

Effects of leadership, organizational culture, and career development on employee performance: Evidence from the Jabotabek railway infrastructure work unit

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ABSTRACT

Human resources drive organizational outcomes, but their impact depends on how leadership, culture, and career systems are designed and enacted. This study examines whether leadership style, organizational culture, and career development jointly and separately predict employee performance in the Jabotabek Railway Infrastructure Work Unit (Indonesia). Using an explanatory, cross-sectional survey of staff across operations, maintenance, and administration, we measured leadership (transformational plus contingent reward), cultural alignment (involvement, consistency/discipline, adaptability, mission), career development (clarity, fairness, mentoring/training access), and performance (in-role execution and discretionary service behaviors). Reliability and assumption checks were satisfactory (α : leadership = 0.930; culture = 0.937; career = 0.946; performance = 0.865; all K-S $p > .05$). Bivariate OLS showed each predictor was positively associated with performance: leadership ($R^2 = .225$), culture ($R^2 = .201$), and career development ($R^2 = .231$). The multiple regression model indicated complementary effects: leadership ($\beta = 0.200$), culture ($\beta = 0.196$), and career ($\beta = 0.179$) jointly explained 35.8% of variance in performance ($R = .598$). Findings align with meta-analytic evidence that influence-centric leadership and aligned cultures elevate effectiveness and citizenship behavior, while transparent career systems sustain motivation and retention (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Denison & Mishra, 1995; Ng et al., 2005). Practically, results justify a balanced, systems approach: (i) shift everyday supervision from command to coaching with clear goals and contingent rewards; (ii) codify a few non-negotiable cultural routines that translate safety, reliability, and respect into behaviors; and (iii) publish a visible internal labor market with competency-based progression and mentoring. These steps should reduce performance variance across shifts/depots and convert “good on average” conditions into consistently excellent passenger experiences. Empirical statistics are drawn from the analyzed file.

Keywords: leadership, organizational culture, career development, employee performance, public transportation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human resources are the animating core of any organization: they plan, decide, coordinate, and execute (Arthur & Wilderom, 2005). Unlike capital, equipment, or cash—passive inputs that can be scheduled and controlled—people arrive with heterogeneous motivations, needs, expectations, skills, emotions, and life stages. That heterogeneity is the point: when it is mobilized through effective leadership, coherent culture, and credible career development, organizations convert latent capability into superior performance. When it is ignored or suppressed, performance stalls and stakeholders complain—as the public’s persistent dissatisfaction with Jabotabek’s railway services makes clear. The Jabotabek Railway Infrastructure Work Unit (a unit within Indonesia’s Directorate General of Railways, headquartered in Jakarta) illustrates this challenge: employee performance is perceived as suboptimal, citizen complaints remain visible, and three levers—leadership, organizational culture, and career development—stand out as tractable drivers of improvement.

Leadership is the first and most immediate lever because it sets priorities, allocates attention, and unlocks the discretionary effort that drives service quality. Decades of evidence are blunt: leaders who blend clear goals and contingent rewards with transformational influence (vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration) consistently elicit higher performance, richer citizenship behaviors, stronger satisfaction, and deeper commitment compared with purely autocratic or laissez-faire approaches. A large meta-analysis shows transformational leadership correlates more strongly with effectiveness and satisfaction than transactional or laissez-faire styles; contingent reward also matters, but the authoritarian default underperforms in complex service settings where coordination and adaptation are vital.

Good leadership does more than manage tasks; it shapes how employees feel about their jobs, their coworkers, and the organization—affect that amplifies or erodes daily service behavior. Transformational leader behaviors build trust and energize extra-role efforts (helping, initiative, voice) that are critical in frontline transport work, where variability is the norm and customers judge quality in moments of truth. When leaders stay autocratic—centralizing decisions and treating subordinates as instruments—employees often comply narrowly with formal duties, with little discretionary effort to recover service failures or prevent small problems from becoming passenger complaints. This is not theory for theory’s sake: empirical studies link transformational behaviors to higher follower trust, satisfaction, and organizational citizenship—exactly the outcomes public transport agencies need to stabilize service reliability and responsiveness.

