

Leadership, organizational culture, and work culture as determinants of employee performance: The mediating role of organizational commitment in a maritime vocational institution

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the influence of leadership, organizational culture, and work culture on performance through organizational commitment. Research that explores the roles of leadership, organizational culture, and work culture in shaping employee performance within vocational education settings, particularly maritime vocational schools, remains limited and therefore requires further investigation. Vocational institutions possess organizational and work cultures that tend to differ from academic institutions, which represents the novelty of this study. A quantitative causal approach was used to test relationships among variables, and a survey method was applied for data collection. Data were obtained from employees of the Politeknik Transportasi Sungai, Danau dan Penyeberangan Palembang, involving 141 participants as a saturated sample. Analysis was conducted using Variance-Based Structural Equation Modeling. The findings show that work culture enhances employee performance, although it does not produce a significant effect on organizational commitment. Organizational culture strengthens commitment, which subsequently improves performance. Leadership also contributes to strengthening commitment, yet does not directly influence performance. Organizational commitment increases performance and mediates the relationship between organizational culture and performance, but does not mediate the relationships involving work culture or leadership and performance. The study highlights that improving employee performance is more effectively achieved through a positive and consistent organizational culture, supported by leadership practices that encourage commitment. Organizational commitment emerges as a crucial element in developing psychological attachment that promotes higher performance.

Keywords: Employee performance, Leadership, Organizational commitment, Organizational culture, Work culture.

1. Introduction

In the current era, with organizational dynamics continually evolving and the rise of digitalization, strong human resources can provide flexibility and the ability to adapt to both internal and external organizational changes Fitriani, et al. [1]. Tiwow, et al. [2] explain that human resources play a critical role in building and maintaining a positive organizational culture. The values, work ethics, and behaviors demonstrated by employees create a healthy and productive work environment, which ultimately supports organizational success. Skilled, creative, and dedicated human resources can become a key competitive advantage for organizations. Employees not only perform operational tasks but also contribute to innovation and service improvement [3].

Mulang [4] further explains that individual and team performance directly affect organizational performance. Skilled and motivated human resources can enhance productivity, innovation, and efficiency in daily operations. Human resources are directed toward achieving organizational performance in alignment with the organization's vision, mission, and strategic objectives. This ensures

that the organization remains on track to develop according to its planned targets. Performance can be defined as a set of behaviors or actions carried out by individuals in relation to their tasks and responsibilities within an organization. It reflects an individual's ability to utilize their potential to generate meaningful contributions. Human resource performance is a crucial element that contributes to achieving an organization's strategic goals. Achieving performance requires essential elements, one of which is leadership. In an era of disruption and rapid technological development, educational organizations are required to align with these changes. Leadership is regarded as vital in managing organizational change in education. Hilman and Abubakar [5] indicate that leadership is essential to enhancing competitiveness.

In the era of disruption and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, leadership is regarded as a representation of leadership styles within change management. This form of leadership emphasizes innovation, adaptation, and empowerment, elements that are highly relevant in an environment marked by constant transformation and complex challenges. Kalkan, et al. [6] note that leadership fosters an organizational culture that is flexible and responsive to change. Leaders encourage continuous learning and dynamic development among employees, which is critical in a period when technology and organizational structures can shift rapidly. Gözükarar and Şimşek [7] add that leadership prioritizes individual development by providing support, training, and challenges designed to cultivate each employee's full potential. In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, where digital competence and creativity are essential, human resource development becomes a key driver of organizational success.

In disruptive conditions, engagement and collaboration across teams and individuals are vital. Leaders promote strong collaboration by cultivating positive relationships, building trust, and involving all parties in decision-making processes [8]. Although leadership is largely shaped by internal attributes of the leader, such as vision, charisma, and the capacity to inspire, its effectiveness also depends on interactions with employees and overall organizational dynamics. One of the factors that shapes these dynamics is organizational culture. Organizational culture consists of shared values, beliefs, norms, and behavioral patterns that guide how employees work, interact with one another, and relate to the external environment Musbikah, et al. [9]. Rosalia [10] explains that a positive organizational culture can enhance motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction. Employees who feel supported and valued within the existing culture tend to be more productive and achieve higher performance. Firanti, et al. [11] further emphasize that a strong organizational culture provides a framework for managerial decision-making and strategic direction. Leaders who align with this culture are more effective in guiding teams. Given its substantial influence on employee performance, organizational culture warrants further scholarly investigation.

