

Buyer Burnout and Psychological Safety: Addressing the Obscured Crisis in Supply Chain Management

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Abstract

This manuscript explores the critical issue of buyer burnout within modern supply chain management, emphasizing its roots in eroded psychological safety and high job demands. As supply chains face increasing complexities—geopolitical tensions, rapid digitalization, and volatile markets—buyers in strategic procurement roles encounter elevated stress levels that threaten their well-being and organizational resilience. The study underscores how unmanaged stress and lack of psychological safety contribute to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished efficacy, which impair decision-making and supply chain stability. Drawing on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, the paper positions psychological safety as a vital organizational resource that buffers the adverse effects of intense job demands. Empirical synthesis from 78 studies reveals a strong inverse relationship between psychological safety and burnout, highlighting that environments fostering open communication, trust, and fairness significantly mitigate burnout symptoms. Qualitative insights illustrate that perceived lack of voice, unfair treatment, and organizational opacity exacerbate emotional exhaustion among buyers, whereas supportive leadership and transparent practices enhance psychological safety and resilience. The findings advocate for strategic organizational interventions—such as leadership training, fair policies, and proactive communication—to cultivate a psychosocial safety climate. Implementing these measures can reduce burnout, foster innovation, and improve supply chain performance. The research emphasizes that embedding psychological safety is not merely a well-being initiative but a vital strategic approach to enhance organizational agility amid ongoing global disruptions. Future studies should quantitatively validate these relationships and explore leadership

styles' roles in fostering psychological safety, ensuring sustainable supply chain resilience and workforce well-being.

Keywords

Buyer Burnout, Psychological Safety, Supply Chain Management, Organizational Resilience, Job Demands-Resources Theory, Employee Well-Being

1. Introduction

The critical role of supply chain management has become undeniably prominent in recent years, moving from a niche operational concern to a strategic boardroom imperative (Di Mauro et al., 2024). However, beneath this amplified visibility lies an often-obscured crisis: the pervasive phenomenon of buyer burnout, intrinsically linked to eroded psychological safety within buyer-supplier interactions (Kaufmann et al., 2018). This burnout not only compromises individual well-being but also detrimentally affects the strategic efficacy and resilience of the entire supply chain, making it a critical area for academic and practical intervention (Alhammadi et al., 2023). This paper delves into the multifaceted origins of buyer burnout, exploring its manifestations and underlying psychological mechanisms within the complex dynamics of modern supply chains, alongside its profound implications for organizational performance. Specifically, this research examines how unmanaged work-related stress, a precursor to burnout, can lead to severe health issues and diminished professional effectiveness among buyers, consequently undermining supply chain stability and increasing operational risks (Ahmad et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2024). Furthermore, it investigates the pivotal role of psychological safety as a protective factor against burnout, positing that its absence exacerbates stress and diminishes the capacity for effective decision-making and innovation within procurement (Teoh & Kee, 2019). “For the purpose of this study, the term ‘buyer’ operationally refers to individuals occupying strategic procurement roles, including but not limited to strategic sourcing managers, category managers, and lead negotiators, who are responsible for developing and maintaining long-term supplier relationships, managing significant spend categories, and making critical decisions that impact supply chain resilience and organizational profitability. This specific focus distinguishes our investigation from more tactical purchasing functions, ensuring a deeper exploration of burnout within high-pressure, strategic procurement environments.”

1.1. Background of Supply Chain Management Challenges

The contemporary supply chain landscape is fraught with intricate challenges, ranging from geopolitical tensions to the increasing demand for real-time insights and rapid decision-making (Mizgier, 2024; Perumallapli, 2025). These pressures,

coupled with the accelerating pace of globalization and digitalization, intensify the workload and cognitive demands placed upon supply chain professionals, particularly buyers (Qi & Yu, 2021). The constant need to adapt to volatile market conditions, manage complex supplier relationships, and mitigate risks across extended networks often leads to chronic stress and, ultimately, burnout (Hajikazemi et al., 2025). This pervasive occupational stress can significantly impair their safety management performance, particularly for those in critical roles like construction safety managers (Li et al., 2025). Thus, understanding the mechanisms through which job stress impacts performance and the role of organizational support in mitigating these effects becomes crucial (Li et al., 2025).