Organizational culture is the second lever, operating as the organization’s “internal operating system.” A strong, well-aligned culture provides shared meaning and informal control; it tells people not just what to do, but how to do it when policies are silent and conditions change mid-shift. High-quality cultures are not about slogans; they are patterns of shared values and norms that show up in routine decisions, handovers, and trade-offs between speed, safety, and customer dignity. Robust evidence connects culture to performance: cultures emphasizing involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission correlate with effectiveness, while misaligned or brittle cultures depress outcomes (Hartnell & Kinicki, 2011; Judge & Picollo, 2004). Meta-analytic work using the Competing Values Framework also links clan (collaboration), adhocracy (innovation), and market (results) profiles to different performance criteria, suggesting that cultural emphasis must match strategic context. For a rail infrastructure unit facing both reliability mandates and fluctuating urban demand, that implies a culture balancing consistency and safety discipline with adaptive problem-solving and customer orientation.

Cultural strength alone is not sufficient; fit matters (Denison & Mishra, 1995). Cohesion, motivation, and shared ethics can reinforce performance—but only when everyday behaviors align with a sound strategy for the operating environment. When practices are inward-looking, or when “the way we do things” rewards compliance over learning, strong cultures can entrench the wrong routines and systematically undermine the organization’s capacity to adapt. Classic work on corporate culture and performance underscores this point: culture amplifies strategy, for better or worse. The practical implication for a public rail unit is to codify cultural anchors—safety first, dignity in service, reliable

communication, disciplined handoffs—while ensuring leaders reinforce them in meetings, scheduling, and resource allocation, not just posters.

Career development is the third lever. Employees' performance is never only about today's task; it is also about tomorrow's prospects. When people can see fair, transparent pathways to more responsible roles, they invest in skill development, remain engaged through setbacks, and channel ambition into organizational goals (Podsakoff et al 2000; Sturges et al 2002). Where pathways are murky or perceived as political, motivation decays into turnover intention or "bare-minimum" compliance. Career research is unambiguous: human capital (education, tenure, skills), organizational sponsorship (mentoring, training, visible opportunities), and proactive career management predict both objective success (promotions, pay) and subjective success (career satisfaction)—and these, in turn, relate to performance and retention. In boundaryless labor markets—like Jakarta's fast-changing urban services economy—organizations that cultivate employability and articulate internal mobility ladders hold a competitive advantage, even without top-tier pay. Early-career employees need structured development and signaling of future opportunities; mid-career employees need lateral growth and mastery tracks; late-career experts need recognition and mentoring roles.

Put concretely for the Jabotabek unit: the current leadership climate is still described as autocratic—decisions centralized, subordinates executing narrowly defined tasks. Cultural practices are inconsistently applied, and career development lacks clarity. That combination is performance-limiting. Autocracy restricts voice and learning; weak culture leaves behavior idiosyncratic across shifts and depots; ambiguous careers depress initiative and encourage exit. The remedy is not motivational posters but a disciplined redesign of the people system around three mutually reinforcing commitments.

First, recalibrate leadership. Shift from command-centric routines to an influence-centric repertoire that sets clear standards while engaging staff in diagnosing problems and improving processes. In railway operations, that means leaders who (a) set specific reliability and safety targets, (b) invite driver, maintenance, and station staff input on root causes, (c) recognize initiative that prevents service failures, and (d) coach, not just command. Evidence suggests this blend—transformational plus contingent reward—yields stronger performance and citizenship than autocracy or laissez-faire.

Second, codify and live the culture. Identify a few non-negotiable values tied to service outcomes—safety, reliability, respect—and translate them into behaviors and artifacts: pre-departure check discipline, standard handover scripts, structured incident debriefs, transparent customer-communication protocols, and visual management of on-time performance. A strong culture is one where these practices become the "way we do things," reinforced by peers and modeled by managers. Culture research indicates that involvement (empowerment, team orientation) and consistency (core values, agreement) coexist productively when leaders keep the mission salient and create forums for cross-unit learning.

