

About PSR2: Organizational Culture

What is Guarding Minds @ Work?

Guarding Minds @ Work (GM@W) is an evidence-based strategy that assists employers in protecting and promoting psychological safety and health in the workplace. GM@W provides a comprehensive set of resources employers can use to effectively address the impact of 12 psychosocial risk (PSR) factors known to have a powerful impact on organizational health, the health of individual employees, and the financial bottom line. The PSRs were identified by researchers from the Consortium for Organizational Mental Healthcare (COMH) in the SFU Faculty of Health Sciences on the basis of extensive research and a comprehensive review of empirical data related to national and international best practices. The determination of the factors also reflects existing and emerging Canadian case law and legislation.

What is PSR2 – Organizational Culture?

Guarding Minds @ Work defines PSR2, organizational culture, as the degree to which a work culture is characterized by trust, honesty, and fairness. In general, organizational culture has been described as “a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group.” These assumptions are a mix of values, beliefs, meanings and expectations that group members hold in common and that they use as behavioural and problem-solving cues. The critical task is to determine which of these assumptions enhance the psychological safety and health of the workplace and the workforce.

Why is PSR2 – Organizational Culture important?

Organizational trust is imperative for any positive and productive social processes within any workplace. Trust is a predictor of cooperative behaviour, organizational citizenship behaviours, organizational commitment, and employee loyalty, all of which in turn help retain and attract employees. When an organization has a health-focused culture, employee well-being, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are all enhanced. A work culture with social support also enhances employee well-being and can provide a positive environment for employees who may be experiencing psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety.

What happens when there is not a good organizational culture in the workplace?

Culture ‘sets the tone’ for an organization; if that culture is negative it can undermine the effectiveness of the best programs, policies and services intended to support the workforce. An unhealthy culture creates more stress in the workplace, which lowers employee well-being. If an organization has a culture of ‘profit at all costs’ and constant chaotic urgency, it can create an environment in which burnout is the norm.

How can organizational culture be improved?

Start by having the organization or work team conduct the Guarding Minds @ Work Assessment (Organizational Audit, Initial Scan and/or PSR-12 Employee Survey) and reviewing the resulting reports. If organizational culture is identified as an area of concern, refer to the relevant Action Tools for a practical strategy and evidence-based and effective suggestions that can improve organizational culture. It is also important to discuss the findings with concerned employees within the organization to gain a further understanding of the results and to obtain input and participation in determining useful corrective actions. Also, consider the information in the readings and resources identified below. Finally, refer back to the GM@W website on occasion for new ideas about how organizational culture can be enhanced.

Further information about organizational culture can be found at:

- Härtel, C. (2008). How to build a healthy emotional culture and avoid a toxic culture. [In?]Research companion to emotion in organizations (pp. 575-588). Northampton, MA US: Edward Elgar Publishing. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2009-06425-036&site=ehost-live>
- The Health Communication Unit. (2009). Organizational culture: From assessment to action. From Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto website: http://www.thcu.ca/Workplace/pdf/2009_03_10_Organizational_Culture.pdf
- Findler, L., Wind, L., & Mor Barak, M. (2007). The challenge of workforce management in a global society: Modeling the relationship between diversity, inclusion, organizational culture, and employee well-being, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. *Administration in Social Work*, 31(3), 63-94. http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/878009_770885140_903285689.pdf
- The Great-West Life Assurance Company. (2009). PSR2: Organizational culture. In Centre resources by risk factor. <http://www.gwlcentrementalhealth.com/english/slides.asp?l1=3&l2=157&l3=159&l4=162&d=159&scroll=2>
- Canadian Psychiatric Research Foundation. (n.d.). Education & awareness. <http://cprf.ca/education/workplace.html>
- Schein, E. (1990). Organizational culture. *American Psychologist*, 45(2), 109-119. http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=4&hid=105&sid=9b6320ad-f934-4019-b800_6a98f95517b8%40sessionmgr104
- Hodge, B.J., & Anthony, W. P. (1988). *Organizational theory*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon
- Zhang, A., Tsui, A., Song, L., Li, C., & Jia, L. (2008). How do I trust thee? The employee-organization relationship, supervisor support, and middle manager trust in the organization. *Human Resource Management*, 47(1), 111-132. <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/117924940/PDFSTART>
- Lansisalmi, H., Peiro, J., & Kivimaki, M. (2000). Collective stress and coping in the context of organizational culture. *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology*, 9(4), 527-559. http://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=7CKVg81n30wC&oi=fnd&pg=PA527&dq=collective+stress+and+coping&ots=eySW1uydUs&sig=HE7Vk_3ul8sgz-Mt08q02utadwU#v=onepage&q=collective%20stress%20and%20coping&f=false

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