

RESEARCH TITLE**Principal Leadership for a Safe School Environment in Arab Schools in Israel: Toward an Integrated Conceptual Model of Psychological, Social, and Organizational Safety****Maale Mahmoud Bakri¹**¹ An-Najah National University, Nablus, PalestineEmail: s12597438@stu.najah.eduHNSJ, 2026, 7(10); <https://doi.org/10.53796/hnsj710/59>**Received at 10/09/2026****Accepted at 20/09/2026****Published at 01/10/2026****Abstract**

This study develops a conceptual model of principal leadership for a safe school environment in Arab schools in Israel. It treats safety as a multidimensional construct that extends beyond the absence of physical violence to include psychological, social, and organizational safety. The study uses a focused integrative analytical review of peer-reviewed research and international reports related to school climate, educational leadership, school violence, and psychosocial and organizational safety. Because a reproducible record of a comprehensive systematic search is not available, the study does not claim to be a systematic review or to exhaust the literature. The conceptual synthesis yields a proposed model with four interrelated domains: contextually responsive transformational leadership; trust and belonging; risk and incident management; and family–community partnership. The model suggests that school safety is shaped through the interaction of leadership vision, everyday relationships, organizational procedures, communication channels, and learning from incidents within a particular social and cultural context. Its principal contribution is to integrate these domains into a practical framework linking leadership practices to indicators that can be examined empirically. The model remains a conceptual proposition that requires field testing in Arab schools in Israel; it should not be interpreted as an empirical finding about all schools in this context. The study recommends using the model to guide school planning and professional development, followed by future field research to assess its relevance and refine its components.

Key Words: safe school environment; school leadership; psychological safety; school climate; Arab schools in Israel.

قيادة المدرسة لبيئة مدرسية آمنة في المدارس العربية في إسرائيل: نحو نموذج مفاهيمي متكامل للأمان النفسي والاجتماعي والتنظيمي

معالي محمود بكري¹

¹ جامعة النجاح الوطنية، نابلس، فلسطين

بريد إلكتروني: s12597438@stu.najah.edu

HNSJ, 2026, 7(10); <https://doi.org/10.53796/hnsj710/59>

تاريخ النشر: 2026/10/01م

تاريخ القبول: 2026/09/20م

تاريخ الاستقبال: 2026/09/10م

المستخلص

تطوّر هذه الدراسة نموذجًا مفاهيميًا لقيادة مدير المدرسة من أجل توفير بيئة مدرسية آمنة في المدارس العربية في إسرائيل. وتتناول الأمان بوصفه مفهومًا متعدد الأبعاد يتجاوز غياب العنف الجسدي ليشمل الأمان النفسي والاجتماعي والتنظيمي. وتعتمد الدراسة مراجعة تحليلية تكاملية مركزة للبحوث المحكمة والتقارير الدولية المتعلقة بالمناخ المدرسي والقيادة التربوية والعنف المدرسي والأمان النفسي والاجتماعي والتنظيمي. ونظرًا إلى عدم توافر سجل قابل لإعادة الإنتاج لعملية بحث منهجية شاملة، فلا تدّعي الدراسة أنها مراجعة منهجية أو أنها تستوعب الأدبيات كافة. ويسفر التركيب المفاهيمي عن نموذج مقترح يتضمن أربعة مجالات مترابطة: القيادة التحويلية المستجيبة للسياق؛ والثقة والانتماء؛ وإدارة المخاطر والحوادث؛ والشراكة بين الأسرة والمجتمع. ويقترح النموذج أن الأمان المدرسي يتشكل من خلال تفاعل الرؤية القيادية والعلاقات اليومية والإجراءات التنظيمية وقنوات التواصل والتعلم من الحوادث ضمن سياق اجتماعي وثقافي محدد. وتتمثل إسهاماته الأساسية في دمج هذه المجالات ضمن إطار عملي يربط الممارسات القيادية بمؤشرات قابلة للفحص التجريبي. ويظل النموذج مقترحًا مفاهيميًا يتطلب الاختبار الميداني في المدارس العربية في إسرائيل، ولا ينبغي تفسيره بوصفه نتيجة تجريبية تتعلق بجميع المدارس في هذا السياق. وتوصي الدراسة باستخدام النموذج لتوجيه التخطيط المدرسي والتطوير المهني، ثم إجراء بحوث ميدانية مستقبلية لتقييم ملاءمته وتنقيح مكوناته.

الكلمات المفتاحية: البيئة المدرسية الآمنة؛ القيادة المدرسية؛ الأمان النفسي؛ المناخ المدرسي؛ المدارس العربية في إسرائيل.

