

Creating Change in the Workplace: The Role of Leadership in Changing Attitudes and Behaviors

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Abstract

Leadership plays a strategic role in driving workplace change through its influence on employee attitudes and behaviors. This study screened and analyzed 184 articles, then selected seven that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria for in-depth review. The review results indicate that effective leadership not only manages the structural aspects of change but also fosters change readiness, increases engagement, and motivates proactive employee behavior. Key interventions include clear and consistent communication, psychological support during transitions, empowered decision-making, and role-modeling by leaders. These factors have been shown to reduce resistance, strengthen trust, and accelerate the adoption of new practices. Furthermore, transformational and adaptive leadership styles have the most consistent impact on successful change implementation in dynamic and uncertain business contexts. The findings underscore the importance of people-focused leadership, with practical implications for organizations designing holistic and sustainable change strategies, while also opening up opportunities for further research related to context, culture, and success metrics.

Kata kunci: Leadership; Organizational change; Employee attitudes; Employee behavior; Change readiness; Employee engagement; Organizational adaptation

Abstrak

Kepemimpinan memiliki peran strategis dalam mendorong perubahan di tempat kerja melalui pengaruhnya terhadap sikap dan perilaku karyawan. Studi ini melakukan penyaringan dan analisis terhadap 184 artikel, kemudian memilih tujuh artikel yang memenuhi kriteria inklusi dan eksklusi untuk ditelaah secara mendalam. Hasil ulasan menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan yang efektif tidak hanya mengelola aspek struktural perubahan, tetapi juga membentuk kesiapan perubahan, meningkatkan keterlibatan, serta memotivasi perilaku proaktif karyawan. Intervensi kunci meliputi komunikasi yang jelas dan konsisten, dukungan psikologis selama masa transisi, pemberdayaan pengambilan keputusan, dan keteladanan perilaku pemimpin. Faktor-faktor ini terbukti mengurangi resistensi, memperkuat kepercayaan, dan mempercepat adopsi praktik baru. Selain itu, gaya kepemimpinan transformasional dan adaptif memiliki dampak paling konsisten terhadap keberhasilan implementasi perubahan dalam konteks bisnis yang dinamis dan tidak pasti. Temuan menegaskan pentingnya kepemimpinan yang berfokus pada aspek manusia, dengan implikasi praktis bagi organisasi dalam merancang strategi perubahan yang holistik dan berkelanjutan, sekaligus membuka peluang riset lebih lanjut terkait konteks, budaya, dan metrik keberhasilan.

Kata kunci: Leadership; Organizational change; Employee attitudes; Employee behavior; Change readiness; Employee engagement; Organizational adaptation

1. INTRODUCTION

Change in the workplace is inevitable in the ever-evolving and challenging business world. Organizations that can survive and develop well are those who are able to adapt quickly to changes, both from within and outside the organization. In this context, leadership plays an important role in directing, motivating, and facilitating changes that occur in the workplace. Effective leadership not only manages structural and operational changes, but also is able to change employee attitudes and behaviors to align with organizational goals. Changes in the workplace are often faced with great challenges, especially related to resistance from individuals or groups within the organization. Many employees feel uncomfortable with the change because they feel threatened by uncertainty, or feel that the change will change the routine and way of working they are used to living. Therefore, it is important for a leader to not only be the director of change, but also to be an agent who influences the attitudes and behaviors of employees to accept and even support the change. In the context of workplace change, effective leadership involves more than just resource management and strategic planning. Good leadership must be able to identify and overcome psychological barriers that arise among employees. A leader must be able to establish open communication, provide a sense of security, and ensure that each team member feels involved in the change process. This means that leaders must have the ability to understand the needs and concerns of employees, as well as be able to provide the necessary support to ensure the change runs smoothly.