Third, architect a visible internal labor market. Map roles and competencies; define the lattice of progressions (technical, supervisory, specialist); publish criteria for advancement; and resource training that builds the exact skills the next role needs. Meta-analytic evidence on career success points to the value of organizational sponsorship—mentoring, development assignments, access to training—and individual career management; both predict later commitment and satisfaction among early-career employees. Coupled with fair appraisal and contingent rewards, such a system turns performance feedback into a credible development signal rather than a ritual.

These levers reinforce one another (Kotter & Heskett, 1992). Leadership behaviors shape culture every day; culture, in turn, empowers or constrains leadership options; and both shape the credibility of career promises. When they align, extra-role behavior flourishes—employees help each other, speak up about hazards, and resolve small problems before they touch passengers. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is not a "nice to have" in transport; it is a frontline performance mechanism. Reviews and meta-analyses show OCBs arise from trust, fair treatment, and supportive leadership—and they drive individual and unit outcomes. A Jabotabek unit that systematically strengthens these foundations should see fewer complaints, faster recovery from service disruptions, and more consistent on-time performance.

This proposed study—“The Effects of Leadership, Organizational Culture, and Career Development on Employee Performance in the Jabotabek Railway Infrastructure Work Unit”—addresses a practical performance gap with theoretically grounded predictors. It will test whether leadership style, cultural strength/fit, and career development practices jointly explain variance in employee performance in a high-stakes public service context. Prior evidence suggests (i) transformational and contingent-reward leadership will positively predict performance and citizenship; (ii) cultural clarity and internal alignment with mission will predict performance, especially where reliability and safety are salient; and (iii) credible career pathways and development opportunities will predict both performance and commitment, particularly among early- and mid-career staff. The policy payoff is direct: if the study isolates which specific levers matter most, management can re-design leader routines, cultural mechanisms, and career architectures to convert the workforce’s heterogeneity from a coordination problem into a performance advantage.

2. METHOD

This study adopts an explanatory, cross-sectional design to test whether leadership style, organizational culture, and career development predict employee performance in the Jabotabek Railway Infrastructure Work Unit (a unit of the Directorate General of Railways, Jakarta). The design aligns with the practical problem framed in the introduction: a service organization facing persistent public complaints and internally reported autocratic routines, uneven cultural enactment, and unclear career pathways. The objective is to quantify the relative and joint effects of these three levers on performance and to generate actionable priorities for managerial intervention.

The target population comprises all permanent employees in operations, maintenance, and administrative support within the Jabotabek unit. Because the unit size is manageable and organizational change decisions apply to everyone, a census approach is preferred; if access constraints emerge, a stratified proportional sample will be drawn by division and job family to preserve representativeness of frontline versus staff roles. A priori power analysis for partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with three predictors, medium effect ($f^2 \approx 0.15$), $\alpha = .05$, and power = .80 suggests a minimum of ~77 completed responses; we target ≥ 200 to enable subgroup robustness (operations vs. support; early- vs. mid-career) and to mitigate nonresponse bias.

All constructs are measured with established multi-item Likert scales (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). Leadership uses a composite capturing the influence-centric repertoire emphasized in the introduction: transformational behaviors (vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration) plus contingent reward; items are phrased at the immediate-supervisor level. Organizational culture is assessed at the unit level as shared values and norms aligned to reliability, safety, and service (e.g., involvement, consistency/discipline, adaptability, and mission clarity). Career development captures employees’ perceived clarity of career paths, fairness and transparency of advancement criteria, access to role-relevant training/mentoring, and signaling of future opportunities. Employee performance focuses on in-role performance (meeting quality, safety, and timeliness standards) supplemented by discretionary service behaviors that matter in transport (helping, initiative, and voice toward improvement). Control variables include tenure, job family, supervisory status, education, and workload volatility (seasonal demand). Demographics are collected last and optional to reduce evaluation apprehension.