Introduction

A safe school environment is a foundation for a positive educational experience. It enables students to learn without fear or exclusion and gives teachers a secure space for professional practice and development. A safe school can also strengthen students' sense of belonging and foster relationships based on mutual respect among students, teachers, and school administrators. Accordingly, school safety is not limited to the absence of physical violence; it also encompasses psychological, social, and organizational safety, the quality of relationships, procedural fairness, and the school's capacity to respond to difficulties and incidents.

In Arab schools in Israel, school safety has particular significance because principals operate within a specific social, cultural, and linguistic context and face challenges associated with community pressures, disparities in resources, and overlapping administrative, educational, and community roles. Eldin Salhb et al. (2023) examined teachers' perceptions of the relationship between classroom climate and violence in Arab schools in East Jerusalem. Nassir and Benoliel (2025) examined associations among paternalistic leadership, teacher job satisfaction, and school violence in the Arab educational system in Israel.

School leadership contributes to a safe environment by clarifying expectations, applying procedures fairly, providing reporting channels, supporting teachers, and organizing responses to incidents. A systematic review of 21 studies on safety leadership in education identified three themes: establishing and communicating a clear safety vision, supporting learning and professional capacity-building, and adopting an explicit safety-oriented leadership approach (Mat Lazim et al., 2022). Azeem and Bochaver (2026) offer a comparative example of the relationship between transformational leadership and principals' perceptions of school climate; however, differences between contexts preclude the automatic transfer of their findings to Arab schools in Israel.

Leadership in Arab schools in Israel therefore needs to be analyzed within its linguistic, social, and institutional context rather than through general assumptions about the local community. Local studies have addressed the relationship between school climate, socioeconomic and cultural factors, and exposure to violence (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2005); teachers' experiences and attitudes toward violence (Abd Algani et al., 2020; Eldin Salhb et al., 2023); and associations among paternalistic leadership, teacher job satisfaction, and school violence (Nassir & Benoliel, 2025). These studies provide an important foundation, but they do not, individually, offer a single framework integrating psychological, social, and organizational dimensions within an applied leadership model.

Accordingly, this study proposes a conceptual framework connecting principals' practices with school processes that may support safety. It does not claim that the model has been empirically tested or that its dimensions constitute a validated measure. The study's outputs are presented as the result of an analytical synthesis of the literature, while the need for field research is acknowledged as a limitation of the present work rather than an empirical finding.

Study Problem

The problem addressed by this study lies in the fragmented treatment of safe school environments. Some studies focus on violence or discipline, while others examine school climate, leadership, or employees' psychological well-being. This fragmentation makes it difficult for school principals to translate the available evidence into one practical framework linking leadership vision, trust and belonging, risk management, and partnership with families and the community. Such integration is especially relevant to Arab schools in Israel, while

requiring a distinction between findings from local research and insights cautiously drawn from studies conducted in other contexts.

The study does not claim that relevant research is absent. Rather, it identifies a conceptual and practical synthesis gap: the need to organize separate domains within a coherent conceptual model that can be examined and developed in subsequent research.

Main Research Question

How can a conceptual framework be developed to explain the role of school leadership in supporting a psychologically, socially, and organizationally safe environment in Arab schools in Israel?

Sub-questions

1. What are the principal dimensions that should be considered when school safety is understood as a multidimensional construct?
2. Which leadership practices does the literature associate with building trust and belonging, preventing risks, and responding to incidents?
3. How can these practices be integrated into a conceptual model that takes the social and cultural context of Arab schools in Israel into account?
4. What practical indicators could be used in future research to examine the model's suitability and develop it empirically?

Study Objectives

- To analyze the concept of a safe school environment in light of literature on school climate, leadership, and psychological, social, and organizational safety.
- To synthesize recurring leadership practices in the literature into clear domains that can be interpreted and applied.
- To propose an integrated conceptual model that reflects the context of Arab schools in Israel without generalizing findings from external contexts to these schools.
- To identify practical indicators and research questions that can guide future field studies.

Significance of the Study

Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to educational and administrative literature by presenting an expanded conceptualization of the safe school environment. Rather than reducing safety to the absence of physical violence or incidents, it treats safety as a multidimensional construct encompassing psychological, social, and organizational dimensions. This position is consistent with the review by González et al. (2023), which identified relationships, environment, safety and discipline, and academic aspects among the domains addressed by school-climate measures. Safety therefore cannot be understood separately from the quality of relationships and school policies.

The study also connects educational leadership literature with research on school climate and psychological safety. Whereas previous studies have examined associations between leadership and school violence, including Nassir and Benoliel (2025), this study seeks to develop a model explaining how safety might become part of everyday organizational culture. The OECD report (2019) presents indicators related to students' school lives, including belonging, bullying, and school climate, but does not provide direct evidence of the effectiveness of any particular leadership practice in Arab schools in Israel.