1.2. The Emergence of Buyer Burnout as a Critical Issue

While supply chain managers are often perceived as robust figures, immune to professional stressors, mounting evidence suggests they are highly susceptible to burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Atkins et al., 2023: p. 65; Dobroszek et al., 2023: p. 86). This multifaceted syndrome can significantly undermine individual well-being and organizational efficacy, with prior research indicating that the specific dimensions of burnout and their pathways to detrimental outcomes remain underexplored (Azimi et al., 2024). The rigorous demands of their roles, combined with a lack of adequate support systems, often leave buyers vulnerable to chronic stress, which is a direct catalyst for job burnout (Li et al., 2025; Lv et al., 2023). This subjective experience of stress, rather than the objective stress load, is particularly influential in precipitating burnout, often impacting job performance and creating hazards within the workplace (Li et al., 2025; Lv et al., 2023). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the psychological stressors contributing to buyer burnout is essential for developing targeted interventions that foster a more resilient and psychologically safe procurement environment.

1.3. The Role of Psychological Safety in Professional Well-Being

Psychological safety, defined as a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, emerges as a crucial construct in mitigating burnout and fostering a healthier work environment (Amoadu et al., 2025; Tang et al., 2025). Within the context of supply chain management, psychological safety enables buyers to voice concerns, admit mistakes, and propose innovative solutions without fear of punitive repercussions, thereby reducing chronic stress and enhancing adaptive capabilities (Saud & Rice, 2024). Conversely, the absence of psychological safety can exacerbate job-related stress, leading to a heightened risk of burnout due to an environment where individuals feel compelled to suppress concerns, contributing to an increased mental load and diminished well-being (Huang et al., 2021; Maqsoom et al., 2023). This condition, often manifesting as physical and mental exhaustion, is a direct consequence of prolonged negative feelings experienced at work (Ensour & Al Maaitah, 2024).

2. Literature Review

This section synthesizes existing scholarship on burnout, psychological safety, and their specific interplay within the supply chain context, highlighting key theoretical frameworks and empirical findings. It critically examines the evolution of burnout as a construct, tracing its definitional nuances from its initial conceptualization to contemporary understandings that encompass emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Zhang & Liu, 2023).

2.1. Theoretical Frameworks Linking Burnout and Psychological Safety

This study is fundamentally rooted in the Job Demands-Resources theory, which serves as the core theoretical framework for understanding buyer burnout within supply chain management (Andersen et al., 2025). The theory posits that employee well-being and burnout are determined by the interplay between the demands of a job and the resources available to an employee, with high-pressure procurement roles, complex market conditions, and stringent deadlines identified as significant *job demands* (Amabile et al., 1996). These demands, if not adequately managed, can lead to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization—key characteristics of burnout (Liu et al., 2024).

Crucially, psychological safety is integrated into this JD-R framework as a vital *job resource* (Amabile et al., 1996). The study assumes that a psychologically safe environment, where individuals feel secure to voice concerns, admit mistakes, and take interpersonal risks without fear of negative repercussions, acts as a critical buffer against these demanding job conditions (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This protective climate helps mitigate chronic stress, prevents resource depletion, and significantly reduces the susceptibility of supply chain professionals to burnout (Amabile et al., 1996). Therefore, the study is grounded in the central assumption that by enhancing psychological safety—acting as a crucial job resource—it is possible to substantially reduce buyer burnout, encourage proactive behavior, and ultimately contribute to improved individual well-being and organizational resilience within the challenging field of supply chain management (de Lisser et al., 2024). Therefore, the presence of psychological safety fosters an environment where supply chain professionals can voice concerns, challenge norms, and innovate without fear of reprisal, thereby enhancing organizational adaptability and resilience against disruptions.

2.2. Defining Buyer Burnout in the Supply Chain Context

This nuanced understanding is vital for distinguishing burnout from mere stress or fatigue, underscoring its chronic and debilitating nature as a psychological response to prolonged workplace stressors (Chen et al., 2022). Moreover, recent research highlights the evolving nature of burnout, emphasizing the need for updated conceptual models and multidimensional research approaches that consider both work environment and individual factors (Nagle et al., 2024). This pa-

per, therefore, adopts a comprehensive definition of buyer burnout, focusing on its specific manifestations within the unique operational and relational complexities of procurement and supply chain roles (Moreno et al., 2025). Buyer burnout is characterized by chronic emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a reduced sense of efficacy, directly stemming from the intense pressures and often unacknowledged emotional labor inherent in managing global supply networks (Qi & Yu, 2021). This comprehensive perspective underscores the pervasive impact of burnout on cognitive function, decision-making, and overall professional efficacy among supply chain professionals, moving beyond a simplistic view of stress to a more profound understanding of its chronic and debilitating effects (Ip et al., 2025).

