The dynamics of power and psychological safety on team cohesion during interprofessional simulation-based education

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Background

• Negative relationships among providers can affect teams in clinical settings, which can undermine patient safety.¹

• Sources of poor team cohesion include:²,³
  – unequal distributions of power
  – inability to express oneself without fear

Intervention
Research Question

How is **team cohesion** as perceived by ICCS students influenced by:

1. **perceived power distance**—the distribution of power on a team, and
2. **psychological safety**—the belief that one can express themselves without the fear of negative consequences on a team?
Methods

• Students who participated in the ICCS series in 2015-2016 completed a survey after the final session regarding their team experiences.

• Measures included team cohesion\(^3\) (DV), perceived power distance\(^4\) (IV), and psychological safety\(^3\) (IV)

• A partial mediation model was used to analyze the influence of the IVs on team cohesion.


Mediation Model

Perceived Power Distance \(\rightarrow\) Psychological Safety \(\rightarrow\) Team Cohesion

\((-\)) \quad \text{Psychological Safety} \quad \text{Team Cohesion}
Results

• 132 nursing students and 98 medical students across 48 teams completed the posttest measures.

• As greater power distance was perceived between medical and nursing students on a team, ratings of team cohesion decreased both directly and indirectly through psychological safety.

• As ratings of psychological safety increased, so did team cohesion.
Model

Perceived Power Distance \[-.28^*\] Psychological Safety \[.40^*\] Team Cohesion \[-.19^*\]

R sq = .30, F(2,227) = 47.94, p < .001
Total effect of X on Y: -0.30 [-.40, -.20]
Indirect effect of X on Y: -0.11 [-.18, -.05]
Note: Controlled for semester; *p < .001
Limitations

• Cannot infer causation
• Responses were clustered within teams but not statistically accounted for
• Social desirability bias
Implications for IPE Facilitators

• Creating a safe space where learners clearly understand their roles and responsibilities on an interprofessional team will impact the affective nature of team dynamics.

• Facilitators should:
  – Shape team interactions so power distance is minimized amongst disciplines
  – Support environments where students feel safe to speak up without the fear of negative consequences