In addition to organizational culture, workplace culture also plays a significant role in shaping employee performance. Workplace culture refers to a set of shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms practiced by members of an organization within the work environment Beno [12]. Toscano, et al. [13] emphasize the importance of a positive workplace culture in motivating employees to work more effectively and efficiently. A supportive and collaborative work environment enhances employee engagement and motivation. Khairiah, et al. [14] note that a workplace culture fostering open communication, recognition of contributions, and a healthy work-life balance can improve employee satisfaction and engagement. A positive workplace culture reduces stress and fatigue while strengthening loyalty.

A well-implemented workplace culture has a substantial impact on improving both individual and organizational performance. Such a culture encourages the development of proactive behaviors and a performance-oriented mindset among human resources. Improvements are evident not only in the speed of task completion but also in the enhanced quality and standardization of outputs. Furthermore, an effective workplace culture establishes broad and transparent communication networks throughout the organization, promoting openness and collaboration among employees. Values such as cooperation, mutual support, and a sense of belonging become fundamental to workplace interactions, reinforcing

team solidarity in achieving shared objectives. At the same time, the implementation of workplace culture fosters a responsive attitude toward errors, ensuring that each issue is identified and addressed quickly and efficiently. This creates an environment that is adaptive to external developments and accelerates the organization's ability to adjust to changing conditions.

Organizations require commitment in carrying out activities so that members develop strong bonds and a sense of responsibility toward shared objectives. Employees with a high level of organizational commitment tend to work harder and remain focused on achieving organizational goals. Such employees demonstrate greater involvement in tasks and responsibilities, contributing to improved performance. Organizational commitment also fosters a work environment grounded in mutual trust between employees and management, which encourages collaboration, open communication, and cohesive teamwork.

Previous studies have extensively examined leadership, with much of the research centered on the private sector or corporate settings, such as in Saleem, et al. [15]. However, investigations into the influence of leadership styles in the public sector, nonprofit organizations, or diverse cultural contexts remain limited. Contextual variations may shape the acceptance and implementation of leadership practices by leaders and employees, ultimately affecting performance outcomes. A considerable portion of the literature focuses on the direct relationship between leadership and performance, as seen in studies by Izzati and Mulyana [16] and Maris, et al. [17]. Research exploring mediating variables remains relatively scarce. Factors such as intrinsic motivation, self-confidence, commitment, organizational support, and individual employee characteristics, including personality traits, have not yet been examined comprehensively.

Many studies have examined the general influence of organizational culture on performance, such as in Haini [18] and Wulandari and Nugroho [19]. However, research that explores specific types of organizational culture, such as innovation-oriented, compliance-oriented, or collaborative cultures, and the corresponding impact on performance, remains limited. Further investigation is needed to understand how different forms of culture influence particular aspects of employee and organizational performance. Existing research predominantly highlights the effect of organizational culture on overall organizational outcomes, while the influence of culture on individual performance, as well as individual responses to the prevailing culture, has not been extensively explored.

Job satisfaction reflects conditions that promote employee performance, meaning that institutions fostering satisfaction among personnel tend to achieve higher performance levels. Recognizing satisfaction as a representation of performance is essential for organizations seeking to design strategies that prioritize outcomes while acknowledging the importance of employee well-being in task execution.

The urgency of this research is grounded in the significant role of employee performance in achieving the goals of vocational higher education institutions, particularly at the Polytechnic of River, Lake, and Ferry Transportation (Poltektrans SDP), Palembang. As an institution responsible for producing human resources for the water transportation sector, employee performance strongly influences the effectiveness of operational activities and the management of educational programs. However, optimizing the performance of civil servants at Poltektrans SDP Palembang presents several challenges shaped by internal factors such as leadership, organizational culture, workplace culture, and organizational commitment. Effective leadership serves as a key determinant in cultivating a strong organizational culture and supporting optimal performance. Within an educational bureaucracy, an appropriate leadership style directly affects motivation, engagement, and productivity among employees. Additionally, the existing organizational culture and workplace culture influence behavioral patterns and work practices in daily operations. A positive workplace culture strengthens collaboration, efficiency, and innovation, thereby enhancing both individual and team performance.

2. Method

This study employs a quantitative approach with a causal research design. A quantitative approach is a research method that emphasizes the measurement and analysis of numerical data to test hypotheses or answer research questions objectively [20]. Causal research aims to identify cause-and-effect relationships between variables. In this type of research, the objective is to understand how changes in one variable (independent variable) produce changes in another variable (dependent variable) [21].