To strengthen the argument for buyer burnout as a distinct issue, it is crucial to recognize the unique and often profound stressors inherent in procurement and strategic sourcing roles. Unlike other organizational functions, buyers frequently operate at the intersection of conflicting demands, which contribute significantly to their vulnerability to burnout (Moreno et al., 2025). These distinct stressors as postulated by (Qi & Yu, 2021) include:

- **Navigating Ethical Dilemmas and Conflicting Values:** Buyers are frequently confronted with situations that test their ethical boundaries, such as pressures to engage with suppliers with questionable labor practices, or to compromise on sustainability goals for the sake of cost savings. The constant need to balance corporate profitability with ethical sourcing, regulatory compliance, and personal values creates significant moral distress and cognitive load, a form of emotional labor that is often unacknowledged and can lead to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.
- **Simultaneous Demands for Cost Reduction and Innovation:** Procurement professionals are under continuous pressure to drive down costs while simultaneously being expected to foster innovation, identify strategic suppliers, and enhance supply chain resilience. This dual mandate of efficiency and innovation is inherently contradictory and can lead to chronic stress as buyers must continuously reconcile these competing objectives, often with limited resources and tight deadlines. The cognitive burden of optimizing across these competing objectives, often in volatile market conditions, depletes mental resources and contributes to burnout.
- **Managing Complex and Volatile Supplier Relationships:** Buyers are responsible for maintaining intricate relationships with a diverse array of suppliers, often across different cultures and time zones. This involves constant negotiation, conflict resolution, and relationship management, which can be emotionally taxing. The inherent power dynamics, information asymmetry, and potential for opportunistic behavior in buyer-supplier relationships add layers of psychological complexity and stress.
- **High Stakes and Visibility of Decisions:** Procurement decisions often have significant financial and operational consequences for the organization. Mistakes can lead to supply chain disruptions, reputational damage, or substantial fi-

nancial losses, placing immense pressure on buyers. This high-stakes environment, coupled with the need for rapid decision-making in volatile markets, significantly elevates job demands and contributes to chronic stress.

- **Lack of Voice and Perceived Unfairness:** As highlighted by qualitative insights, buyers often experience burnout when they perceive a lack of voice in decision-making processes or when organizational practices are opaque. This can be exacerbated in environments with low psychological safety, where concerns about workload or resource constraints are suppressed, leading to increased stress and isolation.

These unique stressors differentiate buyer burnout from general occupational stress, underscoring the necessity for a focused examination within supply chain management. This deep dive into the specific demands of the procurement role reinforces the study's relevance and the urgency of addressing psychological safety as a protective factor.

2.3. Precursors and Consequences of Burnout

Burnout is an escalating phenomenon that comprises emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy (Malik & Annabi, 2022). This syndrome is a chronic work-related stress condition that manifests as profound fatigue, detachment, and a diminished sense of accomplishment, extending beyond mere job dissatisfaction to significantly impact an individual's mental and physical health (Anadkat & Joshi, 2023; Rubio-Valdehita et al., 2024). Early conceptualizations of burnout, rooted in caregiving professions, recognized it as a multidimensional syndrome encompassing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1993). Specifically, emotional exhaustion, identified as the core component of burnout, involves feelings of being emotionally drained and depleted of energy (Chen, 2023; Lee et al., 2020; López-Núñez et al., 2020). Cynicism or depersonalization, another crucial dimension, involves a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job (Gaspar et al., 2024).

2.4. Understanding Psychological Safety in Organizational Settings

Psychological safety, fundamentally, creates an environment where individuals feel secure enough to engage in interpersonal risk-taking without fear of negative consequences to their self-image, status, or career (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2021). This concept extends beyond mere civility, fostering an environment where candor, experimentation, and constructive dissent are not only tolerated but actively encouraged (Tang et al., 2025). It cultivates an atmosphere where employees can voice concerns, admit mistakes, and offer innovative ideas without apprehension of humiliation or retribution, thereby fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement. This environment is critical for complex, high-stakes environments like supply chain management, where proactive problem-solving and open communication are paramount for operational resilience and strategic agility.

3. Methodology

This systematic review, which aims to synthesize existing qualitative and quantitative literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of how psychological safety influences buyer well-being and mitigates burnout within the specific settings, is underpinned by an **interpretivist** research philosophy. This approach acknowledges that social realities, such as experiences of psychological safety and burnout, are complex, context-dependent, and socially constructed (Galanti et al., 2024). This philosophical stance aligns with the qualitative nature of the thematic analysis employed, seeking to synthesize rich, descriptive findings from various studies rather than reducing them to quantifiable measures (Alanazy & Alruwaili, 2023). The selection of studies for this systematic review adhered strictly to the guidelines outlined in the **Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses protocol** (Gómez-Urquiza et al., 2023). This systematic and transparent approach ensures that the “sampling” of relevant literature is comprehensive, unbiased, and replicable.

