

In my experience as a nurse, I have worked in both a blame culture and a culture of safety. In a blame culture, mistakes were often met with punitive measures, and there was a significant fear of repercussions. For example, during my early years at a particular hospital, any medication error, regardless of its severity, would lead to immediate disciplinary action. This environment created a sense of fear and reluctance to report errors, as staff were more concerned about protecting themselves than improving patient safety. Conversely, in a culture of safety, which I experienced at a later stage in my career, the focus was on understanding why errors occurred and how to prevent them in the future. At this institution, we had regular debriefing sessions where errors were discussed openly without fear of punishment. This approach fostered a more collaborative environment where the primary goal was to enhance patient care and safety.

In the blame culture environment, I was indeed afraid to complete incident reports. The fear stemmed from the potential for disciplinary action and the stigma associated with making mistakes. Reporting an incident felt like admitting personal failure, which could lead to negative evaluations and even job insecurity. However, in the culture of safety, this fear was significantly reduced. The emphasis was on learning from mistakes rather than punishing them. Incident reports were seen as opportunities for improvement rather than grounds for blame. This shift in perspective made it easier for me and my colleagues to report incidents, knowing that the information would be used constructively to enhance patient care and safety protocols (Afaya et al, 2021).

Healthcare organizations can incentivize staff to report errors and near misses by creating a non-punitive reporting system and recognizing staff contributions to patient safety. One effective strategy is to implement a “Just Culture” framework, which balances accountability with a focus on learning and improvement. This approach encourages staff to report incidents without fear of