

EMOTIONAL AGILITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN THE NEW NORMAL ORGANIZATION: AN INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE SYNTHESIS FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The move toward the new normal organization—hybrid and distributed work, deepening digital mediation, and the swift uptake of artificial intelligence—has widened employees' flexibility while sharpening their psychological strain. Human resource development (HRD) models built for stable, co-located settings sit uneasily with the emotional vulnerability this shift produces. This article reviews two literatures that have matured largely apart: emotional agility, an individual capacity for engaging adaptively with one's inner emotional life that draws on the science of emotion regulation and psychological flexibility; and psychological safety, a team-level belief that interpersonal risk-taking is safe. Drawing on an integrative literature review of Scopus, Web of Science, and the Thai-Journal Citation Index, searched on 15 January 2026, and synthesizing 25 peer-reviewed and foundational sources through thematic and conceptual integration rather than meta-analytic pooling, the review clarifies each construct, examines the obstacles the new normal places before both, and proposes—as a theoretical antecedent relationship for future empirical testing, not an established finding—that individual emotional agility serves as a proximal antecedent of team psychological safety, with agile and empathetic leadership acting as the connecting mechanism. The synthesis yields a multilevel framework that links the new normal environment, leadership, emotional agility, psychological safety, and sustainable HRD outcomes—retention, well-being, and innovation—and closes with implications for practice and a research agenda.

Keywords: emotional agility; psychological safety; psychological flexibility; hybrid work; agile leadership; sustainable human resource development; well-being

ABSTRAK

Perubahan menuju organisasi new normal yang ditandai dengan kerja hibrida, digitalisasi, dan adopsi kecerdasan buatan meningkatkan fleksibilitas sekaligus tekanan psikologis karyawan. Kondisi ini menuntut pendekatan pengembangan sumber daya manusia (SDM) yang lebih adaptif terhadap dinamika emosional di tempat kerja. Artikel ini mengintegrasikan dua konstruk yang berkembang secara terpisah, yaitu emotional agility, sebagai kemampuan individu untuk merespons dan mengelola emosi secara adaptif, dan psychological safety, sebagai keyakinan tim bahwa lingkungan kerja aman untuk mengambil risiko interpersonal. Melalui tinjauan literatur integratif terhadap 25 sumber dari Scopus, Web of Science, dan Thai-Journal Citation Index yang ditelusuri pada 15 Januari 2026, artikel ini menganalisis kedua konstruk tersebut dalam konteks new normal. Sintesis konseptual mengusulkan bahwa emotional agility individu dapat menjadi anteseden proksimal psychological safety pada tingkat tim, dengan kepemimpinan yang lincah dan empatik sebagai mekanisme penghubung. Kerangka multilevel yang dihasilkan menghubungkan lingkungan new normal, kepemimpinan, emotional agility, psychological safety, serta hasil SDM berkelanjutan berupa retensi, kesejahteraan, dan inovasi. Artikel ini memberikan implikasi bagi praktik SDM dan agenda penelitian empiris di masa mendatang.

Kata kunci: emotional agility; psychological safety; fleksibilitas psikologis; kerja hibrida; agile leadership; pengembangan SDM berkelanjutan; kesejahteraan.

1. Introduction

Work has been rearranged. In the span of a few years, the working image of organizational life moved from the shared office to a scattered, screen-mediated

patchwork of home setups, split-week schedules, and asynchronous exchange. The COVID-19 pandemic did not invent these arrangements so much as compress a decade of gradual change into a handful of

quarters, forcing scholars to revisit long-held assumptions about how work is designed and felt (Kniffin et al., 2021; Wang, Liu, Qian, & Parker, 2021). The *new normal* organization that emerged is usually praised for what it adds—autonomy, no commute, freedom of location—yet these gains carry quieter costs to the emotional and relational texture of work.

Two features of this setting matter most for the argument that follows. One is the reach of *digital mediation*. When most interaction passes through a screen, the subtle nonverbal signals that people have always used to build trust are thinned out or distorted (Bailenson, 2021; Feitosa & Salas, 2020). The other is the entry of *artificial intelligence* into routine tasks, which rewrites job content, shifts the skills people are expected to hold, and seeds fresh doubt about competence and professional standing (Wang, Ravazzani, & Anton, 2025). The combination produces a paradox: the new normal hands employees more say over *where* and *when* they work while stripping away much of the relational support that once made work bearable over the long run.

