



**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
(IJEMP)**
www.ijemp.com



**EXPLORING LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS THAT SHAPE
SAFETY PERFORMANCE:
A TRANSFORMATIONAL LENS**

Nadwatul Husna Mustapha^{1*}, Mazlina Che Malek²

¹ Department of Management and Business, Universiti Islam Selangor, Malaysia
Email: nadwatul@edu.my

² Department of Management and Business, Universiti Islam Selangor, Malaysia
Email: mazlinamalek@umk.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 17.06.2025

Revised date: 15.07.2025

Accepted date: 28.08.2025

Published date: 24.09.2025

To cite this document:

Mustapha, N. H., & Che Malek, M. (2025). Exploring Leadership Behaviours That Shape Safety Performance: A Transformational Lens. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Management Practices*, 8 (31), 637-649.

DOI: 10.35631/IJEMP.831043

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Abstract:

This study examines the role of transformational leadership in improving employee safety through elements of motivation, guidance, enforcement, support for employees, and monitoring. Transformational leadership plays a key role in influencing employee safety behaviour and performance. By providing inspiration, guidance, and positive role models, transformational leaders can strengthen safety practices in the workplace, as well as ensure employees consistently adhere to established safety procedures. Furthermore, the study also emphasizes the importance of support to workers in the form of ongoing training, adequate rest, and recognition of their efforts, all of which contribute to improved workplace safety. Additionally, effective safety policy enforcement and monitoring, achieved through awareness campaigns, play a crucial role in ensuring employee compliance. The results of this study demonstrate that transformational leadership enhances employee motivation and strengthens the enforcement of safety policies, ultimately leading to an overall increase in employee safety.

Keywords:

Transformational Leadership, Employee Safety, Motivation, Enforcement, Employee Support

Introduction

Workplace safety is a critical aspect in the healthcare sector, particularly in hospitals that serve the community (Suji & Sowmiya, 2022). Nurses, at the frontline of the healthcare system, play a vital role in ensuring the quality and safety of patient care. However, they are often exposed to high safety risks, including injuries, accidents, and unsafe working environments (Imes et al., 2022). To address this challenge, various safety policies have been formulated and implemented in hospitals. Although these measures are intended to protect employees and improve workplace safety, reality reveals that the achievement of safety performance among nurses is still at a less-than-satisfactory level (Prihatiningsih et al., 2025).

One of the main reasons for this issue is the lack of effective leadership in supporting the implementation of safety policies. Although safety policies are established with good intentions, the absence of strong transformational leadership has prevented safety performance among nurses from reaching its maximum potential (Lievens & Vlerick, 2014). Transformational leaders, who play a crucial role in inspiring, motivating, and guiding employees towards compliance with safety practices, often struggle to meet these expectations (Wu et al., 2022). This weakness results in a significant gap between the safety policies set and their practical implementation in the field. As a result, the risk of accidents and injuries remains high, thus affecting the well-being of nurses and the overall quality of healthcare services (Romero-Saldaña, 2024).

This study aims to investigate this issue through an analysis of transformational leadership and its role in shaping the safety performance of nurses. The main objectives of this study are to identify factors in transformational leadership that influence the achievement of safety performance among nurses and to analyze the relationship between transformational leadership and safety performance among nurses in hospitals. Furthermore, this study aims to identify critical leadership elements and explore how these elements can be utilized to enhance safety practices in the workplace.

Additionally, this study provides important contributions to various parties. In terms of the government, the findings of this study can be used as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of existing safety policies and designing new, more effective strategies. This approach aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize the importance of occupational safety and health as crucial components in social and economic development. This study also greatly benefits the community, especially nurses who are directly involved in implementing safety policies. Through an understanding of the role of transformational leadership, nurses can obtain better guidance to improve their safety in the workplace.

For the healthcare industry, this study offers practical guidance for hospital management in designing more focused leadership training and development programs. By training leaders who can inspire and motivate, hospitals can create safer work environments, thereby increasing their productivity and reputation as high-quality healthcare institutions. Moreover, from an academic perspective, this study contributes to the literature on the relationship between transformational leadership, safety climate, and safety performance, particularly in the context of public university teaching hospitals. These new findings are important for broadening theoretical understanding and providing a basis for further research in this area.

The scope of this study includes nurses in public university teaching hospitals. Teaching hospitals were chosen because they provide a unique work environment, where nurses are involved in patient care as well as in clinical training and research. This context makes teaching hospitals an ideal location to understand how transformational leadership influences safety performance in complex and challenging work environments. Furthermore, this study focuses on nurses because they are the group most affected by weaknesses in the implementation of safety policies and often face great challenges in adapting to dynamic work demands.