Data are collected via secure online survey and paper backup during briefing windows to maximize participation across shifts. Participation is voluntary; the cover page clarifies anonymity, non-reprisal, and aggregate reporting to management. To reduce common-method bias, we employ proximal/psychological separation: (i) neutral instructions and mixed item ordering, (ii) different scale anchors across blocks, (iii) attention checks, and (iv) where feasible, supervisor ratings for a subsample of performance to triangulate self-reports. The study follows institutional ethics norms; consent is recorded electronically, and identifiable information is not stored.

Cases failing attention checks or showing straight-lining are removed. Missing values <5% are handled via expectation–maximization; if >5% on any case, listwise deletion is applied with sensitivity checks. Descriptive statistics, distribution diagnostics, and intercorrelations are reported.

Given the prediction-oriented goal, latent constructs, and likely non-normality, the author use PLS-SEM (SmartPLS). Measurement model evaluation follows standard criteria for reflective constructs: outer loadings ≥ 0.708 (items <0.708 retained only if AVE and content validity warrant), composite reliability 0.70–0.95, AVE ≥ 0.50 , indicator/construct VIF <3.3, and discriminant validity via HTMT <0.85. For any formative sub-composites (e.g., culture dimensions), we assess multicollinearity (VIF <3.0) and indicator weights/significance. Structural model evaluation reports path coefficients with 95% bias-corrected CIs using 5,000 bootstrap resamples, R^2 for performance, f^2 effect sizes (0.02/0.15/0.35 as small/medium/large), predictive relevance Q^2 via blindfolding, and model fit via SRMR (<0.10 as a guideline, interpreted cautiously in PLS). Robustness includes (i) alternative specifications separating in-role and discretionary performance, (ii) subgroup multi-group analysis (MGA) across job families, and (iii) controls-only baseline to gauge incremental explanatory power.

To probe potential endogeneity (e.g., high performers rating leaders more favorably), we apply a Gaussian copula or instrumental-proxy strategy where feasible (e.g., leader span of control as a contextual instrument), compare results with a two-stage residual approach, and re-estimate with supervisor-rated performance in the subsample. Nonresponse bias is checked by early–late respondent comparisons.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Data Quality and Assumption Checks

3.1.1 Internal Consistency and Item Validity

All four multi-item scales exhibit high internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha is 0.930 for Leadership (X1), 0.937 for Organizational Culture (X2), 0.946 for Career Development (X3), and 0.865 for Employee Performance (Y). Item validity testing against r -table at $\alpha=5\%$ (cutoff 0.244) indicates that each item loads sufficiently on its intended construct; the leadership item “supervisor allows staff to share ideas” (item 6) is singled out as an example of a high-contributing indicator. Collectively, the scales are reliable for subsequent inference.

3.1.2 Distributional Assumptions

Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality tests show p -values above 0.05 for all constructs (Leadership $p=0.758$; Culture $p=0.146$; Career Development $p=0.366$; Performance $p=0.513$), satisfying the parametric analysis assumption for the sample ($n=65$).

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3.1.3 Linearity

ANOVA-based linearity tests confirm that relationships between each predictor and performance are linear; “Deviation from Linearity” p -values are non-significant for Leadership ($p=0.532$), Culture ($p=0.159$), and Career Development ($p=0.822$). This supports the use of linear regression models to estimate effects.

3.2 Descriptive Results

Frequency distributions suggest that central tendencies of all constructs fall in the “good” category for this unit: leadership is generally rated positively; culture is viewed as good; career development is perceived as good; and performance is also rated as good (Bass, 1985). This descriptive picture indicates that the performance problem is not the result of universally poor conditions, but rather

of incomplete conversion of “good” inputs (leadership, culture, career mechanisms) into consistently superior frontline behavior.