That paradox is where conventional HRD shows its age. The field has long concentrated on building task competencies and managing performance—worthy aims, but ones that quietly assume a steady emotional and relational backdrop. Under conditions of isolation, blurred boundaries, and screen fatigue, the affective side of work can no longer be left in the background. Attending to it means working at two levels at once: the *individual*, where employees must manage their own reactions to ongoing uncertainty, and the *team*, where the climate has to stay safe enough for people to speak up, question, and own their mistakes across distance.

This article therefore reads together two streams of scholarship that bear directly on those levels but have rarely been brought into contact. At the individual level, *emotional agility*—a term

popularized by David and Congleton (2013) and resting on the established literatures of emotion regulation (Gross, 2015) and psychological flexibility (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010)—names the capacity to meet difficult emotions with awareness, to avoid being “hooked” by them, and to act on one’s values while uncomfortable. At the team level, *psychological safety*—defined by Edmondson (1999) and consolidated through later review and meta-analysis (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Frazier, Fainshmidt, Klinger, Pezeshkan, & Vracheva, 2017; Newman, Donohue, & Eva, 2017)—names a shared belief that the team is a safe place to take interpersonal risks.

The review’s central proposition—advanced here as a theoretical antecedent relationship for future empirical testing rather than an established conclusion—is that these constructs are not merely compatible but plausibly sequentially linked: the individual capacity (emotional agility) is theorized to enable the team climate (psychological safety), with leadership together with the structure of the new normal shaping how strongly that link holds. Section 2 lays the theoretical groundwork for each construct. Section 3 sets out the method. Section 4 examines the barriers the new normal raises, develops the synthesis, and presents the framework (Figure 1). Section 5 turns to practice and to research yet to be done.

2. Literature Review

2.1 From Emotion Regulation to Emotional Agility: The Individual Dimension

Emotional agility is best read not as a free-standing idea but as a practitioner-facing distillation of two deeper scientific traditions. The first is *emotion regulation*, the study of how people shape which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express them (Gross, 2015). One of its most useful lessons is that regulatory strategies are not

interchangeable: approaches built on suppressing or avoiding feeling tend to exact a toll over time, whereas approaches built on reappraisal, acceptance, and flexible use tend to serve people better. The point translates directly to working life, since employees are constantly asked to manage their affect in the service of their roles—an effort that, when it leans on surface-level masking, tracks with strain and lower well-being (Grandey & Melloy, 2017).

The second tradition is *psychological flexibility*, which treats the ability to stay in contact with the present, to hold one's thoughts and feelings lightly, and to keep acting on one's chosen values as a core feature of psychological health (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). Here the aim of emotional life is reframed: not the removal of negative states but a workable relationship with the whole range of inner experience.

David and Congleton (2013) carried these insights into the workplace in an accessible form. Rather than telling employees to control or bury unwanted emotions, the model asks them to face those emotions with awareness, to step back from automatic reactions, and to take values-congruent action even when it is uncomfortable. Read alongside the wider scholarship on emotional intelligence at work (Côté, 2014), emotional agility looks like an applied, dynamic version of the regulatory and flexibility competencies that organizational psychology has studied for decades. What matters for this review is the dual character of the construct: emotional agility is an *individual* capacity—it is the inner work a person does with their own feelings—yet its consequences are unavoidably *interpersonal*, because someone who can sit with their own vulnerability is better placed to be open with others.

2.2 The Architecture of Psychological Safety: The Team Dimension

Where emotional agility lives inside the individual, psychological safety lives in the relational space between people. Edmondson (1999) defined team psychological safety as a shared belief, held by a team's members, that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking; in such teams, members ask questions, seek feedback, raise concerns, and admit mistakes without fearing ridicule or punishment. Her foundational study showed that this climate feeds team learning behavior, which in turn carries the relationship between psychological safety and team performance—evidence that safety is no soft amenity but a mechanism with hard consequences.