The inclusion criteria encompass peer-reviewed empirical studies, theoretical papers, and meta-analyses published in academic journals, focusing on the constructs of burnout, psychological safety, and their interplay within organizational or supply chain contexts. The search strategy systematically identified relevant literature by employing keywords such as “buyer burnout”, “procurement stress”, “psychological safety”, “supply chain well-being”, and “organizational climate” across major academic databases. This approach ensured a broad and comprehensive retrieval of studies, thereby minimizing publication bias and enhancing the generalizability of the findings (Brown, 2023). The exclusion criteria focused on studies not directly addressing the specified constructs or those outside the scope of supply chain and procurement contexts, ensuring the relevance and focus of the review. Data extraction involved meticulously documenting key characteristics of each study, including research design, participant demographics, theoretical frameworks employed, and principal findings related to the relationship between psychological safety and burnout. Subsequently, a thematic analysis was performed to identify recurring patterns, divergent perspectives, and synthesize the collective evidence, thereby establishing a robust understanding of the mechanisms linking psychological safety to burnout prevention and mitigation in supply chain settings (Kareem et al., 2024). The journals assessed are those indexed with SCOPUS, Web of Science, and PubMed, alongside grey literature databases such as Google Scholar and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, to ensure comprehensive coverage (Ajayi & Udeh, 2024: p. 571). Coding and analysis of the extracted data will follow established systematic review guidelines to ensure rigor and validity (Alanazy & Alruwaili, 2023; Gómez-Urquiza et al., 2023).

Sampling and Study Selection

The selection of studies for this systematic review rigorously followed the guidelines outlined in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-

Analyses protocol (Krause et al., 2023). This systematic and transparent approach ensured that the selection of relevant literature was comprehensive, unbiased, and replicable. The process involved several distinct stages, and a detailed PRISMA flow process as detailed below:

Identification: A comprehensive search across the specified databases such as SCOPUS, Web of Science, PubMed, Google Scholar, and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses initially yielded 500 records. After importing these records into reference management software, 220 duplicates were removed.

1) Screening: The remaining 280 unique records underwent title and abstract screening by two independent reviewers against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This stage resulted in the exclusion of 130 records that were deemed irrelevant to buyer burnout or psychological safety in supply chain contexts.

2) Eligibility: The full texts of 110 potentially eligible articles were retrieved and assessed in detail by two independent reviewers. During this stage, 32 articles were excluded for reasons such as not empirical research, wrong study population, irrelevant outcomes, and full text unavailable.

3) Included: Ultimately, 78 studies met all inclusion criteria and were selected for qualitative synthesis and data extraction.

This structured approach, guided by PRISMA, and summarized below, ensured a clear audit trail of the literature selection process, making the review's scope and limitations transparent: (Table 1)

Table 1. Structured sampling and study selection approach, guided by PRISMA.

PRISMA Stage	Number of Records
Identified	500
Duplicates Removed	220
Screened	220
Excluded	130
Full-text Assessed for Eligibility	110
Excluded	32
Included in Review	78

4. Results

This section presents the synthesized findings derived from the thematic analysis of the included studies, elucidating the prevalence and manifestations of buyer burnout, the assessment of psychological safety levels, their correlation, and qualitative insights into the lived experiences within supply chain management. The thematic analysis systematically identified recurring patterns and salient concepts across the literature. Preliminary findings suggest a nuanced interplay between perceived psychological safety and the prevalence of burnout symptoms among supply chain professionals, with a significant emphasis on the role of leadership

in fostering environments conducive to open communication and reduced emotional exhaustion. Specifically, an organizational culture that champions transparency and support demonstrably correlates with lower incidences of chronic stress and higher job satisfaction in these roles. This is further supported by evidence indicating that strong social support networks and clear, consistent communication from management act as critical buffers against the psychological demands inherent in complex global supply chains, ultimately mitigating burnout (Agrell et al., 2024: p. 742; Golparvar & Parsakia, 2023: p. 160).

4.1. Prevalence and Manifestations of Buyer Burnout

Buyer burnout is increasingly recognized as a significant issue in supply chain management, affecting both individual well-being and organizational outcomes (Kottler et al., 2023; Rossi et al., 2023). This phenomenon is characterized by three core dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, with emotional exhaustion being the most prominent and often the initial symptom (Krause et al., 2023). High-pressure procurement roles, marked by tight deadlines, volatile markets, and complex stakeholder demands, contribute to chronic stress and diminished engagement, further exacerbated by supply chain disruptions such as geopolitical instability and natural disasters (Amin et al., 2024).

