

# The Effect of Storytelling on Psychological Safety

A Scoping Review

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# Abstract

- This research aims to uncover the linkages between storytelling, psychological safety, and voice.
- There is some support to indicate the relationship between storytelling, psychological safety, and voice, however, there is more research and study needed to understand how storytelling might be used to give rise to psychological safety and promote voice behavior.



# Objective

This scoping review aimed to outline and summarize the studies that depict how storytelling and narrative are linked and explore if and how they are used to give rise to psychological safety within organizations and teams.

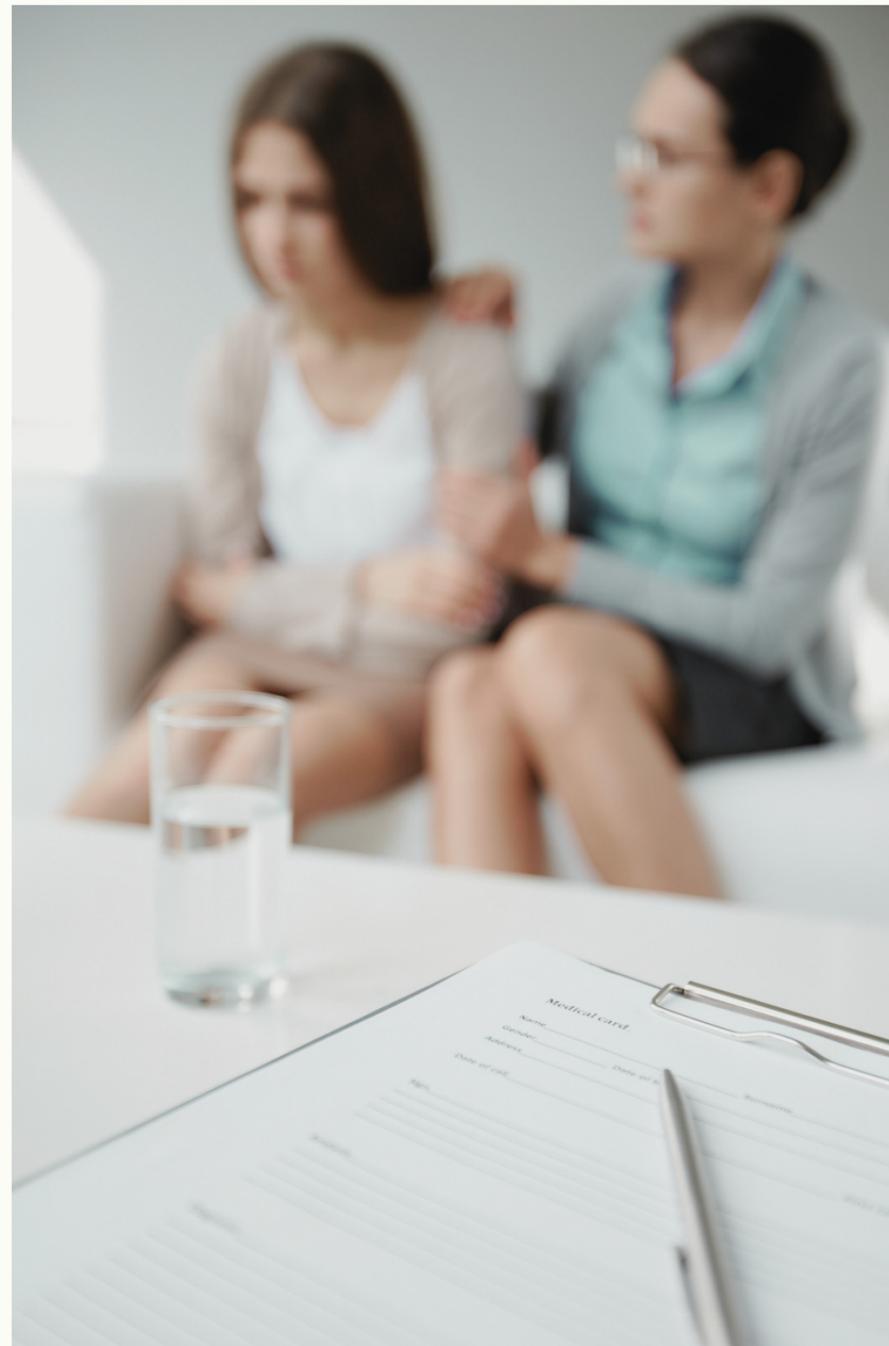


# Psychological Safety



## The Importance of Safety

Psychological safety has been touted as an important cultural pillar in high functioning teams and productive organizations for decades (Newman, A., Donohue, R., Nathan, E., 2017).



## What Does it Imply?

Psychological safety implies that there is no fear or reservation within the human interaction. Instead, there is respect, comfort, and no fear of judgment or retribution when engaging with fellow team members and others within an organization.



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white blazer, is seated at a white table. She is smiling and gesturing with her hands as if in conversation. Another person, seen from the back, is seated across from her. The background is a bright window with a view of a city. Overlaid on the image is a large green double quote symbol, the quote text, and the author's name.

“

Stories are the water we swim in.

– David Foster Wallace

# Protocol

The protocol for this scoping review was created and submitted to PROSPERO. The eligibility criteria for this search were as follows:



## **Inclusions:**

Organizations, managers, leaders, frontline workers, workers, employees, employers, psychological safety, storytelling narrative, trust, organizational structure, time, roles within organizations, modality of storytelling (in person, video, audio, written, virtual reality), implementation of psychological safety