Later work widened and deepened the construct. Reviewing its history and trajectory, Edmondson and Lei (2014) traced psychological safety across individual, group, and organizational levels and clarified how it relates to voice, teamwork, and learning. Newman, Donohue, and Eva (2017) pulled together the empirical record on antecedents, outcomes, and moderators, while the meta-analysis by Frazier and colleagues (2017), built on a large set of independent samples, mapped the construct's nomological network—placing it against related states such as work engagement and leader relations and confirming its ties to performance and citizenship behavior.

One finding runs through all of this: psychological safety is *built*. It is made and remade through patterns of interaction, above all those involving leaders and high-quality relationships (Carmeli, Brueller, & Dutton, 2009). It is neither a fixed trait of a team nor a free gift of being in the same room. That distinction anchors the present argument, because if safety must be actively cultivated, then the conditions of the new normal—examined next—can either help or hinder the cultivation.

3. Methods

The study is an *integrative literature review*, a method suited to consolidating and reconceptualizing literatures that are mature on their own but poorly connected to one another (Torraco, 2005). Unlike a meta-analysis, which pools effect sizes, an integrative review fits the present purpose: building a conceptual bridge between individual- and team-level scholarship and proposing a framework that later empirical work can test.

Literature was located through the principal databases for organizational and human resource scholarship—Scopus and Web of Science, with the Thai-Journal Citation Index (TCI) added for regionally indexed work—and was extended through forward and backward citation tracing from seminal papers. Search strings paired construct terms with contextual terms using Boolean operators; representative examples include (“psychological safety”) AND (“hybrid work” OR “remote work” OR “virtual team”), (“emotional agility” OR “emotion regulation” OR “psychological flexibility”) AND (workplace OR organisation), and (“psychological safety”) AND (leadership) AND (“learning” OR “voice” OR “innovation”). Because the focal constructs cross disciplinary lines, searches were not confined to a single field. The Thai-Journal Citation Index component of the search was run to capture regionally indexed Thai scholarship; it did not return additional peer-reviewed sources meeting the eligibility criteria below, so no TCI-indexed items are among the sources retained in the synthesis (Table 1)—a gap discussed as a limitation in Section 5.1.

The searches were executed on 15 January 2026, after the publication of Corneliuson et al. (2026) and Tinnerholm Ljungberg et al. (2025). Scopus returned 1,843 records and Web of Science returned 1,267 records, for 3,110 records identified in total; as noted above, the Thai-Journal Citation Index search added no further eligible records beyond these two databases. After 689 duplicate records were

removed (approximately 22% overlap between the two databases), 2,421 records were screened at the title-and-abstract level against the eligibility criteria set out below, of which 2,358 were excluded as off-topic, non-peer-reviewed, or lacking methodological transparency. The remaining 63 records were assessed in full text, of which 13 met the final eligibility criteria, and forward and backward citation tracing from seminal papers added a further 12 foundational sources. The final synthesis therefore draws on the 25 sources listed in the References, of which the 13 studies retrieved through the database search are summarized in Table 1.

Foundational theoretical sources were retained regardless of publication date so that the conceptual lineage stayed intact (Edmondson, 1999, is the clearest case). Contextual and empirical sources on the new normal were drawn mainly from 2018 onward, which let the synthesis span the period before, during, and after the pandemic. A source was included when it was peer-reviewed and engaged at least one focal construct or its application to current work design; authoritative books and review articles were kept for their conceptual weight. Sources were set aside when they could not be retrieved, lacked methodological transparency, or touched the constructs only in passing. In keeping with sound scholarly practice, each cited work was checked against its publisher record so that bibliographic details and DOIs match the published version.

To support directly the claim that these two literatures have rarely been connected, the sources retained in the synthesis were compared against one another rather than asserted as disconnected. Table 1 lists the studies carried into the review; inspection of that set shows that none of the retained sources simultaneously theorizes or tests emotional agility (or its emotion-regulation and psychological-flexibility foundations) together with psychological safety as joint constructs within a single study—each

source addresses one construct, the shared contextual literature on the new normal, or the review's own methodological grounding, but not the cross-level linkage proposed here. This absence of any

overlapping treatment across the assembled literature is the systematic basis for the claim, introduced in Section 1, that the two streams have developed largely in isolation from one another.