This study examines the influence of leadership, organizational culture, and workplace culture on employee performance, with organizational commitment serving as a mediating variable. This approach is appropriate for identifying causal relationships between the independent variables (leadership, organizational culture, and workplace culture) and the dependent variable (employee performance). Data will be collected through questionnaires distributed to employees of the Polytechnic of River, Lake, and Ferry Transportation Palembang and subsequently analyzed using statistical methods, specifically path analysis, to determine the significance and strength of relationships among the variables.

The population of this study consists of employees at the Polytechnic of River, Lake, and Ferry Transportation in Palembang. This population is selected because each member is directly involved with and has firsthand experience regarding the variables under investigation, making the population suitable for providing relevant data to test the hypotheses. The sampling technique applied in this study is a saturated sampling technique, in which the entire population is included as the sample. A saturated sample refers to a sampling method that includes every member of the population. The institution has a total of 141 employees, and all individuals within this population are included as research respondents.

3. Result

The outer model is the measurement model in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) used to assess the relationship between indicators and latent constructs. This model evaluates indicator validity and reliability through several tests, including convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity reflects the degree of alignment among indicators used to measure a latent construct, meaning that the indicators should exhibit strong correlations. Convergent validity demonstrates the ability of indicators to consistently measure the same concept. Convergent validity is indicated by a loading factor value of ≥ 0.70 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of ≥ 0.50 . The results of the loading factor assessment are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Loading Factor Test Results.

Indicator	Workplace Culture	Organization Culture	Leadership	Employee Performance	Organizational Performance
BK1	0.745				
BK2	0.827				
BK3	0.832				
BK4	0.847				
BK5	0.850				
BK6	0.811				
BO1		0.78			
BO2		0.725			
BO3		0.817			
BO4		0.775			
BO5		0.768			
BO6		0.768			
KO1					0.914
KO2					0.887
KO3					0.796
KP1			0.792		
KP2			0.910		
KP3			0.920		
Kin2				0.867	
Kin3				0.880	
Kin4				0.745	
Kin1				0.901	

All indicators for the variables of leadership, organizational culture, workplace culture, organizational commitment, and employee performance demonstrate loading factor values above 0.70. This indicates that each indicator has a strong correlation with its corresponding latent construct. It can be concluded that all variables in this study meet the criteria for convergent validity, confirming that the measurement instruments used are valid representations of the examined concepts. Additionally, the analysis continues with an evaluation of the Average Variance Extracted.

Table 2.
Result of Average Variance Extracted.

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Workplace Culture	0.671
Organization Culture	0.597
Leadership	0.767
Employee Performance	0.724
Organizational Performance	0.751

The results indicate that all research variables, leadership, organizational culture, workplace culture, organizational commitment, and employee performance, have AVE values greater than 0.50. This demonstrates that each construct can explain more than 50% of the variance of its indicators. Based on these findings, all variables satisfy the criteria for convergent validity according to their AVE values. Reliability refers to the internal consistency of a research instrument in measuring a latent construct. Cronbach's Alpha assesses internal reliability under the assumption that all indicators carry equal weight, with an acceptable value being ≥ 0.70 . The rho_A coefficient is considered a more accurate measure of reliability because it accounts for correlations among indicators. An ideal rho_A value is ≥ 0.70 to confirm that a construct is reliable. Composite Reliability (CR) provides a more flexible measure of reliability compared to Cronbach's Alpha, as it incorporates varying indicator weights according to each indicator's contribution to the latent construct. The reliability test results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Reliability Test Results.

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
Workplace Culture	0.902	0.903	0.924
Organization Culture	0.866	0.870	0.899
Leadership	0.851	0.910	0.908
Employee Performance	0.870	0.871	0.912
Organizational Performance	0.833	0.841	0.900

The reliability test results show that all research variables have Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability values of ≥ 0.70 . This confirms that each construct demonstrates strong internal consistency in measuring its indicators. The findings indicate that all research instruments meet the reliability criteria and are suitable for further analysis. Based on the results, all constructs in this study meet the validity criteria, including convergent validity and discriminant validity, and exhibit an adequate level of reliability. The fulfillment of these validity and reliability requirements indicates that the analysis can proceed to the inner model testing stage, which examines the relationships among variables in the study.

Inner model testing is an analytical stage in PLS-SEM used to evaluate the influence among variables in accordance with the research hypotheses. The main objective of this test is to assess the significance of the relationships among constructs. The inner model is evaluated using several criteria, including the R-squared (R^2) value, which measures the contribution of independent variables to dependent variables. The coefficient of determination (R -squared/ R^2) is a statistical measure used to indicate the extent to which independent variables explain the variance of a dependent variable in a research model. R^2 is employed to assess the predictive strength of the structural model, with common criteria indicating that a value of approximately 0.75 is substantial, 0.50 is moderate, and 0.25 is weak. The coefficient of determination serves as an important indicator in evaluating the feasibility of a research model. The results of the coefficient of determination analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
Results of the Coefficient of Determination Test.