## **Exclusions:**

Non-working individuals and individuals under 18



# Subject Matter Experts

Two subject matters were consulted on the subject of storytelling



## **Matt Lewis**

Core Leadership  
consultant for 3rd  
Conversation

3rd Conversation is an intervention that brings health professionals and patients together--outside the exam room--to connect and explore common human experiences in service of a better system that meets everyone's needs. Matt specializes in storytelling as a relational activity for healing.



## **Brian Sturm**

Associate Dean for  
Academic Affairs and  
Professor at the UNC  
School of Information  
and Library Science

Dr. Sturm specializes in story telling as a tool and was consulted on the topic of using story for implementation to inform this systematic review process.

# Review of Literature

## **Nine databases were searched for this study:**

- Academic Search Premier
- PsychInfo
- ProQuest Central
- Scopus
- AnthroSource
- Business Source Premier
- Global Health
- PubMed
- Web of Science.

## **The search terms included:**

- (Psychological Safety OR psychologically safe OR interpersonal risk) AND (storytelling OR “Story Telling” OR Narrative OR Enablers OR “Team Behaviors” OR “team behaviors” OR “team behavior” OR “team behaviors” OR “Organizational Behaviors” OR Crisis OR crises OR “Trust Building” OR Organizations OR “Trust Behaviors” OR “Learning of Safety” OR “leadership behavior” OR leadership behaviors OR leader behavior OR servant leadership OR “organizational climate” OR “organizational culture”) AND (“Implementation” OR “Implementing”) for some databases.

# Documents Retrieved

- A total of 5,491 documents were aggregated based on the search terms above.
- The results of the abstract screening resulted in 44 documents for full-text review.
- 26 documents for inclusion in the overall systematic review, 20 intervention articles, and 6 reviews.

# Data Extraction

- Two different data extraction documents were created, one for intervention studies and one for reviews.
- Data extraction elements centered on extracting elements centered on storytelling definitions, measures and interventions, psychological safety definitions, measures and interventions, and voice definitions, actions and outcomes.