Table 1. Summary of Included Studies

Study	Context	Design	Level	Construct(s)	Key finding
Edmondson (1999)	Manufacturing/hospital teams (US)	Field study	Team	Psychological safety	PS predicts learning behavior; mediates PS–performance link
Nembhard & Edmondson (2006)	Health care teams (US)	Field survey	Team/leader	Leader inclusiveness; PS	Inclusiveness predicts PS, softens status effects
Carmeli et al. (2009)	Organizational teams	Field survey	Individual–team	Relationships; PS	High-quality relationships support PS and learning
Kashdan & Rottenberg (2010)	Clinical/health psychology	Narrative review	Individual	Psychological flexibility	Flexibility is a marker of psychological health
David & Congleton (2013)	Workplace (practitioner)	Conceptual article	Individual	Emotional agility	Introduces EA as engaging difficult emotions with awareness
Edmondson & Lei (2014)	Cross-level scholarship	Narrative review	Multilevel	Psychological safety	Traces PS's development and nomological network
Gross (2015)	Emotion science	Narrative review	Individual	Emotion regulation	Updates process model; differentiates strategies
Frazier et al. (2017)	Cross-industry orgs	Meta-analysis	Team/individual	Psychological safety	PS strongly related to engagement, performance, learning
Newman et al. (2017)	Organizational teams	Systematic review	Multilevel	PS antecedents/outcomes	Synthesizes PS literature; flags measurement gaps
Bailenson (2021)	Videoconferencing users	Conceptual analysis	Individual	Nonverbal overload	Identifies mechanisms of videoconference fatigue
Yang et al. (2022)	Large tech-firm employees	Network analysis	Organizational	Collaboration networks	Remote work linked to more siloed networks
Tinnerholm Ljungberg et al. (2025)	Higher-ed managers, hybrid	Qualitative interviews	Leader/team	Leadership in hybrid work	Leaders adapt practices to sustain connection
Corneliusson et al. (2026)	Hybrid workers (Sweden)	Longitudinal survey	Individual	Boundary blurring	Hybrid work brings benefits and boundary risks

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Barriers in the New Normal Work Environment

The new normal sets several structural obstacles before both individual emotional agility and team psychological

safety. Naming them shows why integrating the two constructs is not just a tidy theoretical move but a practical necessity. Table 2 maps each barrier to the level it threatens and the construct it most directly undercuts.

Table 2. Structural Barriers of the New Normal Work Environment and Their Primary Targets

Barrier	Primary level affected	Construct most undercut	Key source(s)
Attenuated nonverbal cues / videoconference overload	Dyadic, team	Psychological safety	Bailenson (2021)
Static, siloed collaboration networks	Team, organizational	Psychological safety	Yang et al. (2022); Feitosa & Salas (2020)
Isolation and work–home boundary blurring	Individual	Emotional agility	Corneliusson et al. (2026)
Uncertainty from AI integration	Individual, team	Both	Wang, Ravazzani, & Anton (2025)

Trust and rapport have always been negotiated in large part through nonverbal channels—gaze, posture, micro-expression, the rhythm of being together in a room. Move that interaction onto video, and those channels are compressed, delayed, or made ambiguous. Bailenson (2021) offered a theoretical account of “Zoom fatigue” grounded in nonverbal overload, pointing to the cognitive cost of sustained, unnaturally close eye gaze, the strain of constantly watching one’s own image, and the loss of natural movement. Since the interpersonal risk-taking at the core of psychological safety depends on reading others’ reactions accurately, degrading those signals raises the felt risk of speaking up.

The structure of collaboration changes too. Large-scale evidence shows that, without deliberate counter-effort, remote arrangements can make collaboration networks more static and siloed, with weaker cross-group ties and less informal exchange (Yang et al., 2022). Such fragmentation eats away at the dense, overlapping relationships that normally sustain safety. Studies of virtual teamwork make the same point from another angle: trust does not migrate automatically to mediated settings and has to be built on purpose through communication practices fitted to the medium (Feitosa & Salas, 2020).

At the individual level, the new normal can breed isolation and dissolve the line between work and private life.

Longitudinal evidence on the psychosocial experience of hybrid work indicates that, alongside real benefits such as autonomy and better work–life balance, hybrid arrangements can blur the work–home boundary and intensify certain demands, with effects that differ by person and setting (Corneliusson, Babapour Chafi, Tornevi, Stjernbrandt, & Wahlström, 2026). When this blurring meets digital fatigue, it drains the very emotional reserves that agility draws on—setting up a vicious circle in which depleted people find openness harder, and a less open climate offers less of the relational replenishment that might restore them.