The study's theoretical contribution also lies in its focus on the distinctive linguistic, social, and cultural context of Arab schools in Israel, which may shape relationships among principals, teachers, students, and families. Eldin Salhb et al. (2023) examined teachers' perceptions in Arab schools in East Jerusalem regarding the role of classroom climate in reducing violence. The importance of local context supports the development of frameworks that account for the environment in which they will be applied rather than transferring external models unchanged.

Practical Significance

The proposed model offers an initial practical framework that principals may use when reviewing psychological, social, and organizational safety in their schools. Rather than focusing only on responses after incidents occur, the model draws attention to prevention, safe communication channels, trust-building, fair policies, and teacher training for handling difficulties. Berkowitz (2025) supports the importance of considering social and organizational climate: the study examined associations between teachers' reports of teacher-to-student victimization, teachers' own experiences of victimization, and school-climate indicators, including interpersonal conflict at work, trust in the principal, and job socialization. Its findings do not establish that any single intervention causally reduces violence.

Education directorates and other educational bodies may also use the model when designing training for principals and teachers. Such programs could address shared vision, conflict management, responses to bullying, and family–community partnerships. The review by Mat Lazim et al. (2022) emphasizes the importance of a safety vision, professional capacity-building, and a clear organizational orientation toward safety.

The study also provides a conceptual basis for future qualitative or quantitative field research examining the relationship between leadership practices and students' and teachers' sense of safety. The model could inform the development of questionnaires or interview protocols to assess school conditions, identify gaps between desired and existing practice, and prepare evidence-informed improvement plans.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

Thematic scope: The study focuses on leadership for safe school environments in Arab schools in Israel, particularly the principal's central role in shaping school climate.

Geographical scope: The study focuses on Arab schools in Israel and does not extend its analysis to Jewish schools or other education sectors.

Temporal scope: The study considers the literature available up to the time of preparation of the manuscript.

Methodological scope: The study uses an analytical approach based on a review of literature and content synthesis; it does not include quantitative field data or actual interviews.

Key Terms and Operational Definitions

Safe School Environment

Conceptual definition: A system of relationships, practices, and policies that enables students and teachers to learn and work without fear, exclusion, or threat. The concept includes relational and environmental conditions, safety and discipline, and academic performance (Gonzálvez et al., 2023).

Operational definition: In this study, a safe school environment refers to the extent to which a

principal can strengthen students' and teachers' sense of safety through trust-building, fair policies, risk and incident management, and partnership with families and the community.

Contextually Responsive Transformational Leadership

Conceptual definition: A leadership approach through which a principal develops a shared vision, motivates teachers and students, reinforces ethical values, and develops professional relationships while taking the local community's cultural and social characteristics into account (Azeem & Bochaver, 2026).

Operational definition: Contextually responsive transformational leadership refers to the extent to which a principal communicates effectively, develops a shared vision, supports teachers, reinforces shared values, and considers cultural and linguistic characteristics in daily decisions and practices.

Psychological Safety

Conceptual definition: A shared belief among team members that they can express opinions, ask questions, and report mistakes or concerns without fear of humiliation or social punishment. Edmondson (1999) established this concept in research on work teams. In this study, psychological safety serves as an interpretive lens adapted to the school environment, not as a validated measure.

Operational definition: Psychological safety refers to the extent to which students and teachers feel comfortable expressing views, seeking support, and reporting problems without fear of punishment or exclusion.

Social Safety

Conceptual definition: The quality of relationships within the school, mutual respect and belonging, and the reduction of bullying and exclusion. This dimension is considered within the multidomain conceptualization of school climate described by González et al. (2023).

Operational definition: Social safety refers to the presence of positive relationships and mutual respect between students and teachers, as well as lower levels of bullying and exclusion within the school.

Organizational Safety

Conceptual definition: The school's capacity to establish clear and fair policies and procedures to prevent risks, manage incidents, and support staff and students, consistent with literature on safety leadership in education (Mat Lazim et al., 2022).

Operational definition: Organizational safety refers to the availability of clear school policies and procedures for addressing bullying, conflicts, incidents, and emergencies, and to the extent to which principals and teachers apply these procedures fairly and transparently.

Arab Schools in Israel

For the purposes of this article, Arab schools in Israel are defined as official Arab schools within Israel that serve Arab students and operate within an Arab social and cultural context. This is an operational definition that establishes the scope of the article rather than a definition taken from a single study.