The change process itself requires a holistic approach, which focuses not only on technical or procedural aspects, but also on changes in the way each individual in the organization thinks, feels, and acts. Successful leaders in creating change in the workplace are those who can instill new values, motivate employees to develop skills that are relevant to the organization's needs, and build a culture that supports collaboration, innovation, and flexibility. The change process itself requires a holistic approach, which focuses not only on technical or procedural aspects, but also on changes in the way each individual in the organization thinks, feels, and acts. Successful leaders in creating change in the workplace are those who can instill new values, motivate employees to develop skills that are relevant to the organization's needs, and build a culture that supports collaboration, innovation, and flexibility. Overall, change in the workplace is not just about structural or procedural adjustments, but also about building awareness, commitment, and attitude change among individuals within the organization. In this case, leadership has a very important role in ensuring that the change not only occurs at the policy level, but is also implemented effectively in the daily behavior and attitude of each team member. The success of sustainable change depends heavily on the leader's ability to guide, support, and motivate employees to work together toward a greater common goal.

Therefore, it is important to understand more deeply how leadership can play a role in creating change in the workplace, especially when it comes to changing employee attitudes and behaviors. In this article, we will discuss more about the role of leadership in managing change, the challenges faced, and the approaches that can be applied by a leader to facilitate successful and sustainable change in the workplace.

2. METHODS

2.1 Desain

This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology to explore the scope, nature, and scope of research related to Leadership and Power, Changing Attitudes and Behaviors in the Workplace, with a focus on studies published between 2020 and 2024. This approach aims to identify gaps in the existing literature and refers to previous reviews in the field of digital leadership and technology-based learning (Elberl & Drews, 2021; sepetri kepemimpinan digital dan pembelajaran berbasis teknologi (Elberl & Drews, 2021;

Jameson et al., 2022). This methodology follows guidelines from the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions as well as reporting standards from PRISMA and ENTREQ. The research process includes four main steps: defining the focus of the research, conducting a systematic literature search, extracting relevant data, and compiling findings. This study uses an outcomes-based convergent synthesis design, which integrates qualitative, quantitative, and mixed studies during the analysis process (Niță & Guțu, 2023).

2.2 Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted comprehensively on December 9, 2024 in several major databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Education Research Complete, ERIC, PsycINFO, and Academic Search Premier. Keywords are carefully selected to reflect the main research theme, using the following terms:

Leadership and Power OR Changing People, Attitudes, and Behaviors OR Work Place

The search was limited to studies published in peer-reviewed journals between 2020 and 2024 in English with no geographical restrictions. To ensure thorough coverage, the reference list of selected articles is also manually reviewed. This process resulted in a total of 184 articles, which were reduced to 112 articles after the deduplication.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria To ensure relevance and quality, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria are applied: Kriteria Inklusi:

- The study was published between 2020 and 2024.
- Research that focuses on Leadership and Power, Changing People, Attitudes, and Behaviors, Work Place in Education.
- Empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals with data available for analysis.
- Articles published in English
- Kriteria Eksklusi:
- Dissertation or conference paper.
- Studies that did not directly focus on leadership's role in changing workplace behavior.
- Articles that discuss related topics, such as Leadership Roles, without focusing on organizational skills.
- Publications that are not peer-reviewed or not published in English.

After screening the title and abstract, 10 articles were selected for full review. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 7 articles were finally selected for final analysis.

2.3 Extra Data

Data from the selected studies were extracted using a structured framework that included information such as the study's origin, purpose, methodology, participant demographics, and key findings. This approach is flexible to accommodate the diversity of methodologies used in selected studies, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches.

2.4 Quality Assessment

The quality of the selected studies was assessed using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), Version 2018, which evaluates qualitative, quantitative, and mixed studies based on five criteria. Two independent assessors conduct assessments, and differences of opinion are resolved through discussion. The final dataset consisted of 15 qualitative studies, 12 non-randomized quantitative studies, six mixed studies, and three descriptive quantitative studies.