AI integration adds a distinct layer of doubt about competence, evaluation, and professional identity. Early work on professionals’ readiness for generative AI documents the perceived risks that travel with fast adoption and stresses the value of individual and organizational preparedness (Wang, Ravazzani, & Anton, 2025). Where an employee is unsure whether admitting confusion about a new tool will be read as incompetence, the bar for interpersonal risk-taking rises—again landing on psychological safety. Read together, these barriers do more than sit beside deficits in emotional agility and safety; they actively generate the pressures that depress both.

4.2 Integrative Synthesis: Strategic Intersections for HRD

This section carries the review’s main contribution. It organizes the literature

around two themes: the synergy between individual emotional agility and team psychological safety, and leadership as the mechanism that joins them under new

normal conditions. Table 3 sets the two constructs side by side to make the complementarity explicit.

Table 3. Comparison of the Two Focal Constructs

Dimension	Emotional agility	Psychological safety
Level of analysis	Individual	Team / group
Nature	Internal capacity / skill	Shared relational belief
Core question	“Can I engage adaptively with my own emotions?”	“Is it safe to take interpersonal risks here?”
Theoretical roots	Emotion regulation; psychological flexibility	Team learning; organizational behavior
Proximal outcome	Values-congruent action under discomfort	Voice, candor, learning from error
Role in framework	Proximal antecedent	Emergent state

4.2.1 Emotional Agility as a Proximal Antecedent of Psychological Safety

A theme recurs across both literatures, even where it is left unstated: the willingness to take interpersonal risks—the behavioral substance of a safe climate—rests on an inner ability to tolerate the discomfort such risks bring. Speaking up, admitting an error, or challenging a settled approach exposes a person to possible negative judgment, and doing it well means staying in contact with the resulting anxiety rather than being swamped by it. That is precisely the capacity the emotion regulation and psychological flexibility literatures describe (Gross, 2015; Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010) and that David and Congleton (2013) packaged, for practice, as emotional agility.

The synthesis therefore advances, as a theoretical proposition for future empirical testing rather than an established conclusion, the position that emotional agility functions as a *proximal antecedent* of psychological safety. When team members can acknowledge and work through their own vulnerability instead of defending against it, they become readier to extend openness to others and to model the disclosure that signals safety to the group. This reading fits evidence that high-quality

relationships supply a relational foundation for safety and for learning from failure (Carmeli, Brueller, & Dutton, 2009), and findings that a safe climate lets teams turn task disagreement to advantage rather than letting it curdle into relational conflict (Bradley, Postlethwaite, Klotz, Hamdani, & Brown, 2012). Seen through the wider lens of affect in organizations (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017), individual emotional capacities and collective climates are mutually constituting: the inner work of agility feeds the relational work of safety, and safety in turn creates conditions under which individuals keep developing their emotional capacities. The relationship is plausibly reciprocal, but the synthesis foregrounds the individual-to-team direction, since that is the under-theorized link with the most leverage for HRD intervention.

4.2.2 Empathetic and Agile Leadership as the Connecting Mechanism

If emotional agility is the individual ingredient and psychological safety the team result, leadership is what connects them—nowhere more so than under the dispersed conditions of the new normal. The foundational evidence is plain: leader behavior is among the strongest

antecedents of safety. Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) introduced *leader inclusiveness*—the words and deeds through which leaders invite and value others’ input—and showed that it predicts psychological safety and softens the chilling effect of status differences within a team.