Theoretical Framework

Safe School Environment and School Climate

A safe school environment extends beyond the absence of direct violence. It includes everyday relationships, fairness in the application of rules, a sense of belonging, clear

procedures, and the institution's capacity to manage risks. School climate is broader than safety: it encompasses relational, physical, academic, and organizational dimensions. A review of school-climate measures demonstrated that these instruments address multiple domains, including relationships, environment, safety and discipline, and academic aspects (Gonzálvez et al., 2023). The OECD report (2019) addresses students' school experiences, including belonging, bullying, and climate. Together, these sources support treating safety as a multidimensional construct rather than a single variable.

School Leadership and Safety Practices

School leadership translates the idea of safety into expectations, procedures, and everyday practices by articulating a clear vision, distributing responsibilities, supporting professional learning, and reviewing responses to incidents. Mat Lazim et al. (2022) identify three themes in safety leadership in education: establishing and communicating a safety vision, supporting learning and capacity-building, and maintaining an explicit safety-oriented leadership approach. Leadership styles are also related to staff perceptions of school climate. The proposed model should therefore be understood as a conceptual organization of interrelated practices, not as a claim that one leadership style guarantees safety in every context.

Psychological, Social, and Organizational Safety

In the literature on work teams, psychological safety refers to a shared belief that people can take interpersonal risks, such as asking questions, expressing concerns, or acknowledging mistakes, without fear of humiliation (Edmondson, 1999). In schools, this concept is associated with trusted reporting channels, mutual respect, and staff support. Social safety concerns relationship quality, belonging, and the reduction of exclusion and bullying. Organizational safety involves clarity of roles and procedures, fair handling of complaints and incidents, and mechanisms for follow-up and learning. Research on psychosocial safety climate in schools emphasizes that written policy alone is insufficient; implementation also depends on middle leadership practices and everyday interactions (Cataloni et al., 2026). These concepts shape the analytical framework in this article; they do not constitute a locally validated measure.

Previous Studies

Studies in the Arab Context in Israel

Khoury-Kassabri et al. (2005) aimed to examine the relationship between school climate, social, economic, and cultural factors, and students' exposure to violence in Israel. The study population comprised students in schools serving different cultural contexts, and the national sample included approximately 10,400 students in Grades 7–11 across 162 schools. The researchers analyzed survey data on students' experiences, school climate, and socioeconomic factors. The findings indicated an association between school climate and exposure to violence, alongside the importance of family and neighborhood socioeconomic context. The study remains an important historical reference, but it does not directly describe current conditions.

Abd Algani et al. (2020) aimed to explore teachers' attitudes and feelings toward violence in Arab schools in Israel, including their reactions and ways of expressing them. The study population comprised female teachers in Arab primary schools in northern Israel, and the sample included six teachers. The researchers used a qualitative design and collected data through in-depth, semi-open interviews containing 12 questions. The findings were organized into five major themes, including academic weakness; feelings of alienation and reduced emotional appreciation; a lack of intervention strategies among staff; inappropriate school

relationships; and personal and family factors. The study highlights teachers' experiences as a source of insight into school violence, although its small sample size must be considered when interpreting the findings.

Eldin Salhb et al. (2023) aimed to examine teachers' perceptions of the role of classroom climate in reducing violence in Arab schools in East Jerusalem. The study population comprised teachers working in public and private Arab schools in East Jerusalem, and the sample included 352 teachers: 302 completed a classroom-climate questionnaire and 50 participated in interviews. The researchers used a mixed design combining a questionnaire with semi-structured interviews. According to participants' perceptions, a positive relationship existed between a supportive classroom climate and violence reduction. The study reinforces the importance of classroom climate and relationships, while its findings remain tied to teachers' perceptions within a specific geographical area.

Nassir and Benoliel (2025) aimed to examine associations among paternalistic leadership, teachers' job satisfaction, and school violence in the Arab education system in Israel. The study population comprised teachers in Arab primary schools, and the sample included 350 teachers from 70 schools. The researchers used data from multiple sources and structural equation modeling. In the model, paternalistic leadership was directly associated with school violence but was not similarly associated with teacher job satisfaction; in contrast, teacher job satisfaction was associated with lower levels of violence. These associations alone do not establish a general causal relationship.

Berkowitz (2025) aimed to examine the relationship between teachers' reports of teacher-to-student victimization, teachers' own victimization, and indicators of school social and organizational climate. The study population comprised teachers in middle and high schools in Israel, and the sample included 214 teachers from six Hebrew-language and four Arabic-language schools. The study used a cross-sectional questionnaire design, with bivariate analyses and logistic regression. Teachers' reports of teacher-to-student victimization were associated with a less positive social and organizational climate and higher levels of interpersonal conflict at work. Arabic-speaking teachers were more likely to report this type of victimization than Hebrew-speaking teachers. These findings highlight the relevance of school climate but do not provide a comprehensive assessment of every dimension of school safety.