Emotional exhaustion manifests as pervasive fatigue, emotional depletion, and stress, leading workers to disengage cognitively and emotionally from their tasks (López-Núñez et al., 2020). It is widely regarded as the most common symptom of burnout, often serving as the first indicator of work-related stress (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Depersonalization, or cynicism, involves a negative attitude toward one's work and colleagues, characterized by resentful detachment, objectification of clients or coworkers, and cynical behaviors (López-Núñez et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020). Reduced personal accomplishment reflects a decline in self-perceived effectiveness, leading to feelings of incompetence, failure, and reduced productivity (López-Núñez et al., 2020). Workers experiencing this dimension often feel they are not achieving meaningful goals or performing effectively (Krause et al., 2023).

Although quantitative data on prevalence are limited, qualitative evidence consistently emphasizes emotional exhaustion as the core and most pervasive symptom of buyer burnout, often emerging first in response to occupational stressors. This underscores the importance of addressing emotional fatigue to mitigate overall burnout in procurement roles.

4.2. Assessment of Psychological Safety Levels

Psychological safety, a critical factor influencing employee well-being and organizational effectiveness, is commonly assessed using tools such as the Psychosocial Safety Climate-12 (PSC-12) or PSC-4, which gauge employees' shared perceptions that their organization prioritizes psychological health and safety (Amodu et al.,

2025). Empirical research consistently demonstrates that higher levels of psychological safety are linked to reduced burnout rates, underscoring its protective role for employees (Bahadurzada et al., 2024). This protective effect operates through the cultivation of an organizational climate where employees feel secure to voice concerns, admit mistakes, and propose new ideas without fear of negative repercussions (Ip et al., 2025). Such an environment fosters proactive problem-solving and innovation, leading to decreased chronic stress and a more resilient workforce (Moriano et al., 2021).

Conversely, a deficiency in psychological safety can exacerbate burnout by creating an atmosphere of fear and reticence, where employees are reluctant to raise issues or seek support, resulting in heightened stress and feelings of isolation (Bernard et al., 2025; Messina et al., 2025). High psychological safety, however, offers enduring benefits that persist even during periods of heightened stress or resource constraints (Bahadurzada et al., 2024). These environments are vital for mitigating psychosocial risks that negatively impact mental health and productivity (Buele et al., 2024).

Measurement Tools: The assessment of psychological safety predominantly involves self-report questionnaires. Among the most widely used is Edmondson's Psychological Safety Scale, which captures perceptions of safety regarding interpersonal risks within teams (Liu et al., 2024). Additionally, instruments like the PSC-12 and PSC-4 evaluate the broader organizational climate concerning psychological health and safety. The Japanese version of the PSC-12 (PSC-12J) has undergone psychometric validation, confirming its reliability (Moriano et al., 2021). Newer tools, such as the 30-item Psychological Safety Inventory, are designed to assess perceptions of support and safety for interpersonal risk-taking, voicing opinions, and idea sharing, with studies reporting acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.77 to 0.81) across samples (Liu et al., 2024). Despite variability in measurement approaches, meta-analyses suggest these tools are generally reliable and valid (Liu et al., 2024).

Qualitative Insights and Findings: Although quantitative scores vary by context, qualitative research provides nuanced descriptions of psychological safety's presence or absence. When present, employees feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of criticism or embarrassment, sharing thoughts, acknowledging errors, experimenting with new ideas, and engaging in open communication (Liu et al., 2024). This environment fosters mutual respect and the belief that individuals can "show and employ themselves" without risking damage to self-image or career (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Conversely, a lack of psychological safety leads to avoidance behaviors such as silence or withholding concerns, which increase stress and feelings of isolation, negatively impacting mental health and well-being (Buele et al., 2024).

Factors Influencing Psychological Safety in Procurement: Several factors influence levels of psychological safety, especially pertinent within procurement environments characterized by high stakes. Leadership and organizational support play pivotal roles; empathetic communication, active listening, and transparency

from management are associated with higher psychological safety (Liu et al., 2024; Buele et al., 2024). Encouraging voice behavior—where employees feel safe to challenge processes, admit mistakes, and offer feedback—is fundamental for fostering psychological safety (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Fairness and transparency in decision-making further reinforce a sense of security; when procurement professionals perceive processes as opaque or dismissive of their input, psychological safety diminishes (Buele et al., 2024).

At its core, psychological safety involves the willingness to take interpersonal risks, such as negotiating assertively or raising vulnerabilities within the supply chain (Scieपुरa & Linos, 2022). Contextual factors also significantly influence psychological safety; leaders can modify aspects of the environment to promote open communication and risk-taking. Studies extending to global virtual teams indicate that psychological safety correlates with behaviors like active listening and reliable promises, which ultimately enhance team performance (Krause et al., 2023).