This article is organized into several main sections to provide a clear and systematic explanation of this study. The first section provides the background of the study, including the problem statement, objectives, and significance of the research. The second section describes the research methods, with a focus on the qualitative approach employed to gather data.

The third section presents the study's results and a discussion of the implications of the findings for both theory and practice. The article concludes with a summary of the key findings and recommendations, which include practical steps to improve workplace safety as well as suggestions for future research.

Overall, this study aims to provide insight into the role of transformational leadership in enhancing workplace safety, particularly among nurses in a public university teaching hospital. By building a solid theoretical foundation and contributing to better practice, this study seeks to benefit all stakeholders, from the government to the healthcare community.

Literature Review

The literature review aims to analyze the relationship between transformational leadership, safety climate, and safety performance, with a focus on nurses in public university teaching hospitals. Public teaching hospitals offer a distinctive work environment where nurses deliver patient care and participate in research and clinical training activities (Azmi et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding the role of transformational leadership in shaping nurses' safety practices is important to ensure both employee and patient safety, as well as to improve organizational effectiveness. This section will discuss the main relevant themes, identify research gaps, propose a conceptual framework, and analyze the main findings and controversies in the existing literature.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that inspires employees to reach their full potential and drive positive change within the organization. Sutanto, H., Utami, Y., and Diantoro, A. K. (2021) defined transformational leadership through four main dimensions: charismatic influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. In the context of healthcare, transformational leaders can generate enthusiasm among employees by inspiring and encouraging them. The charismatic influence dimension involves the leader's ability to serve as a role model, while inspirational motivation encompasses the leader's capacity to communicate a clear vision and motivate employees to achieve it. Conversely, intellectual stimulation emphasizes the leader's ability to encourage employees to think critically, while individual consideration focuses on paying special attention to the needs and well-being of each employee (Cesilia et al., 2025).

On the other hand, previous studies have demonstrated that transformational leadership can influence various aspects of an organization, including work culture, communication effectiveness, and employee commitment to organizational goals. In the healthcare sector, transformational leaders are often associated with increased compliance with safety protocols. A study by Mullen et al. (2011) revealed that transformational leaders who demonstrate concern for employees' welfare can increase employee perceptions of the importance of safety, thereby reducing the risk of workplace accidents (Hamdan et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of transformational leadership also depends on the work context, including organizational challenges such as work stress and resource scarcity.

Safety Climate

Safety climate refers to employees' collective perceptions of an organization's values, policies, and safety practices. Idris et al. (2022) emphasized that a positive safety climate is crucial for achieving better safety performance. Employees' perceptions of an organization's commitment to safety can influence their level of compliance with safety measures. In the healthcare context, safety climate involves factors such as safety training, effective communication, and management support for safety compliance (Derahim et al., 2021).

Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that leaders play a critical role in shaping the safety climate. Leaders who provide clear guidance, adequate resources, and demonstrate a commitment to safety can enhance employee perceptions of the safety climate (Prasanna et al., 2024). In hospitals, transformational leaders can motivate employees to understand the importance of safety through an approach that involves inspiration and motivation. Wang et al. (2023) suggested that safety climate acts as a mediator linking leadership behaviour to employee safety performance. However, a positive safety climate alone is insufficient if it is not supported by consistent practical actions from leaders and employees.

Safety Performance

Safety performance refers to employee behaviour in complying with safety procedures and the safety outcomes achieved, such as reduced accident rates. In particular, safety performance can be divided into two main categories: safety compliance and safety participation. Safety compliance involves meeting basic safety requirements, such as the use of personal protective equipment, whereas safety participation entails additional employee efforts to support a safety culture in the workplace (Srimarut & Mekhum, 2020).

Moreover, studies have revealed that employee safety performance is influenced by various factors, including organizational culture, management commitment, and leadership support (Fang et al., 2024). In this context, transformational leadership plays a key role in shaping safe behaviour through consistent motivation and support. Chen et al. (2024) suggest that leaders who prioritize employee welfare can increase employee engagement in safety activities, thereby contributing to better safety performance.

Relationship Between Transformational Leadership, Safety Climate, and Safety Performance.

Previous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between transformational leadership, safety climate, and safety performance (Wang et al., 2023; Draghici et al., 2022). Effective transformational leaders motivate employees to adhere to safety procedures and create a stronger safety culture within the organization. Moreover, a study by Mullen et al.

(2011) reported that transformational leadership could increase employee perceptions of the importance of safety, thereby promoting compliance with safety protocols (Lyubykh et al., 2022).