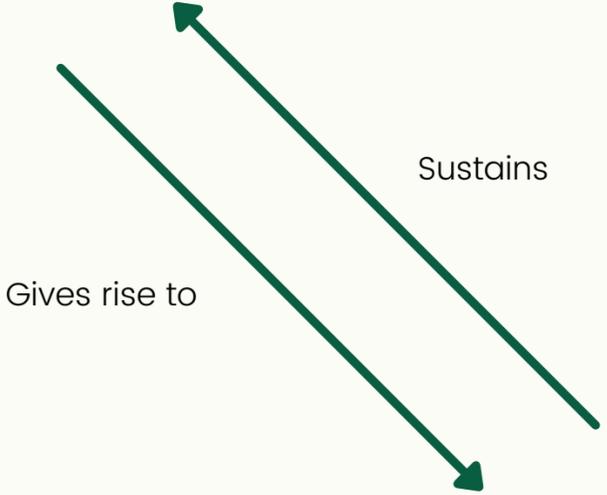
# Final Studies



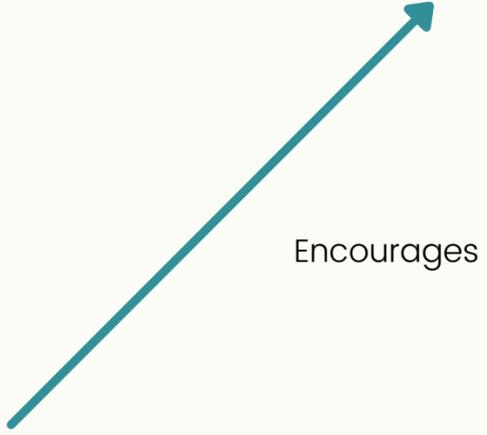
- Once the data extraction and full-text review were completed on the 44 articles, 26 articles were extracted to use for the final review.
- 20 intervention articles and 6 review articles

Storytelling

Voice



Psych Safety



# Psychological Safety Table

	<b>Psychological safety</b>		<b>Measures</b>		<b>Model component</b>		<b>Evidence of Story telling &lt;&gt; Psych Saftey Link</b>		<b>Notes</b>
1	The effects of power, leadership and psychological safety on resident event reporting.	Appelbaum, Nital P; Dow, Alan; Mazmanian, Paul E; Jundt, Dustin K; Appelbaum, Eric N	Psychological Saftey measure (as a mediator) other measures: Power Distance, leadership Inclusiviness, Adverse events		Leadership and Psychological Saftey (leading to adverse reporting/vocie)		Psych Saftey moderates increase in vocie and adverse event reporting		*Here we are assuming that adverse event reporting itself is a form of story telling
2	Learning behaviours in the workplace: The role of high-quality interpersonal relationships and psychological safety	Carmeli, Abraham; Brueller, Daphna; Dutton, Jane E	Psychological saftey measure (as a mediator). Other measures: Percivied learning behaviors, High quality realtionships		Psychological Saftey moderating high quality realtionships leading to impact learning behaviors and voice		Psych saftey moderating high quality realtionships, high quality relationships leading to voice		Voice link is tangential
3	High-quality relationships, psychological safety, and learning from failures in work organizations	Carmeli, Abraham; Gittell, Jody Hoffer	Psychological Safety was measured (Edmonsons measure) as well as "High quality relationships".		Psychological Safety meadiates high quality relationships, resulting in abiltiy to learn from work failures within organizations.		Tangentially, the way that high quality relatinships is measured is through looking at alignment with shared goals, shared knowledge and mutual respect. The type of communiation and voice that leads to high quality realtionships could include storytelling.		High quality Relationships measure: High quality relationships: To construct a measure of high-quality relationships, we drew on Gittell's (2003) conceptualization. Gittell (2003) suggests three features of high-quality relationships that underly relational coordination. These features are: (1) shared goals, (2) shared knowledge, and (3) mutual respect. Drawing on this conceptualization, we developed a 10-item scale for measuring these three features of high-quality relationships: three items for shared goals, four items for shared knowledge, and three items for mutual respect.