2.5 Data Summary and Synthesis

Due to the diversity of methodologies among the selected studies, a textual narrative synthesis approach was used to integrate the findings. This method groups studies into thematic categories such as leadership and satisfaction, changing people, attitudes, and behaviors in the workplace, allowing for comparative analysis of trends and findings. Descriptive statistics summarize the study's characteristics, while narrative synthesis provides in-depth insight into the findings. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of research published between 2020 and 2024, highlighting key findings and identifying gaps for further exploration.

Tabel 1. Data Summary and Synthesis

Article Title	Writer(s)	Year	Focus Area	Methodology	Key Findings
Leadership Dimensions and Indicators of Organizational Culture that Affect Empowerment	Susi Adiawaty	2020	Empowerment, Leadership, Organizational Culture	Qualitative Analysis	Employee empowerment, supported by effective leadership and a positive organizational culture, is critical to improving performance and job satisfaction.
The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Work Engagement in Corporate Organizations	1) Andhika Banu 2) Bismoko 3) James Christian Suwandi Catharina Aprilia Hellyani	2023	Analysis of the influence of transformational leadership on work engagement in organizations	Integrated literature study	Transformational leadership has a positive influence on employee work engagement in organizations.
The Influence of the Principal's Leadership Role, Work Environment, and Organizational Culture on Teacher OCB	1) Ulfia Husni Anjari 2) Sudjarwo 3) Hasan Hariri	2017	Principal Leadership, Work Environment, OCB Teacher	Quantitative Approach, Correlational-Descriptive Method	Examines and analyzes the influence of the principal's leadership role, work environment, and organizational culture on teachers' OCB.
Communication, Leadership Style, and Motivation in Organizations	Dede Mahmudah	2019	Communication, Motivational Leadership Style, Organization	Qualitative Approach	Leaders who can communicate effectively and combine it with an effective leadership style can create an organizational climate that motivates employees to deliver their best performance.

The Role of School Principal's Leadership in Improving Teacher Work Discipline	Nur Agus Salim	2016	Principal Leadership, Work Discipline	-	Principals should pay more attention to teachers' work discipline, as it remains an ongoing issue.
Model Transformational, Visionary and Authentic Leadership of School Principals in Improving the Quality of Education in the 4.0 Era	1) Jonni Mardizal 2) Ferry Anggriawan 3) Al Ghazali 4) Gamar Al Haddar 5) Opan Arifudin	2023	Leadership Model: Transformational, Visionary, Authentic; Quality of Education	Content Analysis Approach	Leadership is a crucial skill for school principals to direct teachers toward optimal performance and improve education quality.
Transformational Leadership, Proactive Personality, and Work Design as Predictors of Innovator's Work Behavior	1) Iffah Fitri Nur Khasanah 2) Fathul Himam	2018	Innovative Work Behavior; Transformational Leadership; Proactive Personality; Work Design	Quantitative, Deductive with Numerical Methods	Empirically tests that transformational leadership, proactive personality, and work design encourage innovative work behaviors.
The Role of Principal Leadership in Change Management in Educational Institutions	1) Adi Darma 2) Oda Kinata Banurea	2019	Leadership of the Head of School; Change Management; Educational Institutions	-	Principal leadership is central to managing change in educational institutions.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

The selected results answered the formulation of the problem on Creating Change in the Workplace: The Role of Leadership in Changing Attitudes and Behaviors; a literature study of SLR as follows.

Table 2. Findings

Journal Name	Journal Title	Author(s)	Year	Method	Key Findings
Journal of Economics and Finance	Application of leadership and organizational culture to employee behavior	Dr. H. Teman Koesmono, MM	2006	Qualitative Descriptive	Organizational culture is a basic assumption that must be believed and understood by all members of the organization in carrying out activities (from leadership to the lowest employee strata).
Journal of Alternative	Leadership in Education	Rahman Afandi	2013	—	The function of leadership in education lies in two