However, there is a gap in understanding how these elements interact in specific contexts, such as teaching hospitals. For example, quantitative studies often fail to capture employee experiences that can provide a deeper insight into the challenges and opportunities in implementing transformational leadership to improve safety performance. Additionally, although many studies emphasize the role of safety climate as a mediator, there is still a lack of qualitative evidence supporting this relationship in the healthcare context.

Research Gaps

Several research gaps have been identified in the existing literature. To begin with, most studies on transformational leadership and workplace safety use a quantitative approach, leaving room for in-depth qualitative studies (Clarke, 2013, p. 22). A qualitative approach can provide a better understanding of how employees, particularly nurses, experience and evaluate the role of transformational leadership in shaping their work safety (Zohar & Luria, 2005).

Subsequently, there is a lack of studies focusing on teaching hospitals (M. A. Ismail et al., 2024). Teaching hospitals have a more complex work environment as they combine elements of patient care, research, and clinical training (Kagawa et al., 2022). These factors necessitate distinct leadership approaches, which have not been thoroughly explored in the existing literature (Benmira, S., & Agboola, M., 2021).

Moreover, although safety climate is often cited as an important variable in the relationship between transformational leadership and safety performance (Draghici et al., 2022), there is a lack of studies examining its mediating role in the healthcare context (Z. Ismail et al., 2022). Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by providing a deeper qualitative perspective.

Conceptual Framework Development

Based on the literature review, the conceptual framework proposed in this study involves three main elements: transformational leadership, safety climate, and safety performance. Transformational leadership acts as an independent variable that influences safety climate, while safety climate acts as a mediating variable that links transformational leadership with safety performance. Safety performance, in turn, is the dependent variable that encompasses safe behaviours and safety outcomes.

This model suggests that effective transformational leaders can increase employees' perceptions of the organization's commitment to safety, thereby motivating them to adopt safe behaviours. This relationship provides a foundation for examining how transformational leadership can be applied to enhance safety practices in healthcare organizations.

Key Findings and Controversies

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing workplace safety. For example, a study by Clarke (2013) reported that leaders who demonstrate support and concern for employee well-being can increase compliance with safety procedures. However, there is controversy about the effectiveness of transformational leadership in certain situations (Tusianah et al., 2023). Factors such as job

stress, limited resources, and a weak organizational culture can hinder leaders from implementing transformational approaches effectively (Tusianah et al., 2023; Akdere & Egan, 2020).

Additionally, although safety climate is often considered an important element in the relationship between leadership and safety performance, some studies have demonstrated that its impact may vary according to the organizational context (Asad et al., 2021; Saleem & Malik, 2022). Therefore, this study aims to provide new insights into how this relationship occurs in the context of a teaching hospital.

Conclusion

The body of literature suggests that transformational leadership, through its influence on safety climate, can improve employee safety performance. However, there is a gap in understanding how these elements interact, particularly in the context of healthcare.

Data Collection

Data collection in this study is conducted through two main methods: in-depth interviews and observation. In-depth interviews were conducted with five nurses working in a public university teaching hospital. The interviews were conducted semi-structured, which provided the researcher flexibility to explore important topics in depth, while ensuring that all key issues relevant to the study were discussed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes for each participant, and the questions asked were structured to reveal their views on transformational leadership and its impact on safety.

In addition to interviews, observation is also conducted as an additional method to collect data. This observation involves direct observation of the interactions between nurses and their leaders in daily work situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This observational method provides a richer context, allowing the researcher to understand how transformational leadership is applied in actual workplace practice. Conversely, qualitative inquiry can provide an in-depth understanding of health communication issues and processes, offering evidence-based guidance for addressing key challenges in healthcare delivery and promotion, which helps answer the research objectives more effectively. Qualitative methods, such as grounded theory, have provided evidence-based guidance to address key challenges in the delivery and promotion of health care in hospitals (Ngenye & Kreps, 2020).

Sampling

This study employs purposive sampling as a sample selection strategy, where five nurses are selected based on certain criteria relevant to this study. The selection criteria include work experience in a public university teaching hospital and involvement in daily operations that require adherence to safety procedures as well as experience working with leaders who practice a transformational leadership style.