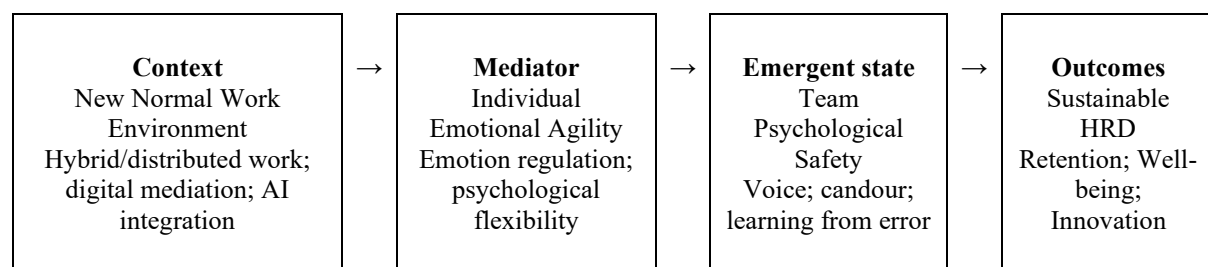
In the new normal, the demands on leaders grow heavier and their character changes. Qualitative evidence on managers in knowledge-intensive hybrid settings shows that leaders consciously adjust how they communicate and tend relationships when teams are spread out, navigating new expectations around availability, connection, and the upkeep of community (Tinnerholm Ljungberg et al., 2025). Two interlocking qualities mark effective leadership here. The first is *emotional agility in the leader’s own conduct*: leaders who engage adaptively with their own feelings can stay steady amid uncertainty and resist the defensive control that silences subordinate voice. The second is the deliberate display of *leader vulnerability*—

openly naming the limits of one’s knowledge and one’s own mistakes—which models behavior that lowers the perceived risk of disclosure for everyone else. This aligns with Edmondson’s (2018) account of the “fearless organization,” in which leaders build safety not by lowering standards but by reframing failure as learning and treating candor as a norm. On this reading, agile and empathetic leadership is the bridge: it converts latent individual agility into a shared climate of safety, and it does so through behaviors that become indispensable precisely when physical presence can no longer carry the relational load.

4.3 A Proposed Conceptual Framework

Drawing the threads together, the article proposes a multilevel framework (Figure 1) that arranges the focal constructs into a testable set of relationships. Table 4 states the framework as formal propositions.

Figure 1. A Multilevel Conceptual Framework Linking the New Normal Work Environment to Sustainable HRD Outcomes



Moderating mechanism: Agile and Empathetic Leadership

Inclusiveness; modelled vulnerability; leader emotional agility — moderates the context → agility → safety pathway

The framework has five elements. The *new normal work environment*—hybrid and distributed arrangements, digital mediation, AI integration—forms the distal context, exerting downward pressure on both individual emotional reserves and team climate (Section 4.1). *Agile and empathetic leadership*—inclusiveness, modeled vulnerability, and the leader’s own

agility—moderates how far that context turns into deficit or opportunity; strong leadership buffers the corrosive effects of distance, while weak leadership lets them spread. *Individual emotional agility* is the proximal capacity that lets employees meet vulnerability and uncertainty adaptively, treated here as the mediator through which favorable conditions yield relational

results. *Team psychological safety*, aggregating from individual openness and shaped by leadership, is the emergent climate that licenses voice, questioning, and learning. The terminal outcomes are those of *sustainable HRD*—an approach that deliberately balances economic goals against the long-term well-being of employees and the wider system (Kramar, 2014, 2022): retention, since employees who are both internally resourced and relationally safe are less likely to disengage or leave; well-being, since easing chronic interpersonal threat and emotional suppression supports sustainable

functioning; and innovation, since safety enables the candid exchange and constructive risk-taking on which novelty depends.

Stated as a directional logic, the framework holds that the *new normal work environment*, filtered through *agile and empathetic leadership*, fosters *individual emotional agility*, which builds *team psychological safety*, which in turn produces *sustainable HRD outcomes*. It is offered as a set of theoretically grounded propositions for operationalization and testing, not as a validated empirical model.

Table 4. Propositions Derived from the Conceptual Framework

	Proposition
P1	The new normal work environment is negatively associated with individual emotional agility and team psychological safety in the absence of compensating mechanisms.
P2	Individual emotional agility is positively associated with team psychological safety.
P3	Emotional agility mediates the relationship between agile/empathetic leadership and team psychological safety.
P4	Agile and empathetic leadership moderates the new normal → emotional agility → psychological safety pathway, buffering adverse contextual effects.
P5	Team psychological safety is positively associated with sustainable HRD outcomes (retention, well-being, innovation).