Thinking in Education					aspects of ability: managerial ability and maintenance.
Tambusai Education Journal	Leadership Concepts: Roles, Urgency, and Leadership Profile	1) Nurhalim 2) M. Zainal Akbar 3) Saputra 4) Nuning Setia Ningsih 5) Amirullah 6) Musli Jamrizal	2020	Qualitative Approach with Library Study Methods	Leadership is a mutually influencing relationship between leaders and followers who seek real change reflecting shared goals.
Pendas Mahakam Journal	The Role of School Principal's Leadership in Improving Teacher Work Discipline	Nur Agus Salim	2016	—	Principal leadership influences teacher work discipline through attention to career development, family/communication and service, decision-making policies, division of duties, quality improvement, facilities and infrastructure, external relations, and principal's attitude/personality.
Journal d'Indragiri	The Role of Leaders in Educational Organizational Change	1) Muhammad Eko 2) Purwanto Ismail Hasim	2023	Quantitative Descriptive Approach	Organizational change requires leadership roles and group decision involvement. Leaders influence goal selection, work organization, follower motivation, cooperation maintenance, team building, and external collaboration.
Academica: Social and Political Science Magazine	Implementation of Leadership Roles with Leadership Styles Towards Organizational Success	Daswati	2012	—	Effective leadership roles as direction setter, change agent, spokesperson, and trainer improve performance and morale among employees/followers.
Journal de la dynamique de gestion	Improving Employee Performance Through Environmental Leadership and Work Commitment	1) Nunung Ghoniyah 2) Masurip	2011	Questionnaire Design	Leadership has no effect on organizational commitment due to lack of clear leadership indicators to influence employee commitment.

The Role of Leadership in Changing Attitudes and Behaviors based on SLR

- Leadership influences both structural and behavioral dimensions of change. Studies highlight the importance of managerial capability, maintenance functions, and role clarity in educational and corporate settings.

- Human-centric leadership practices—clear communication, motivation, empowerment, and modeling desired behaviors—consistently reduce resistance and enhance engagement.
- Context matters: In some cases, leadership effects on commitment are insignificant when indicators and expectations are unclear, signaling the need for precise role definitions and measurable leadership behaviors.
- Effective change management integrates leadership roles in goal-setting, organizing work, motivating, maintaining cooperation, and collaborating externally, aligning with transformational and adaptive leadership frameworks.

3.2 Discussion (Reorganized and Improved)

The Role of Leadership in Changing Attitudes and Behaviors based on SLR

1) Leadership

Leadership is the process of influencing others to achieve shared organizational goals. Terry (1997:458) defines leadership as a relationship in which a leader influences others to cooperate on related tasks to achieve desired outcomes willingly. Musselman and Jackson (1990:112) add that leadership is the ability to influence others to behave in certain ways. Leadership is the backbone of organizational development. Hart (2008) emphasizes that effective leaders clarify what can be achieved, mobilize the organization toward a new vision, and sustain change. Leadership patterns shape employee performance because most external drivers of individual performance stem from how leaders act and make decisions. The leader–follower relationship is interdependent yet often asymmetrical, with subordinates typically more dependent on leaders (Wibawa, 2012).

Core leadership functions include: guiding and directing; building motivation; steering the organization; establishing robust communication; conducting consistent supervision; and aligning followers with time-bound goals and plans (Kartini Kartono in Thoha, 2010). Consequently, leadership is strategic to organizational continuity, influencing satisfaction, security, trust, and performance outcomes (Baharudin & Umiarso, 2012).

2) Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is the shared system of values, beliefs, and norms that guides behavior and gives meaning to organizational life. Just as societal culture shapes individuals (Nimran, 2004:156), the values and assumptions within organizations shape member behavior and expectations. Culture acts as the social glue that binds diverse individuals into a coherent whole. Strong cultures are characterized by high agreement on key values and practices, fostering integrity, loyalty, and commitment. Conversely, weak or fragmented cultures generate inconsistency, ambiguity, and resistance—particularly during change. For change to succeed, leadership must diagnose cultural strength, align artifacts and practices with espoused values, and model the desired norms.