Purposive sampling was chosen as it allows the researcher to select participants who can provide the most meaningful and relevant information about the issue being studied (Campbell et al., 2020). Notably, it has also been stated that purposive sampling improves methodological rigor and trustworthiness of data and results, addressing four aspects of trustworthiness. A sample size of five people is considered sufficient because, in qualitative research, depth of data is more important than quantity (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021). Each participant provides a

unique perspective, which helps the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. Additionally, the small sample size also allows the researcher to conduct a more detailed data analysis, consistent with the Basic Qualitative Inquiry approach (Wutich et al., 2024).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study is done through the process of coding and thematic analysis. Data obtained from interviews and observations were coded manually using Microsoft Word software. Shahvaroughi et al. (2022) stated that interviews can effectively collect detailed eyewitness accounts, regardless of the interview setting, making them a valuable tool for investigation. However, the coding process involved identifying the main themes that emerged from the interview transcripts and observations, where the data were categorized according to issues related to the study's objectives (Zhou et al., 2022). Following the coding process, a thematic analysis is conducted to identify patterns and relationships among the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The selection of coding and thematic analysis techniques is suitable for this study as it allows the researcher to analyze the data in depth and systematically (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, coding helps researchers organize the data better, while thematic analysis enables them to identify the relationships between emerging themes and relate these to relevant theories (Coates et al., 2021). Hence, this approach also enables the researcher to understand the context in which the studied phenomenon occurs, which is crucial in understanding the role of transformational leadership in influencing safety climate and safety performance (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted following all necessary ethical considerations. Before the interview was conducted, written consent was obtained from all participants, who were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the interview procedure, and their right to withdraw at any time without any implications. Data confidentiality is carefully safeguarded, and participants' identities are encrypted to ensure that no personally identifiable information is disclosed. This study has also received approval from the university's ethics committee, ensuring that it is conducted by strict research ethics standards.

Data Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, several strategies were used. First, data triangulation is achieved by utilizing various data sources, including interviews and observations, to ensure that the study's findings are consistent and reliable. Subsequently, member checking is conducted by sharing interview transcripts with participants to ensure the accuracy and validity of the information collected. Following this, the researcher also reflects on personal bias and their role in the process of data collection and analysis, to ensure that data interpretation is done objectively.

Methodological Conclusions

Overall, the methodology employed in this study is designed to ensure that it aligns with the set objectives and provides in-depth answers to the research questions. A qualitative approach through Basic Qualitative Inquiry allows the researcher to explore in depth the role of transformational leadership in influencing the safety climate and the safety performance of

nurses. With a combination of data collection techniques, including interviews and observations, as well as data analysis through coding and thematic analysis, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. A strict ethical approach and measures to ensure the validity and reliability of the data make this study a valuable contribution to the existing literature.

Findings

The results of this study provide an in-depth picture of the role of transformational leadership in influencing the safety and work performance of nurses in a public university teaching hospital. The interviews conducted with five participants produced several main themes relevant to the objectives of this study. To analyze these findings, data analysis is conducted through coding and thematic analysis techniques, which help identify patterns and relationships between emerging themes.

Based on the interviews, it was revealed that the majority of participants considered transformational leadership to be a crucial element in achieving workplace safety. The first participant emphasized that leaders who act as role models and give motivation can encourage nurses to comply with safety policies. Similarly, a third participant added that constant monitoring by leaders and provision of adequate safety training also increased compliance with safety procedures. This suggests that transformational leaders, who serve as both role models and coaches, can effectively create a safe working environment.

Despite the recognition of the importance of transformational leadership, some participants criticized the lack of delivery and enforcement of safety policies by leaders. For instance, the second participant stated that leaders do not play a significant role in encouraging compliance with safety procedures, citing that no action is taken even if procedures are violated. Additionally, the fourth participant asserted that leaders tend to focus more on work performance than safety, which causes employees to place less value on the importance of safety. Hence, this suggests that leaders' weaknesses in delivering and enforcing policies can lead to neglect of workplace safety.

Furthermore, the participants also emphasized several challenges that hinder the implementation of safety in hospitals. The third and fourth participants stated that the high workload and fatigue resulting from shift work leave nurses vulnerable to the risk of injury and accidents. The first participant admitted that the lack of workforce made it impossible for them to comply with safety procedures. Additionally, the fourth participant highlighted the issue where the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is not aligned with the reality of work in the field, causing nurses to prioritize meeting work demands over safety.

Moreover, the third participant suggested that transformational leaders should give recognition to nurses who work safely and successfully as a way to motivate them. Similarly, this aligns with the opinion of the fifth participant, who asserted that a leader who is firm and sets an example will more easily obtain compliance from nurses. Motivation and recognition, when combined with proper enforcement, can increase safety awareness and drive employees to work more safely.

Overall, the results of the study demonstrate that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring safety in the workplace. However, deficiencies in the delivery and enforcement of safety policies by leaders, as well as work challenges such as high workload and fatigue, pose significant obstacles to security implementation. Additionally, the motivation and recognition of employees who work safely are crucial factors that transformation leaders must prioritize. Therefore, this study underscores that effective transformational leadership, which includes motivation, enforcement, and recognition, is key in strengthening the safety culture in hospitals.