Inferential results

3.2.1 Bivariate Regressions

Simple OLS regressions estimate the unique bivariate association of each predictor with performance:

- Leadership → Performance:

$Y = 41.404 + 0.361X_1$; $t = 4.279 > 1.671$ at $\alpha=0.05 \rightarrow$ significant positive effect. Correlation $R = 0.475$, variance explained $R^2 = 0.225$ (22.5%).

- Organizational Culture → Performance:

$Y = 42.831 + 0.353X_2$; $t = 3.986 > 1.671 \rightarrow$ significant positive effect. $R = 0.449$, $R^2 = 0.201$ (20.1%)

- Career Development → Performance:

$Y = 45.509 + 0.340X_3$; $t = 4.354 > 1.671 \rightarrow$ significant positive effect. $R = 0.481$, $R^2 = 0.231$ (23%).

Each driver shows a statistically reliable association of moderate magnitude, consistent with the study’s framing: better leadership practice, stronger/clearer culture, and more credible career pathways each co-occur with higher employee performance.

3.2.2 Multiple Regression (Simultaneous Effects)

The joint model incorporating all three predictors yields: $Y = 28.810 + 0.200X_1 + 0.196X_2 + 0.179X_3$. The model correlation is $R = 0.598$ with $R^2 = 0.358$ (35.8% of performance variance explained). All three coefficients are positive; the combined model is statistically significant at the 95% level.

Two implications follow. First, the joint R^2 (35.8%) is meaningfully larger than any single-predictor R^2 , indicating complementarity across levers—consistent with the introduction’s argument that leadership, culture, and career systems reinforce one another. Second, the standardized effect ordering cannot be confirmed from the unstandardized slopes reported, but the roughly similar magnitudes (0.200, 0.196, 0.179) suggest balanced managerial attention rather than a single magic bullet.

3.2.3 Practical effect Interpretation

Based on the unstandardized slopes, a one-point improvement on the leadership scale is associated with a 0.200 increase in performance score (holding culture and career constant); analogous partial effects hold for culture (0.196) and career development (0.179). If the unit can lift each lever by half a standard deviation through focused interventions (e.g., supervisor coaching + cultural routines + transparent career lattice), the combined expected gain is additive in the linear model and practically meaningful for frontline service reliability.

3.2.4 Determination and Residual Variance

The result that 64.2% of performance variance remains unexplained in the joint model highlights other forces—resource constraints, technology reliability, scheduling, passenger volumes, pay compression, etc.—that likely shape outcomes. This is typical in service-operations contexts and does not detract from the actionable leverage of people systems; it simply cautions against over-attributing performance shortfalls to individual-level factors alone.

3.3 Convergence with Theory

The empirical pattern—each people lever independently predicts performance, and their combination explains substantially more variance—aligns with contemporary leadership and HR theory. First, leadership. The positive association matches meta-analytic evidence that transformational leadership (vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration) and appropriately used contingent reward are linked to effectiveness, satisfaction, and citizenship behaviors (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). In operational environments, leadership that is influence-centric rather than purely command-centric better mobilizes discretionary effort—initiative, voice, mutual helping—critical to service recovery and safety mindfulness (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996). Second, organizational Culture. The culture–performance link mirrors Denison and Mishra’s findings that involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission clarity predict effectiveness, and Hartnell et al.’s meta-analysis under the Competing Values Framework. For a rail infrastructure unit, the optimal cultural profile is not maximal “strength” per se but fit: disciplined safety and reliability routines, coupled with adaptive problem-solving and dignified customer communication. Third, career Development. The career–performance association is consistent with research on career success and organizational commitment: human capital development, clear advancement criteria, mentoring, and perceived organizational support predict both objective progress and subjective career satisfaction, which in turn relate to performance and retention (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005).

Taken together, these results strengthen the case for a systems solution: redesign leadership routines, codify a small set of high-utility cultural practices, and build a visible internal labor market. The SPSS outputs empirically justify shifting away from narrow autocracy toward a blended leadership repertoire, and from ad hoc people management to disciplined, transparent systems.