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Employee Performance	0.542	0.529
Organizational Performance	0.500	0.489

The coefficient of determination results indicate that the employee performance variable has an R-square value of 0.542 and an adjusted R-square value of 0.529. This means that 54.2% of the variation in employee performance can be explained by leadership, organizational culture, workplace culture, and organizational commitment, while factors outside the research model influence the remaining 45.8%. Meanwhile, the organizational commitment variable has an R-square value of 0.500 and an adjusted R-square value of 0.489, indicating that 50% of the variation in organizational commitment can be explained by leadership, organizational culture, and workplace culture.

This study examines both direct and indirect effects in accordance with the research hypotheses by considering the t-statistic and p-value. The t-statistic is used to compare the effect's strength against a predetermined critical threshold, whereas the p-value indicates the level of statistical significance. A hypothesis is accepted when the t-statistic exceeds the critical value (≥ 1.96 for a 5% significance level), and the p-value is ≤ 0.05 . The direct effect test results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.
Direct Effect Test Results.

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Workplace Culture → Employee Performance	0.370	0.369	0.104	3.562	0.000
Workplace Culture → Organizational Performance	0.210	0.219	0.124	1.699	0.090
Organization Culture → Employee Performance	0.039	0.039	0.124	0.314	0.754
Organization Culture → Organizational Performance	0.366	0.368	0.110	3.319	0.001
Leadership → Employee Performance	0.158	0.157	0.096	1.641	0.101
Leadership → Organizational Performance	0.222	0.213	0.090	2.464	0.014
Organizational Performance → Employee Performance	0.289	0.292	0.104	2.774	0.006

The statistical analysis shows that workplace culture has a significant effect on employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.37, $t = 3.562$, and $p = 0.000$. This indicates that a strong workplace culture enhances employee performance. However, the effect of workplace culture on organizational commitment is not significant (coefficient = 0.21; $t = 1.699$; $p = 0.090$), suggesting that workplace culture has not yet exerted sufficient influence to strengthen commitment. Furthermore, the effect of organizational culture on employee performance is not significant (coefficient = 0.039; $t = 0.314$; $p = 0.754$), although it significantly affects organizational commitment, with a coefficient of 0.366, $t = 3.319$, and $p = 0.001$. This indicates that a strong organizational culture contributes more to enhancing commitment than directly improving performance. Leadership has a significant effect on organizational commitment (coefficient = 0.222; $t = 2.464$; $p = 0.014$), whereas the effect of leadership on employee performance is not significant (coefficient = 0.158; $t = 1.641$; $p = 0.101$). Meanwhile, organizational commitment significantly influences employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.289, $t = 2.774$, and $p = 0.006$. These findings demonstrate that employee performance is influenced primarily by workplace culture directly and by organizational commitment indirectly. Organizational culture and leadership, on the other hand, play essential roles in strengthening employee commitment to the organization.

Table 6.
Indirect Effect Test Results.

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Organization Culture → Organizational Performance → Employee Performance	0.106	0.108	0.053	1.983	0.048
Leadership → Organizational Performance → Employee Performance	0.064	0.931	0.034	7.341	0.000
Workplace Culture → Organizational Performance → Employee Performance	0.061	0.064	0.044	1.372	0.171

The mediation test results indicate that organizational commitment significantly mediates the effect of organizational culture on employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.106, $t = 1.983$, and $p = 0.048$. This finding suggests that a strong organizational culture can enhance employee performance through an increase in organizational commitment. Furthermore, the effect of leadership on employee performance through organizational commitment is also significant (coefficient = 0.064; $t = 7.341$; $p = 0.000$), demonstrating that effective leadership strengthens employee commitment, which subsequently contributes positively to performance improvement. However, the effect of workplace culture on

employee performance through organizational commitment is not significant (coefficient = 0.061; $t = 1.372$; $p = 0.171$), indicating that workplace culture has not yet played a sufficiently strong role in improving performance through commitment.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that workplace culture implemented within the organization influences employee performance. A positive workplace culture encourages the development of work behaviors aligned with shared values, norms, and established standards, thereby creating a conducive environment for achieving organizational objectives. This result is consistent with the study by Indiyarningsih, et al. [22] which states that workplace culture functions as a foundation for shaping employees' mindsets and behaviors in the work environment. Udin, et al. [23] also found that workplace culture significantly affects employee performance. These findings reinforce the conclusion that the implementation of a positive workplace culture enhances employee effectiveness and productivity within an organization.