# Storytelling

	Storytelling		Measures		Model component		Evidence of Story telling <> Psych Saftey Link		Notes
1	Cultivating a culture of reflection among pharmacy students through storytelling.	Gilliam, Eric H; Brunner, Jason M; Bolan, Jay; Lee, Susie; Nuffer, Wesley; Franson, Kari L; Thompson, Megan E		The intervention was a story slam and the measures were qualitatiev student reflections		Storytelling as an intervention	N/a		*Story Slam, a four-hour storytelling competition, was incorporated into the spring semester of the first professional year of a PharmD program. The event featured short first-person stories told by faculty members as well as students. Students were invited to participate in a pre- and post-intervention survey and focus group. An inductive qualitative analysis of the resulting data was conducted using textual and audio artifacts.
2	'Looking like a bad person': vocabulary of motives and narrative analysis in a story of nursing collegiality.	Padgett, Stephen M		Narrative analysis on vocabualry		The use of story telling and narrative within nursing teams; analysis on how story telling is used.	The types of interviews were a form of story telling and the conclusions of this study suggest that speaking openly with peers (as considered in this study) "is to keep alive the idea of a moral commnity and community of practice." This is a way of discribing Psychological safety.		
3	Animated stories of medical error as a means of teaching undergraduates patient safety: an evaluation study.	Cooper, Kerri; Hatfield, Emma; Yeomans, James		Students watched Videos of doctors discribing serious or "near miss" events. They were then asked if viewing these vidoes impacted their perceptions or belifs. Students overall felt view these vidoes was impactful and increased their engagment.		Listening to stories of negitive outcomes or near negitve outcomes improved medical students engagememnt and overall learning about patient saftey	Qualitative interviews from the students after watching the stories being told demonstrated that watching these stores helped encourage speaking up and many felt it was a good thing to encourage enviroments of speaking up behavior> this type of enviroment could be discribed as psychologically safe.		

# Storytelling

- Who tells the story
- What is the story
- How is the story told
- Why is the story told

# Voice

- Expectations of the voice
- The voice at different levels
- Levels (individual, group, etc.)
- Reality check (the motivation behind the voice)
- What voice is improving (relationship, group, organization)
- - Loops (exchanges)

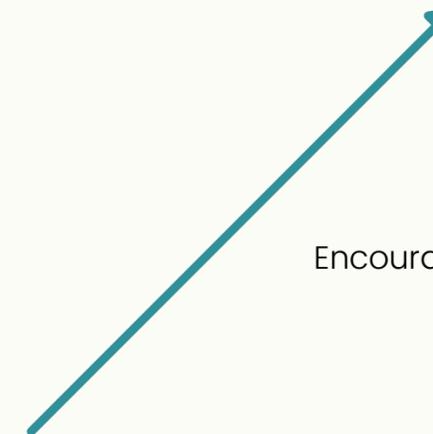
Propels/Promotes



# Psych Safety

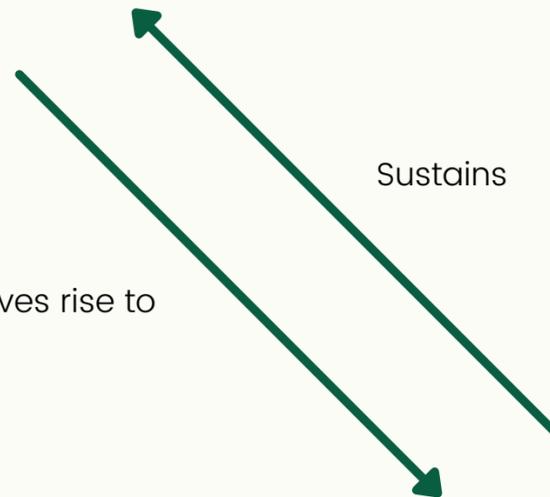
- Individual
- Team
- Climate/culture
- For what purpose
- How long does it take to get there?
- Reality check (trust; levels of trust and risk)
- Multilevel model