In summary, psychological safety is a vital organizational attribute that fosters employee well-being, innovation, and resilience. Its measurement through varied instruments and qualitative descriptions reveals its complex, context-dependent nature. Factors such as leadership support, fairness, interpersonal risk tolerance, and contextual influences shape its presence, especially within high-pressure fields like procurement. Cultivating psychological safety is essential for mitigating psychosocial risks and promoting a healthy, productive workforce (Amoadu et al., 2025; Bahadurzada et al., 2024; Buele et al., 2024).

4.3. Correlation between Buyer Burnout and Psychological Safety

The extensive body of research underscores a consistently strong negative correlation between psychological safety and buyer burnout, positioning psychological safety as a vital protective factor in mitigating burnout among clinicians and other professionals (Galanti et al., 2024; de Lisser et al., 2024; Qi & Yu, 2021). This relationship is characterized by higher psychological safety levels fostering healthier work environments and directly reducing burnout symptoms across multiple dimensions.

Studies reveal that increased psychological safety correlates inversely with burnout, meaning that environments where individuals feel secure to express concerns, ideas, or mistakes tend to experience lower burnout rates (de Lisser et al., 2024). A positive psychosocial safety climate significantly diminishes the incidence of buyer burnout by cultivating an enabling environment where employees are free from fear of judgment or reprisal (Alshamsi et al., 2022; Teoh & Kee, 2022). Such environments promote open communication, which is essential because suppressing thoughts and emotions can lead to physiological stress and emotional exhaustion (Kassandrinou et al., 2023).

From the perspective of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, psychological safety functions as a crucial job resource. It buffers the adverse effects of high job demands—such as heavy workloads and emotional strain—that would other-

wise contribute to burnout (Amoadu et al., 2024). By providing a sense of security and support, psychological safety helps employees cope better with job challenges, thereby reducing burnout risk.

The literature emphasizes that psychological safety impacts all three primary components of burnout—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment—but with varying degrees of influence:

Emotional Exhaustion: This component shows the strongest link with psychological safety. Research indicates a significant negative correlation, where higher psychological safety correlates with lower emotional exhaustion (Galanti et al., 2024). The mechanism involves mitigating relational stressors; when employees feel safe to voice concerns about workload or resources, it prevents chronic stress and emotional depletion. Supportive coworker relationships, often fostered in psychologically safe environments, further buffer against emotional exhaustion (Galanti et al., 2024; Kassandrinou et al., 2023).

Depersonalization: While psychological safety may not directly target depersonalization, it indirectly reduces it by encouraging open dialogue and reducing silence driven by fear (Knoll et al., 2018; Sherf et al., 2020). Silence, often caused by fear of negative repercussions, contributes to emotional detachment and cynicism. Environments that promote mutual respect and open communication diminish the need for silence, thereby indirectly decreasing depersonalization and emotional exhaustion (Alshamsi et al., 2022; Teoh & Kee, 2022).

Reduced Personal Accomplishment: Psychological safety indirectly enhances feelings of efficacy and competence. When individuals feel safe to admit mistakes, seek help, and propose ideas, they experience increased mastery and a sense of contribution (Alshamsi et al., 2022; Teoh & Kee, 2022). Conversely, environments lacking safety foster silence and unaddressed issues, which can lead to feelings of inefficacy and failure (Knoll et al., 2018). By fostering open communication, psychological safety aids individuals in achieving goals and recognizing their contributions.

Two critical dimensions underpin psychological safety's protective effects viz voice and silence where psychological safety fundamentally involves the belief that interpersonal risk-taking is safe, enabling employees to speak up about concerns or ideas (de Lisser et al., 2024). While reducing silence is a direct outcome, the willingness to voice concerns—especially when perceived to lead to positive change—is influenced by psychological safety and trust (Sherf et al., 2020). High psychological safety environments encourage proactive voice behaviors, which help address workload or resource issues before they escalate into burnout.

The second dimension which is trust is a foundational component of psychological safety, reflecting a shared belief that team members and leaders support interpersonal risk-taking (Alshamsi et al., 2022; Teoh & Kee, 2022). Trust facilitates open communication, reduces relational stress, and fosters a supportive atmosphere, thereby indirectly mitigating all burnout dimensions.

In summary, the evidence strongly supports psychological safety's role as a cru-

cial buffer against burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion. By creating an environment where open communication, voice, and trust are prioritized, psychological safety alleviates the relational and emotional stressors that contribute to burnout. It functions not only as a direct protective factor but also as an essential job resource within the JD-R framework, helping individuals manage high demands and maintain well-being in demanding work settings.

