

## **LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR CULTURE CHANGE IN PATIENT SAFETY: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This literature review explores leadership strategies that foster culture change to improve patient safety in healthcare organizations. Articles published between 2020–2024 were systematically reviewed using thematic synthesis. The review highlights that transformational, authentic, and ethical leadership styles are the most influential in strengthening safety culture. Critical strategies include effective communication, interprofessional collaboration, safety checklists, and layered leadership systems. Findings indicate that leadership is a determinant factor in reducing adverse events and promoting sustainable culture change. The study concludes that context-specific and continuous leadership development is necessary to sustain patient safety improvements.

**Key words:** patient safety; leadership strategies; culture change; healthcare; transformational leadership

### **INTRODUCTION**

Patient safety has emerged as a central focus of global healthcare systems due to its significant impact on morbidity, mortality, and financial burden. According to WHO (2021), unsafe care remains one of the top 10 leading causes of death and disability worldwide. Establishing a strong patient safety culture is essential, as it directly influences clinical outcomes and organizational performance.

Leadership plays a critical role in embedding patient safety into organizational culture. Evidence demonstrates that leaders shape staff attitudes, encourage error reporting, and promote teamwork, which collectively drive safety outcomes (Tsaour & Lee, 2022). Despite this, many healthcare institutions still face challenges in sustaining safety initiatives, often due to inconsistent leadership strategies, hierarchical structures, and limited engagement with frontline workers.

Previous studies highlight that transformational leadership fosters empowerment, authentic leadership promotes transparency, and ethical leadership strengthens accountability (Yodang & Nuridah, 2020; Abdurrouf et al., 2023). However, there remains a knowledge gap in how these leadership approaches interact within diverse cultural and organizational settings.

Purpose of the study: This literature review aims to synthesize recent evidence (2020–2024) on leadership strategies that effectively drive culture change in patient safety.

### **METHOD**

This review used a narrative literature review approach. Articles were identified from peer-reviewed databases between 2020–2024 using keywords such as *patient safety*, *leadership strategies*, *culture change*, and *healthcare leadership*.

Inclusion criteria:

- Published in English or Indonesian, 2020–2024
- Focused on healthcare settings
- Discussed leadership strategies related to patient safety culture

Exclusion criteria:

- Opinion papers, editorials, and non-peer-reviewed articles

Analysis: Articles were synthesized using a thematic analysis approach, categorizing findings into leadership models, communication & teamwork, organizational tools, and system-level strategies

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **1. Leadership Models for Patient Safety**

- Transformational leadership improves staff engagement, motivation, and error reporting (Jurnal Ilmu & Teknologi Kesehatan, 2023).
- Authentic leadership creates a climate of trust and openness, enhancing psychological safety (Yodang & Nuridah, 2020).

- Ethical leadership reinforces accountability and professionalism in healthcare practice (Pacenko et al., 2024).

## 2. Communication and Teamwork

Effective communication is repeatedly identified as a critical leadership function. Pacenko et al. (2024) found that 69% of successful strategies emphasized communication and 58.6% highlighted teamwork. Leaders who encourage interprofessional collaboration reduce hierarchy barriers and strengthen shared responsibility for patient safety.

## 3. Organizational Tools and Processes

Safety tools such as the WHO Surgical Safety Checklist significantly improve compliance and reduce preventable harm when leaders enforce their use (Setiawan & Kusumapradja, 2024). Embedding such tools into daily routines reflects leadership commitment to safety.

## 4. System-Level and Layered Leadership

Tsaur & Lee (2022) emphasized the importance of layered leadership, where safety principles are cascaded from top executives to frontline managers. This multi-level engagement ensures sustainability of safety culture.

**Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Literature (2020–2024)**

Author(s) & Year	Country	Leadership Focus	Key Findings
Yodang & Nuridah (2020)	Indonesia	Transformational, authentic, ethical	Identified 3 leadership models effective in patient safety culture
Tsaur & Lee (2022)	Taiwan	Safety leadership	Advocated layered leadership for sustainable safety culture
Abdurrouf et al. (2023)	Indonesia	Leadership roles (decision, interpersonal, information)	Leadership roles significantly influence safety culture
Jurnal Ilmu & Teknologi Kesehatan (2023)	Indonesia	Transformational leadership	Strongly linked to improved safety practices
Setiawan & Kusumapradja (2024)	Indonesia	Safety checklist leadership	Leadership use of checklists improves compliance & reduces incidents
Pacenko et al. (2024)	Brazil & Portugal	Safety culture strategies	Communication (69%) & teamwork (58.6%) key to safety culture

## CONCLUSION

Leadership is a central determinant in achieving sustainable patient safety culture change. Evidence from 2020–2024 highlights that transformational, authentic, and ethical leadership consistently improve patient safety outcomes. Effective strategies include fostering communication, promoting teamwork, implementing safety tools, and practicing layered leadership. Organizations should prioritize leadership development programs that integrate these strategies within their cultural and structural contexts. Future research should focus on evaluating leadership interventions across different healthcare systems to identify context-specific best practices.

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