

Topic: Research for Sustainable and Innovative Food Systems (Food Quality and Safety)

UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS OF PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN IN RELATION TO EMERGING FOOD SAFETY RISKS: AN INTERVIEW STUDY IN FRANCE, GERMANY, HUNGARY, AND THE UK

Overview: This study examines how parents of young children (0-5 years) in the UK, France, Germany, and Hungary perceive, identify and respond to climate-related food safety risks. Semi-structured interviews (n=20 per country) revealed a structural **"Not Me, Not Now" mindset**, underpinned the need for a co-designed risk communication framework to bridge psychological distance among parents, interface with temporal, spatial, social, and hypothetical distance that shape risk perception and the gap between static regulatory controls and sustainability framing and public health concerns. **Keywords:** emerging food safety risk, co-designed risk communication, climate adaptation

Key Concepts

- Threat Multiplier Effect (Tchonkouang et al., 2024)
- Psychological Distance Dimensions (Brügger, A., 2020)
- Optimistic Bias in Risk Perception (Stehr et al., 2022)
- Fragmented Policy Responses (Jensen et al. 2020)



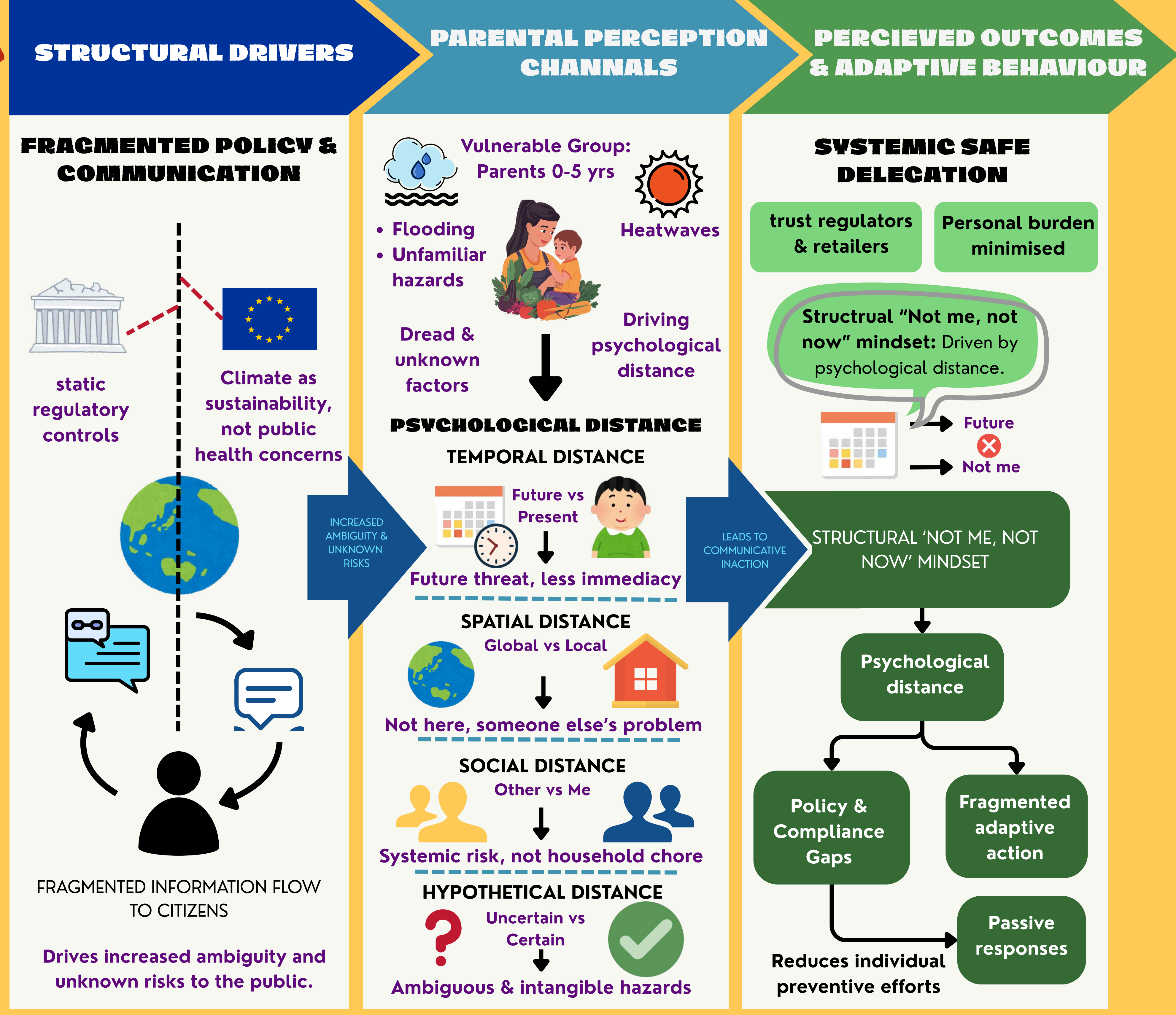
Theoretical Framework

- Citizens may not consider "systemic" food safety risks as being relevant to them (Sari et al., 2025)
- Construal Level Theory explains how psychological distance (temporal, spatial, social, hypothetical) reduces perceived relevance of climate-food safety risks (Brügger, A., 2020).
- Optimistic bias further diminishes personal risk perception (Stehr et al., 2022).



Emerging hazards: antimicrobial resistance within the livestock production sector, mycotoxin contamination of supply chains, microplastics contamination of aquaculture systems, and shifting pathogen and microbial ecologies from climate events.

Conceptual Framework: Psychological Distance



KEY FINDINGS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- BARRIER IS STRUCTURAL:** Identified communicative inaction, not just a lack of awareness. Policy responses must shift from **Information-led to governance-led.**
- REDUCE OPTIMISTIC BIAS:** Use targeted communication to increase the relevance of climate-related risks to individuals and vulnerable groups, countering "green bias".
- CO-DESIGNED RISK COMMUNICATION:** Parents require communication tailored, actionable, and empowering. Enable identification of emerging risks via lived experiences.
- ADAPTIVE REGULATORY APPROACHES:** Shift from "static" controls to increasingly dynamic risk frameworks, driven by the shifting demand for more adaptive environmental health approaches.

POLICY GAP
 Current EU food safety communication fails to bridge psychological distance. Tailored, health-focused messaging needed.



Reference

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