4.4. Qualitative Insights into Experiences of Burnout and Safety

The review identifies the root causes of burnout among buyers, emphasizing the critical role of psychological safety within organizational settings. Based on interviews and focus groups, it reveals that buyers often attribute their exhaustion to a perceived lack of voice and fairness in decision-making processes, which directly undermines their psychological safety (Galanti et al., 2024). When buyers feel their insights, concerns about workload, or realistic expectations are ignored or that organizational processes are opaque, their sense of security diminishes, leading to emotional exhaustion and detachment (Galanti et al., 2024).

A key factor contributing to burnout is the lack of voice. Buyers express frustration when they believe their professional input is undervalued or dismissed by leadership (Galanti et al., 2024). This suppression often results from fears of negative repercussions, such as being perceived as uncommitted or overly critical (Weiss & Zacher, 2025). Employee silence, driven by such fears, correlates with increased depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and reduced personal achievement (Knoll et al., 2018). Psychological safety, which primarily involves reducing silence, is crucial because environments where employees feel safe to voice concerns about resource constraints or unrealistic expectations can mitigate chronic stressors that lead to burnout (Sherf et al., 2020; Bahadurzada et al., 2024).

Perceived unfairness and lack of transparency further exacerbate feelings of insecurity and emotional distress. When decision-making appears arbitrary or biased, or organizational goals and resource allocations are unclear, buyers experience a sense of unfairness that discourages them from voicing concerns about organizational failures (Galanti et al., 2024; Sciepura & Linos, 2022). This opacity fosters feelings of distrust and detachment, as individuals believe their efforts might go unrecognized or that the system is inherently against them (Amoadu et al., 2024).

The role of leadership is emphasized as pivotal in fostering psychological safety and preventing burnout. Supportive, transparent, and equitable leadership practices significantly buffer relational stressors and emotional exhaustion (Galanti et al., 2024). Leaders who demonstrate empathetic communication, active listening, and genuinely consider buyer input can create a climate of trust and safety (Ma et al., 2024). Such leadership behaviors empower employees, fostering a sense of control and reducing burnout risks (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2021). Leadership is viewed as a vital job resource; security-providing leadership, including servant leadership styles, enhances psychological safety, enabling employees to feel valued

and secure enough to share ideas and admit mistakes without fear (Moriano et al., 2021; Bahadurzada et al., 2024).

Generally, buyer burnout is shaped not only by high job demands but also by the social and psychological climate of the workplace. When employees perceive their voice is suppressed, decisions are unfair, and leadership lacks transparency or support, their psychological safety deteriorates, leading to emotional exhaustion and detachment. Conversely, environments characterized by strong psychological safety, fostered by supportive and transparent leadership, serve as protective mechanisms against burnout, highlighting the importance of organizational culture in employee well-being.

5. Discussion

The preceding analysis underscores a critical lacuna in contemporary supply chain management: the often-overlooked nexus between psychological safety and buyer burnout. This intersection highlights how the shared perception of organizational policies and practices supporting employee psychological health profoundly influences the susceptibility of procurement professionals to burnout (Andersen et al., 2025; Boucher et al., 2024). Specifically, a robust psychosocial safety climate, characterized by management commitment and proactive communication regarding employee well-being, serves as a vital bulwark against emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Galanti et al., 2024; Yulita et al., 2017). JD-R theory posits that job resources are functional in achieving work goals, reducing job demands, and stimulating personal growth and development. Psychological safety, in this context, directly acts as such a resource. It fosters an environment where individuals feel secure enough to engage in interpersonal risk-taking without fear of negative consequences, thereby preventing the accumulation of chronic stress. Such an environment encourages voice behavior, wherein employees feel empowered to speak up about challenges and suggest improvements without fear of reprisal, thereby enhancing both individual well-being and organizational adaptability (Pahng & Kang, 2023). The inverse relationship between psychological safety and burnout is further supported by evidence that indicates a supportive organizational environment fosters proactive employee behaviors, particularly in high-stress sectors (Galanti et al., 2024). This dynamic suggests that investments in cultivating psychological safety yield dividends beyond mere compliance, enhancing operational resilience and mitigating the substantial costs associated with employee turnover and reduced productivity due to burnout (Galanti et al., 2024; Sherf et al., 2020). Moreover, acknowledging the role of perceived impact in fostering voice and psychological safety in mitigating silence underscores the nuanced interplay between these constructs and burnout (Sherf et al., 2020). This is especially relevant in contexts where job demands are high, as adequate resources (like psychological safety and supportive leadership) and a supportive climate can buffer the negative effects of such demands on employee well-being, directly in line with JD-R theoretical propositions (Lee et al., 2022;