Benbenishty et al. (2025) aimed to analyze temporal changes in exposure to violence and school climate in Arab and Jewish primary schools in Israel and examine whether these changes varied by socioeconomic status. The study population comprised students in Grades 5 and 6. The sample drew on administrative survey data collected from 2008 to 2019, with the number of schools varying from 751 to 1,189 per year. The researchers conducted a secondary analysis of repeated student surveys. The findings showed reductions in peer victimization and improvements in school-climate indicators over the period; improvements in some indicators were greater in Arab schools and in schools with lower socioeconomic status. The study documents temporal trends but does not, by itself, identify the causes of those changes.

Studies of Leadership and School Climate in Other Contexts

Ababneh (2021) aimed to identify, from teachers' perspectives, the role of school principals in the Irbid Qasaba Directorate of Education in providing a safe school environment. The study population comprised teachers in schools within the directorate, and the sample included 358 teachers during the 2019–2020 academic year. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and used a 40-item questionnaire organized into four domains. The findings

indicated that principals' role in providing a safe school environment was rated highly, with differences in some domains by academic qualification, gender, and years of experience. The study provides a useful comparison, but its ratings should not be transferred directly to the Arab-school context in Israel.

Mat Lazim et al. (2022) aimed to identify effective leadership practices for managing safety in the education sector. The review population comprised published studies on safety leadership in educational institutions, and the analytical sample included 21 studies identified through Web of Science and Scopus. The authors conducted a systematic review following PRISMA guidance and used thematic content analysis. The review identified three main themes: establishing and communicating a safety vision, supporting learning and professional capacity-building, and maintaining an explicitly safety-oriented leadership approach. The review provides a basis for classifying leadership practices, although its scope is broader than the Arab schools addressed in the present article.

González et al. (2023) aimed to identify instruments for measuring school climate and evaluate how these instruments report their psychometric properties for students, teachers, and parents. The review population consisted of published school-climate measurement instruments, and the final sample included 37 instruments that met the inclusion criteria. The authors conducted a systematic analytical review covering four databases: Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC, and PsycINFO. The findings identified four broad domains commonly represented across the instruments: relationships, environment, safety and discipline, and academic aspects. This structure supports a multidimensional understanding of school climate, but does not by itself establish the best ordering of leadership practices.

Azeem and Bochaver (2026) aimed to identify leadership styles used by school principals and explore which styles were most associated with their perceptions of a positive school climate in Pakistan. The study population comprised school principals in that context, and the sample included 20 principals purposively selected from 20 schools. The researchers used an exploratory qualitative design, semi-structured interviews, and hybrid thematic analysis. Transformational leadership accounted for approximately 78% of the analytical codes and was associated in participants' accounts with school management, decision-making, teachers' professional development, and student guidance and support. The study provides comparative evidence but does not justify direct generalization to Arab schools in Israel.

Cataloni et al. (2026) aimed to explore how a school principal and middle managers promote and transmit psychosocial safety climate across school teams in New Zealand. The study focused on one urban secondary school with approximately 70 staff members and 1,000 students, including school leaders and staff working in teams. The researchers conducted a qualitative case study combining document analysis, 26 semi-structured interviews, and three focus groups. The findings indicated that safety priorities do not necessarily pass directly from the principal to teachers; middle managers play a role in translating those priorities into everyday practices and policies at team and individual levels. The study highlights safety as a multilevel process shaped by the institutional context.

Critical Synthesis of Previous Studies and the Research Gap

The reviewed studies agree on the importance of school climate, relationships, leadership practices, and organizational procedures in understanding safety and violence. However, they differ in how safety is defined, their units of analysis, instruments, contexts, and types of evidence. Local studies provide insight into teachers' and students' experiences and into associations among climate, violence, and leadership. Reviews of measurement and leadership identify domains and practices that recur across the literature, while international

studies provide comparative examples that cannot be automatically generalized to Arab schools in Israel. Some studies focus on violence or climate instruments without integrating psychological, social, and organizational safety within a single leadership framework. The contribution of this article therefore lies not in demonstrating a causal relationship or presenting a field-tested model, but in synthesizing these dimensions and practices into an integrated conceptual framework and identifying practical indicators for future empirical examination. Expert review and field testing of the proposed model remain necessary.