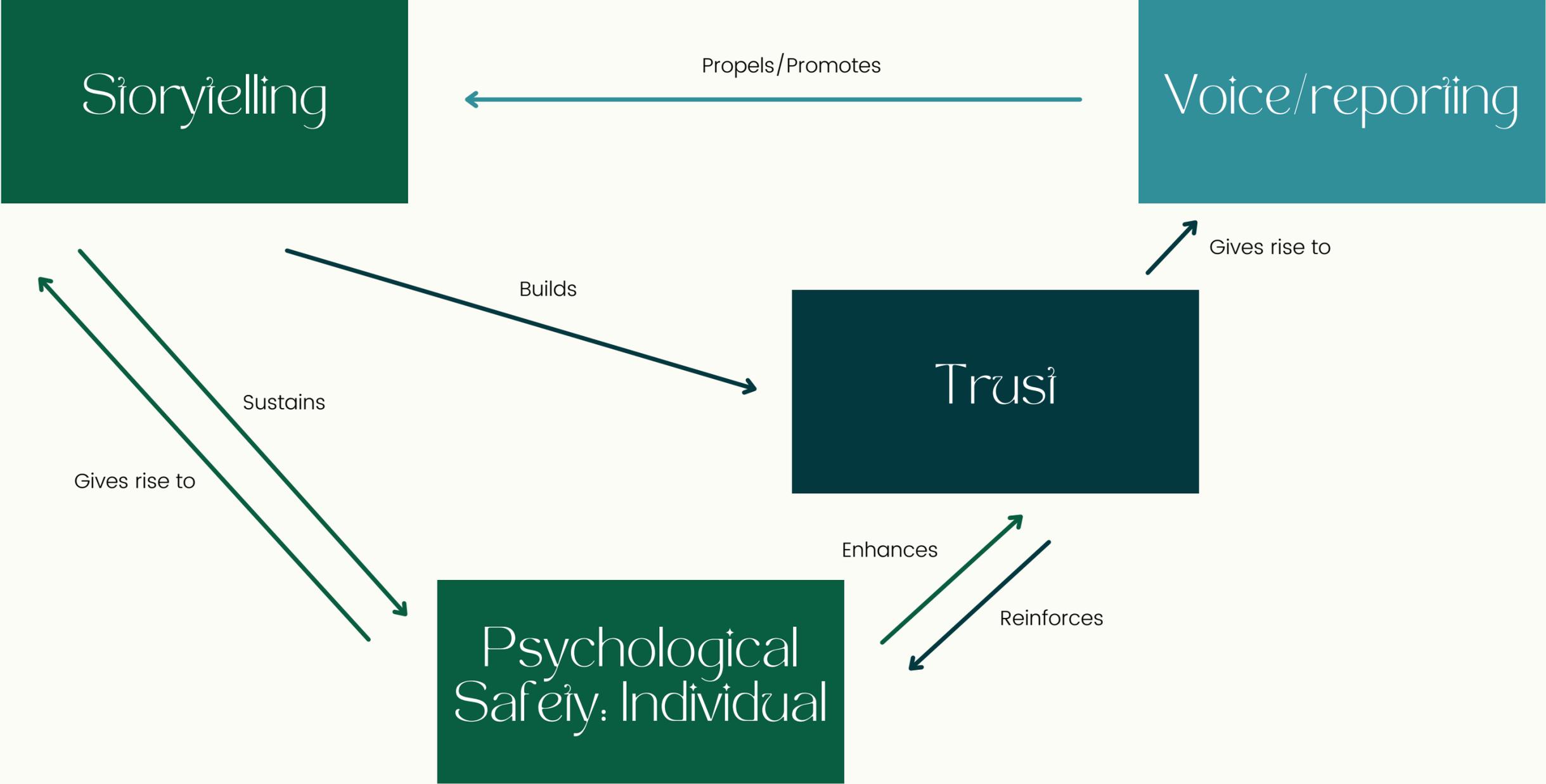
Encourages

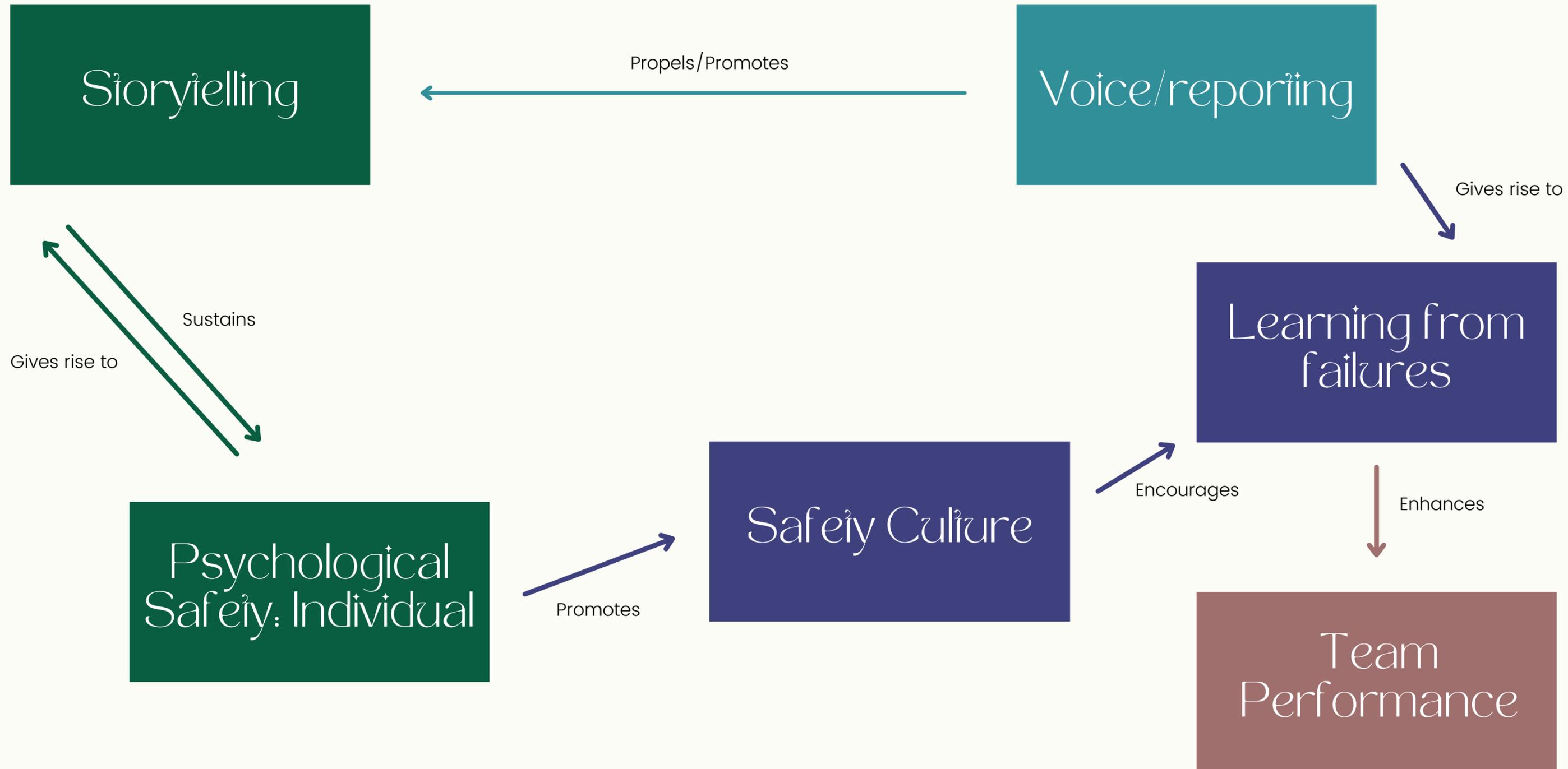


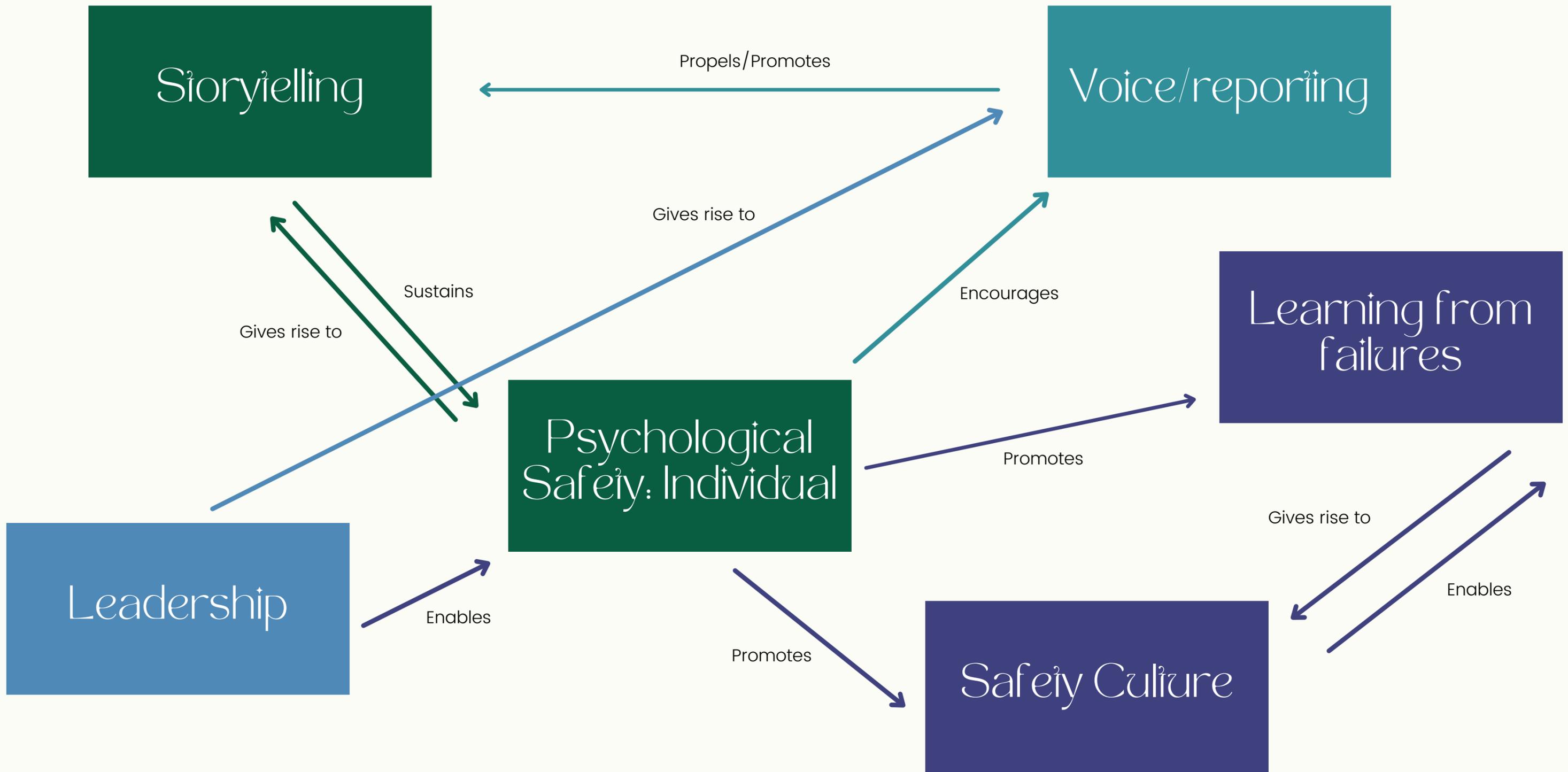
Sustains

Gives rise to











# Further Recommendations

- Current literature offers some support; there is further explanation to be done
- For further research It will be important to uncover the constructs that make storytelling a useful intervention tool (e.g., trust, leadership, safety culture, etc.)





## Next Steps

- Finalize the manuscript detailing these findings
- Make clear recommendations for future research based on the final models

# Conclusion

- There is some evidence to suggest that storytelling could be a useful tool in creating and sustaining psychological safety and encouraging voice
- The use of storytelling as an intervention requires further investigation
- There are other constructs to consider as this model becomes more researched and robust



# Selected Works Cited

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