Müller et al., 2025). The findings confirm that when psychological safety is low, the impact of job demands is exacerbated, leading to increased burnout

5.1. Implications for Supply Chain Management Practice

Given these insights, and through the lens of JD-R theory, supply chain organizations must strategically integrate psychological safety initiatives into their operational frameworks to effectively combat buyer burnout. This involves moving beyond superficial wellness programs to embed principles of transparency, fairness, and voice—all critical job resources—throughout all procurement processes and team interactions. Practically, this translates into leadership training focused on empathetic communication and active listening, as well as the implementation of feedback mechanisms that ensure buyer input is genuinely considered and acted upon, thereby enhancing available job resources for buyers. Furthermore, establishing clear and equitable performance management systems, coupled with opportunities for employees to co-create their work, can significantly enhance psychological safety (a crucial job resource) and reduce burnout by helping employees manage existing job demands [192#x]. For instance, encouraging buyers to voice concerns about workload or resource constraints without fear of negative repercussions can prevent resource depletion (a consequence of unmanaged job demands) and subsequent emotional exhaustion [32#x]. Moreover, compassionate leadership behaviors have been demonstrated to significantly reduce employee silence, which is a key contributor to burnout, by fostering a psychologically safe environment where concerns can be openly expressed, thus providing a crucial job resource [192#x]. This proactive approach not only mitigates individual distress but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement, as valuable insights from the frontline are integrated into strategic decision-making.

5.2. Limitations of the Study

While this study offers comprehensive insights into the interplay between psychological safety and buyer burnout, interpreted through the JD-R framework, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. These include its reliance primarily on qualitative data, which, while rich in detail regarding specific **job demands** and **job resources**, may not be broadly generalizable across all organizational contexts. Future research employing quantitative methodologies, such as large-scale surveys or experimental designs, could provide statistical validation for these observed relationships and enhance the generalizability of how specific **job demands** and **job resources** interact across diverse supply chain environments. Additionally, the focus on buyer roles, while pertinent, might not fully capture the **job demands** and **job resources** experiences of other critical supply chain professionals, suggesting a need for broader investigation into other roles.

6. Conclusion

The pervasive nature of burnout in contemporary workplaces, exacerbated by tel-

ework and increased **job demands**, underscores the critical need for systemic interventions. Organizations must prioritize not only identifying and treating burnout but also implementing robust preventive measures to mitigate psychosocial risks and foster employee well-being (Demerouti, 2024; Moreno et al., 2025). Addressing job burnout necessitates a multifaceted approach, integrating individual, organizational, technological, and policy-level interventions to create sustainable solutions (Naeeni & Nouhi, 2023). A key component of this preventive strategy involves cultivating psychological safety, as it serves as a critical **job resource** that buffers employees against burnout during times of crisis and chronic stress (Kassandrinou et al., 2023). This **resource** is particularly vital in high-stress professions, such as teaching or healthcare, where expressing concerns without fear of reprisal can significantly reduce emotional exhaustion and foster greater engagement (Bahadurzada et al., 2024; Kassandrinou et al., 2023; Peddie et al., 2025).

7. Recommendations for Mitigating Buyer Burnout

Organizations should prioritize establishing a robust psychosocial safety climate (a key job resource) through explicit management commitment to employee well-being and proactive communication regarding mental health support systems (Amoadu et al., 2025). This commitment can be actualized through transparent policies, consistent leadership modeling, and the provision of adequate resources for mental health support, thereby signaling to employees that their well-being is genuinely valued (Demerouti et al., 2001). Furthermore, continuous training programs focused on stress management and resilience-building, tailored specifically for the unique demands of supply chain roles, can empower buyers with effective coping mechanisms (additional job resources) (Costin et al., 2023; Naeeni & Nouhi, 2023). These recommendations directly aim to increase job resources and personal resources to counteract job demands, in accordance with JD-R theory.

8. Future Research Directions

Future investigations could explore the efficacy of specific organizational interventions aimed at reducing exhaustion (a job demand) and enhancing personal resources within supply chain contexts, given the heterogeneity in past findings and the evolving nature of workplace demands (Bes et al., 2023; Pérez-Marqués et al., 2023). Specifically, studies examining the longitudinal impact of psychologically safe environments (a key job resource) on buyer performance metrics and overall supply chain resilience would provide invaluable insights into the business case for such investments. Further research might also delve into the differential impact of various leadership styles on psychological safety (a job resource) and burnout outcomes (a result of unmanaged job demands) among supply chain professionals, especially considering the global and often distributed nature of these teams.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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