Study Methodology

The study adopts a focused integrative analytical review of the literature and develops a conceptual model. This design is appropriate to the research question, which seeks to synthesize dimensions and leadership practices from diverse sources rather than measure the prevalence of a phenomenon in a human sample or test an experimental effect. Because the study did not use a registered systematic-review protocol or maintain a reproducible screening record, it does not describe itself as a systematic review and does not claim to follow PRISMA. The term “analytical synthesis” refers to an organized comparison of published ideas and findings and the development of a conceptual framework from their points of convergence.

Literature Sources and Inclusion Criteria

The review drew on peer-reviewed journal articles, official publisher pages, university repositories, and reports issued by international organizations. Arabic search terms included school leadership, safe school environment, school climate, psychological safety, school violence, risk management, and school–family partnership. Corresponding English terms were also used, including “school leadership,” “safe school environment,” “school climate,” “psychological safety,” “school violence,” “risk management,” and “family–school partnership.” These terms were used to identify sources directly relevant to the research questions; publication details were then checked against publishers’ pages where possible. Available publication information was checked through October 2026.

Sources were included when they were published in a peer-reviewed journal or issued by an official international organization, addressed at least one of the central themes, and provided clear bibliographic details and sufficient information about their purpose, methods, and relevant findings. The review included both recent sources and older works directly relevant to the Arab context in Israel. Khoury-Kassabri et al. (2005) is used as a historical and contextual reference, not as evidence of present-day conditions. The review does not claim to cover everything published and does not report the number of records retrieved or excluded because no saved and verifiable search log was available.

Synthesis and Analytical Procedures

1. Identify the concepts recurring in the research question: leadership; trust and belonging; risk and incident management; family–community partnership; and psychological, social, and organizational dimensions as outcomes or characteristics of a safe environment.
2. Extract information from each source, including its context, study or report type, population or group addressed, relevant findings, and limits on applying those findings to the present topic.
3. Compare similarities and differences among sources without combining statistical results from studies using different measures and samples into a single quantitative estimate.
4. Classify findings into preliminary domains and integrate them into the four proposed model domains where a clear conceptual or practical rationale exists.

5. Formulate practical indicators for each domain, review the coherence of the relationship between each domain and its proposed practices, and identify what requires future field validation.

Standards for Inferential Quality

The conclusions distinguish findings reported in original studies from the interpretations proposed in this article. Findings from one country or educational stage are not generalized to a different context without qualification. Citations were edited to align with verified publication details, and citations that could not be confirmed or adequately support the relevant claims were removed. This constitutes an editorial check of the selected sources, not a comprehensive methodological appraisal of the quality of every study in the field.

Methodological Limitations

The study contains no field data, interviews, or questionnaire and does not estimate the prevalence of safety or violence in schools. It is not a complete systematic review supported by a published protocol and detailed screening record. The resulting model is therefore a conceptual proposal based on a focused synthesis of selected literature. Its components, ordering, and indicators require expert review and field testing in the target schools.

Results: The Proposed Conceptual Model

The analytical synthesis produced a proposed framework comprising four interrelated leadership domains. “Results” here refers to the outputs of the conceptual analysis, not findings from a field study or statistical estimates. The model proposes that psychological, social, and organizational safety does not result from a single measure; rather, it develops through the interaction of leadership vision, relationships, organizational mechanisms, and community communication. The social and cultural context may influence how these domains are implemented, but it should not be used to establish generalizations about all schools or local communities.

Domain One: Contextually Responsive Transformational Leadership

The model positions leadership as the coordinating link among vision, policies, and everyday practice. This domain includes setting clear expectations regarding respect and safety, discussing them with teachers, students, and families, applying rules consistently, providing professional-development opportunities, and reviewing decisions in light of available evidence. The review by Mat Lazim et al. (2022) supports the importance of a safety vision, communication, and professional learning, while the study by Azeem and Bochar (2026) provides a comparative example of the relationship between principals’ perceptions of transformational leadership and school climate. The proposed model adds contextual responsiveness to these practices so that language, community relationships, and differences in school needs are considered without compromising fairness or individual rights.

Contextual responsiveness does not mean excusing harmful behavior or applying different rules based on identity. Rather, it involves interpreting situations fairly, communicating in clear and respectful language, and consulting relevant parties within the limits of their professional roles. Potential indicators for future examination include the clarity of the school safety policy, staff participation in developing it, consistency in procedures, and the presence of periodic implementation reviews.

Domain Two: Trust, Belonging, and Psychological Safety

This domain focuses on the quality of everyday relationships and on whether people feel able to discuss problems without fear of humiliation or retaliation. Individuals’ experiences are

shaped not only by written rules but also by how staff members treat one another and by whether support channels are available. Berkowitz (2025) examined trust in the principal and interpersonal conflict at work among the variables associated with teacher-to-student victimization. Cataloni et al. (2026) explored how psychosocial safety climate is enacted across different leadership levels. These sources support attention to relationships and processes, while their questions and designs differ from those of the model proposed here.