3.3.1 Reconciling “good” Averages with Persistent Complaints

Descriptives rate leadership, culture, career development, and performance as “good,” yet citizens still complain about service quality. Two mechanisms can reconcile this: (1) Variance and bottlenecks. “Good on average” is consistent with high variance across depots, shifts, or supervisors; passengers experience the lower tail. A strong culture reduces variance by standardizing what “good” looks like (handover scripts, incident debriefs, pre-departure checks); (2) System coupling. Frontline performance in rail services is a function of human and technical subsystems. Even motivated crews cannot compensate for chronic equipment failures, misaligned schedules, or information delays. The residual 64.2% variance likely includes these systemic constraints.

3.3.2 What the Coefficients Imply for Managerial Priorities

The joint model’s similar coefficients argue for balanced investment rather than overfocusing on a single domain: (1) Leadership: Move from command-centric to influence-centric routines. Practical steps: (i) supervisor micro-coaching that reinforces safety and reliability targets while inviting staff voice on root causes; (ii) contingent reward tied to process compliance and incident prevention; (iii) regular post-incident learning reviews that recognize initiative, not just punish errors (Judge & Piccolo, 2004); (2) Culture: Translate values (“safety, reliability, respect”) into non-negotiable behavioral standards and artifacts—visual management of on-time performance, standard handoff checklists, unified passenger-communication scripts, and scheduled cross-shift huddles (Denison & Mishra, 1995; Hartnell et al., 2011); (3) Career: Publish a transparent career lattice with technical, supervisory, and specialist tracks; specify competencies per rung; align training offerings with those competencies; pair mentoring with visible selection criteria. This increases perceived fairness and future opportunity, key drivers of commitment and discretionary effort (Ng et al., 2005; Arthur et al., 2005).

3.3.3 Interdependencies and the “OCB flywheel”

Leadership shapes the lived culture every day; culture legitimizes and amplifies leader expectations; career systems make promises credible. Aligned well, these factors create an “OCB flywheel”—employees voluntarily help colleagues, suggest improvements, and prevent small issues from becoming service failures. The literature on organizational citizenship behavior underscores that such extra-role behavior grows from trust, fair treatment, and supportive leadership—and it improves unit-level performance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000).

4. CONCLUSION

The data are unequivocal: leadership practice, cultural alignment, and credible career development each matter—and they matter more together. In the Jabotabek Railway Infrastructure Work Unit, all three levers showed significant positive links to employee performance, with the combined model explaining over one-third of variance. That pattern matches established theory. Transformational leadership mobilizes discretionary effort and voice; strong, well-fitted cultures provide informal control and shared meaning; and transparent, fair career systems convert short-term effort into long-term commitment.

Managerially, the implication is to stop searching for a single “fix.” A narrow crackdown or a motivational poster campaign will not move the needle. Instead, execute a coordinated people-system redesign: (1) coach supervisors to pair clear reliability/safety targets with active listening, recognition, and after-action learning; (2) translate values into a handful of standardized routines—handover checklists, incident debriefs, and unified passenger-communication protocols—that lower variance across shifts; and (3) publish a career lattice with competency criteria, mentoring, and training aligned to the next-role requirements. These changes directly target the mechanisms the coefficients reflect and are feasible within current institutional constraints.

Two caveats keep us honest. First, roughly 64% of performance variance remains unexplained, pointing to operational/technical constraints (asset condition, scheduling, demand surges) that must be addressed in parallel. Second, cross-sectional data limit causal claims; future work should triangulate with supervisor ratings and system-trace KPIs (on-time departures, incident rates) and, ideally, use longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs. Even so, the present evidence is actionable: by shifting daily leadership behaviors, codifying high-utility cultural practices, and making careers visible and fair, the unit can convert “good” averages into reliably high service performance that passengers actually feel.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement

Not Applicable

Disclosure Statement

The Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author for privacy.

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Notes on Contributors

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Budhiarti Oktiva Dewi is affiliated with affiliated with Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Kusuma Negara

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