5. Conclusion

This review set out to integrate two literatures—emotional agility and psychological safety—that address complementary levels of the contemporary work experience yet have grown apart. The synthesis proposes—as a theoretical antecedent relationship that awaits empirical testing rather than an established conclusion—that individual emotional agility is a proximal antecedent of team psychological safety, that agile and empathetic leadership is the mechanism joining the two, and that the new normal environment is the context that makes their integration urgent. The contribution is mainly conceptual: the framework reorganizes existing evidence into a multilevel logic connecting the affective work of individuals to the relational climate

of teams and, finally, to the sustainability goals of HRD.

Several implications follow for managers and HRD practitioners, specified below by intervention, the actor responsible for implementation, the level targeted, and an indicator that would signal effectiveness. First, HRD and learning-and-development units should design emotional agility coaching programs—built on acceptance- and values-based techniques rather than suppression (David & Congleton, 2013; Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010)—delivered to individual employees in hybrid or distributed roles; effectiveness would be indicated by pre–post gains on validated psychological flexibility measures and by reductions in self-reported emotional exhaustion. Second, leadership development functions, working with line

managers and senior leadership, should embed inclusive and vulnerability-modeling behaviors into leadership competency frameworks and manager training (Edmondson, 2018; Nemphard & Edmondson, 2006), targeting the team level and adapting delivery to distributed and hybrid settings (Tinnerholm Ljungberg et al., 2025); effectiveness would be indicated by improvements in team-level psychological safety survey scores and in voice and error-reporting rates. Third, HR operations and workplace-design teams should implement structural practices—deliberate video-meeting norms that offset thinned nonverbal cues, cross-team collaboration rituals that counter network siloing (Bailenson, 2021; Feitosa & Salas, 2020; Yang et al., 2022), and explicit work-home boundary protections (Corneliusson et al., 2026)—operating at the organizational level; effectiveness would be indicated by collaboration-network and engagement analytics and by boundary-violation or after-hours-contact metrics. Framed within a sustainable HRM perspective and championed by senior HR leadership at the organizational level, these interventions should be tracked jointly against performance and well-being indicators rather than treated as optional “wellness” extras (Kramar, 2014, 2022).

As a conceptual synthesis, the review also marks out where empirical work is needed. The proposed mediating role of emotional agility between leadership and safety awaits direct multilevel testing, ideally with longitudinal designs able to address the plausibly reciprocal nature of the individual-team relationship. The measurement of emotional agility as an organizational construct needs further development and validation, building on the more established measurement traditions in emotion regulation and psychological flexibility. The moderating effects of specific new normal conditions—degree of remoteness, intensity of digital mediation, extent of AI integration—on the framework’s pathways remain largely

unexamined. And because much of the foundational evidence comes from Western settings, there is a clear need for research on how these relationships behave across cultural and institutional contexts, including Asian and specifically Thai organizations, where norms around hierarchy, voice, and emotional expression may meaningfully reshape the dynamics described here.

5.1 Limitations

This review is subject to several limitations that qualify its conclusions. First, as an integrative narrative synthesis rather than a systematic review with independent dual screening, the source-selection process carries a risk of selection bias: judgment by a single reviewer shaped which papers were retained, and reliance on forward and backward citation tracing from seminal works may have reinforced an existing citation network rather than surfaced dissenting or marginal perspectives.

Second, the evidentiary base is dominated by Western—chiefly North American and European—scholarship; psychological safety and emotional agility were both conceptualized and validated primarily in Western organizational settings, and the review cannot speak with confidence to how these constructs, or the antecedent relationship proposed between them, operate in Asian, Thai, or other non-Western institutional and cultural contexts, where norms of hierarchy, face, and emotional expression may substantially alter the dynamics described here.

Third, emotional agility carries construct measurement limitations: unlike psychological safety, which has a validated multi-item scale (Edmondson, 1999) refined through decades of psychometric work, emotional agility as popularized by David and Congleton (2013) lacks an equivalently validated organizational measure, so its treatment in this review rests substantially on its underlying emotion-regulation and psychological-flexibility

literatures (Gross, 2015; Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010) rather than on a settled operationalization of its own.

Finally, and most fundamentally, the review's central proposition—that emotional agility functions as a proximal antecedent of psychological safety—has

not been empirically tested here: the synthesis is a theoretical argument for a plausible relationship, not a report of empirical findings, and the framework and propositions in Section 4.3 should be read as a research agenda rather than as established fact.

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