The practices proposed within this domain include listening to concerns, providing confidential reporting channels to the extent permitted by applicable procedures, clarifying complaint-handling processes, prohibiting humiliation and discrimination, and supporting teachers in challenging professional situations. Psychological safety should not be equated with the absence of disagreement or criticism. Rather, it requires the possibility of discussing errors and challenges while respecting individuals and responding to conduct fairly.

Domain Three: Risk and Incident Management

This domain assumes that a safe environment requires procedures that are understandable and actionable both before and after incidents occur. Proposed practices include defining responsibilities, clarifying reporting and referral routes, documenting incidents appropriately, protecting the privacy of those affected, responding proportionately, and reviewing procedures after incidents to identify opportunities for improvement. These practices are consistent with the emphasis on vision, safety orientation, and capacity-building in the review by Mat Lazim et al. (2022), as well as the importance of measuring safety and discipline components identified by Gonzálvez et al. (2023).

The model does not propose that a principal should replace specialists or authorized agencies in safeguarding or emergency matters. School procedures should operate within established regulations and specialized referral pathways. Indicators for future examination include the existence of a communicated plan, staff knowledge of their responsibilities, documentation and follow-up of incidents, and review of recurring problems.

Domain Four: Family–Community Partnership

The school environment is connected to families and the local community through communication about school expectations, students' needs, and the management of some difficulties. The proposed partnership is based on dialogue, clarity, and respect for privacy, together with clear boundaries around the professional responsibilities of the school and family. Partnership should not be reduced to contacting parents only after a problem occurs; it can also include prevention, awareness-raising, coordinated support, and clarification of help-seeking pathways. The OECD report (2019) emphasizes the roles of teachers and families in students' school lives, although applying this principle in the local context requires field research and should not assume that community relationships are identical across schools.

This domain includes identifying appropriate contact persons, providing clear and balanced information, involving families in developing behavioral expectations when appropriate, and coordinating with services and specialists within legal and organizational frameworks. Confidentiality must be protected, and partnership should not become a source of social pressure on affected individuals or lead to unprofessional responses to individual cases.

Table 1. Proposed Model Domains, Leadership Practices, and Indicators for Examination

Model domain	Practices and contribution to safety dimensions	Suggested indicators for field examination
Contextually responsive transformational leadership	A clear safety vision, consistent rules, staff participation, professional role-modelling, and continuous development. This domain supports psychological, social, and organizational dimensions by aligning vision and implementation.	Clarity of the safety policy; staff knowledge of procedures; regular implementation review.
Trust, belonging, and psychological safety	Listening, teacher support, reporting channels, prevention of humiliation and discrimination, and fair complaint handling. This domain supports psychological and social safety.	Staff confidence in reporting; clarity of the complaint pathway; availability of professional support.
Risk and incident management	Defined responsibilities, preventive plans, referral and documentation procedures, incident follow-up, and learning from incidents. This domain supports organizational, psychological, and social safety through clear responses.	Knowledge of procedures; response time; incident documentation and follow-up; review of recurring problems.
Family–community partnership	Preventive communication, shared expectations, coordinated support, and respect for privacy and role boundaries. This domain supports social and organizational safety and facilitates access to support.	Availability of communication channels; regular coordination; clarity about responsibilities and confidentiality.

Interrelationships among the Model Domains

The four domains are not presented as linear stages that begin with the first and end with the fourth; rather, they form an interactive system. Leadership vision defines expectations and responsibilities, trust influences people's willingness to report risks, organizational procedures provide predictable responses, and family–community partnerships support coordination and prevention. Incident follow-up and family feedback may reveal gaps in policies or training, feeding information back into planning and review. Feedback thus connects the domains rather than constituting a separate fifth domain.

Three safety dimensions should be present across all four domains: psychological safety, which concerns the ability to speak up and seek support; social safety, which concerns relationships, respect, and belonging; and organizational safety, which concerns clarity of responsibilities, rules, and procedures. A single practice may affect more than one dimension. A one-to-one correspondence between model domains and safety dimensions should therefore not be assumed; their relationship needs to be specified and tested using future data.

Discussion

The comparison shows that the literature offers neither one definition nor one measure sufficient to capture every aspect of school safety. School climate is multidimensional, while school violence is an important indicator but does not exhaust the concept of safety (Gonzálvez et al., 2023; OECD, 2019). Consequently, responding to incidents, although essential, cannot replace relationships that enable students and teachers to seek help or clear organizational procedures that are expected to be applied fairly.