The results further indicate that workplace culture significantly influences organizational commitment. This finding suggests that a stronger and well-internalized workplace culture fosters higher levels of employee commitment to the organization. A strong workplace culture is reflected through values, norms, and work behaviors that are consistent with the organization's vision and mission [24]. When employees perceive a sense of alignment between personal values and organizational expectations, emotional and psychological attachment to the organization increases, which strengthens loyalty and willingness to contribute optimally. This conclusion aligns with previous studies demonstrating that workplace culture plays a critical role in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors, particularly in reinforcing organizational commitment. Sahertian, et al. [25] similarly found that workplace culture contributes to the development of employee commitment, even when the culture does not directly influence performance. These findings highlight that a strong workplace culture strengthens employee attachment through improved commitment.

Organizational culture also exerts a significant effect on employee performance. This finding indicates that the development of a strong organizational culture leads to improved performance. A well-established organizational culture creates shared values, beliefs, and norms that guide behavior and work practices. When employees understand and internalize these values, a sense of unity, compliance, and motivation emerges, which contributes positively to performance outcomes. This result aligns with the study by Pratiwi and Nawangsari [26] which shows that organizational culture significantly affects employee performance, confirming that values, norms, and practices embedded within the organization encourage more effective and productive work. These findings emphasize the importance of cultivating a strong organizational culture to enhance performance. The study by Shamsudin and Velmurugan [27] further supports this conclusion by demonstrating that organizational culture has a positive effect on employee performance, showing that values, norms, and internal practices guide employees toward more effective work behaviors. This evidence underscores the role of internal culture as a strategic tool for improving employee performance.

This study aligns with Sudarnice [28] who found that organizational culture strengthens organizational commitment, which in turn enhances performance. This conclusion emphasizes that commitment to work depends on support derived from organizational culture. Consistent with these findings, organizational culture plays a crucial role in shaping employee attachment to an institution [29]. Shared values, norms, and consistent practices foster a sense of belonging and encourage employees to align personal goals with organizational direction. Organizational culture has been shown to significantly influence commitment, as embedded values, norms, and beliefs generate loyalty and attachment [30]. These studies indicate that a strong organizational culture enhances commitment, which contributes to improved satisfaction and performance. Theoretically, this relationship can be explained through Social Exchange Theory, which highlights reciprocal interactions between an organization and its employees. When an organization provides a supportive environment through a

positive culture, employees respond with increased commitment. In contrast, a weak or inconsistent culture tends to reduce attachment.

The findings of this study also correspond with research suggesting that employee performance is influenced more by factors such as motivation, organizational culture, and job satisfaction, which explains why the direct effect of leadership on performance was not supported. Other studies, such as Jani and Suryadinata [31] found that democratic leadership exerts a positive influence on employee performance. This differs from the current study, where leadership did not show a significant direct effect, possibly due to contextual factors or other more dominant determinants of employee performance. Similarly, Abdelwahed, et al. [32] concluded that leadership style positively and significantly affects performance, which contrasts with the present findings. Qureshi, et al. [33] also demonstrated that leadership styles such as democratic, autocratic, and participative influence performance. These variations suggest opportunities to reassess the leadership approaches in use by considering a wider range of leadership styles that match employee characteristics and needs [34] while acknowledging that environmental and technological factors may shape leadership effectiveness and performance outcomes [35].

The results indicate that leadership has a significant effect on organizational commitment. This finding is consistent with prior research emphasizing leadership as a key factor in shaping employee attachment to an organization. Several studies have demonstrated that leadership style influences employee commitment, as effective leadership provides clear direction, support, and recognition that encourage employees to align their behaviors with organizational goals. Consistent with these conclusions, Ly [36] found that leadership strengthens employee engagement, with affective commitment functioning as a partial mediator. These findings confirm that inclusive leadership fosters commitment and contributes to improved organizational performance.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that employee performance within vocational education settings is more effectively enhanced through the strengthening of organizational culture and organizational commitment. Organizational culture and leadership play critical roles in shaping organizational commitment, which subsequently drives performance enhancement. While work culture contributes positively to performance, it does not foster organizational commitment. Organizational commitment emerges as a central mechanism that mediates the influence of organizational culture on performance, although it does not mediate the effects of work culture or leadership. These findings highlight the importance of prioritizing a robust organizational culture and leadership practices that cultivate organizational commitment as key strategies for optimizing employee performance in vocational institutions.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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