Furthermore, this study provides an in-depth view of the role of transformational leadership in influencing the safety and work performance of nurses in a public university teaching hospital. Through the interviews conducted, several important themes were identified, indicating that transformational leadership is a crucial element in ensuring workplace safety. Study participants asserted that leaders who act as role models, motivators, and enforcers of safety policies can encourage higher compliance among nurses.

For example, one participant noted that leaders who provide motivation, guidance, and effective enforcement play a crucial role in ensuring that nurses work safely and efficiently. This demonstrates that transformational leadership promotes safety and ensures that safety policies are followed through firm enforcement actions. However, some participants voiced concerns about the deficiencies in the delivery and enforcement of security policies by their leaders. One participant asserted that although safety policies are in place, leaders do not play a significant role in encouraging compliance with safety procedures, and no action is taken when procedures are violated. This suggests that weaknesses in the delivery and enforcement of safety policies by leaders can result in a neglect of safety in the workplace.

In addition, this study identified the main challenges faced by nurses in implementing safety, including high workload and fatigue resulting from shift work. These factors make nurses more vulnerable to the risk of injury and accidents. One of the participants admitted that the lack of workforce and the pressure to complete tasks quickly often resulted in the neglect of safety procedures. In this context, transformational leadership is seen as essential in supporting nurses by understanding and addressing these challenges, as well as providing the necessary support to ensure safety remains a priority.

Although the importance of transformational leadership in ensuring workplace safety is acknowledged, unexpected and contradictory findings have also emerged. For example, one participant stated that in certain situations, transformational leadership had no significant effect, possibly due to the inactivity of leaders in promoting and enforcing security policies. Additionally, some participants noted that leaders sometimes become obstacles when they prioritize achieving organizational goals over the safety and well-being of employees. This suggests that transformational leadership that is not balanced between achieving organizational goals and employee safety may lead to the neglect of safety aspects.

In conclusion, this study underscores that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring workplace safety, particularly in complex hospital environments. Transformational leaders, who function as motivators, guides, and enforcers, can help increase compliance with safety policies and reduce the risk of injuries and accidents among nurses. However, to achieve success in the implementation of safety in the workplace, leaders need to balance between the

achievement of organizational goals and employee safety, as well as pay attention to the challenges that nurses face in carrying out their duties safely.

Conclusion:

This study has provided a deep insight into the role of transformational leadership in influencing the safety and work performance of nurses in a public university teaching hospital. The results of the study demonstrate that transformational leadership plays a significant role in ensuring workplace safety, particularly through the motivation, guidance, and enforcement implemented by leaders. Furthermore, the study participants consistently emphasized that leaders who act as role models, provide motivation, and enforce safety policies can encourage higher compliance among nurses. Therefore, this suggests that transformational leadership is an important element in creating a strong safety culture in hospitals.

Moreover, the findings of this study also reveal weaknesses in the implementation of transformational leadership, particularly when leaders fail to communicate and enforce security policies effectively. This weakness can lead to the neglect of safety, especially when leaders prioritize the achievement of organizational goals over the safety of employees. This situation poses a serious challenge as nurses often face high workloads and fatigue due to shift work, which in turn increases the risk of injuries and accidents at work. Therefore, effective transformational leadership must include a deep understanding of these challenges and provide the necessary support to ensure employee safety is maintained.

Furthermore, this study provides an important contribution to the field of occupational safety management and leadership, particularly in the context of the health sector. It expands the understanding of how transformational leadership can influence workplace safety and emphasizes the importance of striking a balance between achieving organizational goals and ensuring employee safety. Additionally, this study also highlights the importance of motivation and recognition as tools that leaders can use to increase safety awareness and ensure employees comply with safety procedures.

Overall, this study emphasized that transformational leadership is crucial in ensuring workplace safety, while also emphasizing that leaders must be more sensitive to the challenges faced by nurses in fulfilling their duties. The contribution of this study to the occupational safety management literature is significant, as it provides guidance to hospital leaders on how a transformational approach can be applied more effectively to manage worker safety. This study also offers opportunities for further research, particularly in understanding how transformational leadership can be utilized to overcome challenges that hinder effective safety implementation in the workplace.

Acknowledgements

Thank Allah, I express my gratitude to Allah SWT, as with His permission, I was able to complete this writing. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my beloved family and friends, who have always provided moral support and love throughout this period. Not forgetting the university, where I gained knowledge and valuable experience. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the writing of this, whether directly or indirectly. Your contributions mean a lot to me. Thank you.

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