The model's emphasis on vision and professional capacity is consistent with the themes identified by Mat Lazim et al. (2022). Azeem and Bochaver (2026) provide a comparative example of principals' perceptions of transformational leadership and school climate, while Cataloni et al. (2026) show how middle leadership can translate broad priorities into practical procedures. These studies do not provide direct evidence that the current model is effective in Arab schools in Israel; they are therefore used to interpret the conceptual components, not to claim that the model has been tested.

With regard to the local context, the studies do not support reducing the problem to weak administration alone. Khoury-Kassabri et al. (2005) examined the interaction of school climate and socioeconomic factors with exposure to violence; Abd Algani et al. (2020) and Eldin Salhb et al. (2023) highlighted teachers' perceptions and experiences related to violence and climate; Nassir and Benoliel (2025) examined associations among paternalistic leadership, teacher satisfaction, and violence; and Benbenishty et al. (2025) documented temporal changes in climate and victimization indicators. Together, these findings support the need for a framework attentive to differences in contexts and samples rather than assuming that all schools face the same risks.

The proposed model differs from a list of separate recommendations by explaining the role of each domain and its relationship to the others. Leadership is not merely issuing rules; trust does not mean tolerating harmful behavior; risk management is not limited to documentation; and community partnership does not transfer the school's professional responsibility to families. The model's expected value depends on combining clear expectations, fairness, professional support, prevention, and follow-up.

Nevertheless, this discussion remains a theoretical synthesis rather than an interpretation of sample results or a test of the model. The study design does not allow the relative weight or importance of each domain to be determined, nor does it establish causal relationships among them. The next stage should involve review by experts in educational leadership, measurement, and school safety, followed by field examination using suitable instruments and, where feasible, the perspectives of teachers, students, and families after the required ethical approvals have been obtained.

Proposed Practical Implications

- Include an assessment of the safe school environment in the school's annual plan, with indicators of psychological and social relationships and organizational procedures, rather than relying on an incident log alone.
- Define the responsibilities of the school leadership team and the pathways for reporting, referral, and follow-up; review procedures periodically in accordance with applicable regulations.
- Provide professional development for principals and teachers on active listening, conflict management, incident documentation, privacy protection, and proportionate responses.
- Establish clear and as-safe-as-possible complaint and reporting channels, preserve confidentiality, and inform complainants about procedural steps that can appropriately be

shared with them.

- Build preventive partnerships with parents, community organizations, and specialists while preserving professional boundaries and protecting individuals from pressure or stigma.
- Adapt communication language and procedures to the local school context without compromising fairness or equal application of rules.

Model Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The model is a conceptual proposal developed through a focused review of selected sources; it is not an empirically validated result. The scope of its domains and the indicators within them may change after expert review or data collection. Differences in definitions of safety and school climate, as well as in measurement instruments, preclude assuming direct equivalence among the studies. This version also lacks a comprehensive log of search results and exclusions and a formal assessment of risk of bias across all published studies. It should therefore not be presented as a systematic review or used to infer effect sizes.

Future research could follow three complementary pathways: a qualitative study exploring principals', teachers', students', and families' perceptions of the proposed dimensions; the development of a preliminary measurement instrument followed by appropriate validation and reliability procedures; and a field study across schools in different regions and educational stages to compare the dimensions and assess their suitability. Such studies should document how schools and participants are selected, obtain the necessary approvals, follow data-protection standards, and avoid using the model as an established diagnostic instrument before its validity has been demonstrated.

Conclusion

This study proposes a conceptual model of leadership for a safe school environment in Arab schools in Israel. The model comprises contextually responsive transformational leadership, trust and belonging, risk and incident management, and family–community partnership. It is based on the premise that safety is neither a single procedure nor merely the absence of incidents; it emerges through the interaction of everyday relationships, clear procedures, leadership vision, and cooperation with families and the community. The selected literature highlights the relevance of these domains, but the model requires field testing before its suitability or effectiveness in the target schools can be established.

Recommendations

1. Use the four domains as an initial framework for reviewing school safety policies, not as a validated measure or mandatory standard.
2. Include shared vision, psychological and professional support, procedural fairness, incident management, and learning from incidents in principals' professional-development programs.
3. Establish clear procedures for reporting and addressing problems, and inform staff of their responsibilities, confidentiality boundaries, and referral pathways.
4. Strengthen preventive cooperation with families, communities, and relevant agencies while protecting privacy and preventing stigma or pressure on affected individuals.
5. Conduct a field study in Arab schools in Israel to assess the clarity and relevance of the proposed domains and revise the model in light of empirical evidence and

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