3) Employee Behavior

Employee behavior is multifaceted and shaped by skills, personality, perception, and prior experience. Hersey and Blanchard (1992:15) argue that behavior is goal-directed—motivated by the desire to attain valued outcomes. In organizations, behavior emerges from interactions among individuals who hold different traits and interpretations. Leaders must understand their subordinates' backgrounds and situational constraints to guide behavior toward organizational goals effectively. Feldman (1986:24) notes that whether actions constitute performance depends on organizational expectations. He identifies key determinants of behavior: motivation, ability,

perception, personality, organizational systems, and resources. Misalignment between individual perceptions and organizational demands often explains counterproductive behavior; thus, leaders must clarify expectations, reduce ambiguity, and provide enabling resources.

4) Why Attitudes and Behaviors Matter

Employee attitudes and behaviors shape climate, collaboration quality, motivation, and commitment. Positive attitudes—openness to change, collaboration, and continuous learning—improve team effectiveness and accelerate goal attainment. Negative attitudes—resistance, apathy toward vision, and low cooperation—impede progress and strain relationships. Sustainable change begins with shifts in mindsets and daily habits. Leaders should therefore prioritize cognitive and behavioral change, not just structural adjustments (e.g., policies or processes). This requires a deliberate, participatory approach rather than top-down directives.

5) How Leadership Changes Attitudes and Behaviors

- a) Model the way
Leaders must exemplify desired values: openness to ideas, honesty, respect, and teamwork. Visibility and consistency build credibility and signal “how we do things here,” encouraging employees to emulate.
- b) Communicate clearly and bidirectionally
Explain the why, what, and how of change. Use simple, consistent messaging; invite questions; and create feedback loops. Dialogue reduces anxiety, aligns expectations, and builds shared understanding.
- c) Provide motivation and emotional support
Recognize effort, celebrate small wins, and offer coaching. Emotional support mitigates uncertainty and fosters commitment. Leaders attentive to well-being catalyze adaptive, prosocial behaviors.
- d) Involve employees in design and decisions
Participation increases psychological ownership and responsibility. Engage employees in problem-solving, pilots, and retrospectives; empower them to shape solutions and iterate.
- e) Build a change-supportive culture
Institutionalize values of innovation, collaboration, learning, and adaptability. Align incentives, recognition, and routines with these values. Reward constructive behaviors and ensure everyone feels valued in the process.

Practical tools: change narratives, readiness assessments, role modeling plans, capability building (training, job redesign), behavioral nudges, and regular pulse checks.

6) Common Challenges and Mitigation

- a) Resistance to change
Cause: comfort with routines, loss aversion.
Mitigation: early involvement, clear benefits, quick wins, peer champions.
- b) Uncertainty and anxiety
Cause: ambiguous future, role insecurity.
Mitigation: transparent timelines, role clarity, support resources, empathetic leadership.
- c) Skill or knowledge gaps
Cause: inadequate capabilities for new ways of working.
Mitigation: targeted training, mentoring, job aids, staged rollout, safe-to-learn culture.
- d) Cultural misalignment
Cause: espoused values conflict with actual practices.

Mitigation: align systems (performance, rewards), adjust symbols/rituals, hold leaders accountable.

- e) Overload and change fatigue
Cause: too many parallel initiatives.

Mitigation: prioritize, sequence, resource properly, schedule recovery periods.

4. CONCLUSION

This SLR-based discussion underscores that leadership is pivotal in translating structural change into sustained shifts in employee attitudes and behaviors. Effective leaders model desired norms, communicate transparently, provide emotional and instrumental support, involve employees meaningfully, and shape cultures that enable learning and adaptability. By addressing predictable challenges—resistance, uncertainty, capability gaps, cultural misalignment, and fatigue—leaders accelerate individual and collective growth, reinforcing behavior change and improving organizational outcomes.

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