

The Influence of Leadership, Corporate Culture, and Employee Motivation on Employee Performance through Job Satisfaction at an Imported Fertilizer Company (PT Mitra Utama Makmur)

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Abstract: This study examines and analyzes the influence of leadership, corporate culture, and employee motivation on employee performance through job satisfaction at an imported fertilizer company, PT Mitra Utama Makmur. The study was designed using a quantitative approach. The population consisted of 200 permanent employees, and a saturated sampling technique was used, producing a sample of 200 respondents. Data were processed with SmartPLS 3.9 using Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The findings show that leadership, corporate culture, and employee motivation each have a significant positive effect on job satisfaction, and each also has a significant positive effect on employee performance. Job satisfaction in turn has a significant positive effect on employee performance. Overall, the results indicate that job satisfaction plays an important mediating role in translating leadership quality, corporate culture, and employee motivation into improved employee performance at PT Mitra Utama Makmur.

Introduction

Human resources remain one of the most decisive factors in the survival and growth of a company, since the direction, progress, or decline of an organization is largely determined by the quality of the people who run it. Employee performance is a central concern for management because when performance falls short of expectations, absenteeism rises and organizational goals become harder to achieve. A closely related concept is job satisfaction, the positive feeling employees hold toward their work as a result of evaluating its various characteristics (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Employees who are satisfied tend to display positive attitudes toward their tasks, whereas dissatisfied employees tend to display negative attitudes, and this difference in attitude is shaped by factors such as leadership, corporate culture, and motivation.

Leadership is one of the fundamental factors that shapes the working environment and the people within it. The style and effectiveness of a leader has a direct bearing on

employee motivation, direction, and commitment: leaders who inspire, provide clear guidance, communicate transparently, and empower their teams tend to create a positive working climate that encourages initiative and ultimately improves performance, while ineffective leadership tends to create ambiguity, demotivation, and a decline in employee potential. Alongside leadership, corporate culture - the shared values, norms, beliefs, and practices accepted within an organization - plays an equally crucial role in shaping employee behavior and attitudes. A strong, positive culture that emphasizes collaboration, innovation, integrity, and appreciation for employees creates a supportive and conducive working environment, strengthens employees' sense of belonging, and encourages them to adapt, learn, and contribute their best effort, whereas a toxic or unclear culture tends to trigger conflict, lower morale, and damage team cohesion.

In addition to leadership and culture, employee motivation - the psychological drive that determines the direction, intensity, and persistence of an individual's effort toward achieving goals - is a further factor that consistently affects both job satisfaction and performance: motivated employees tend to work harder, treat their tasks as meaningful, and view difficulties as challenges worth confronting, whereas the absence of motivation tends to be followed by declining performance. In practice, PT Mitra Utama Makmur, a company engaged in the import and distribution of fertilizer, has recorded a noticeable downward trend in its production-department performance appraisal results over the 2021-2023 period. As an organization that depends heavily on its human resources to maintain the reliability of an import-based supply chain, the company has provided a range of facilities - work uniforms, recreational activities, holiday allowances, health services, insurance, and overtime bonuses - intended to safeguard employee welfare and stimulate motivation, yet the continuing decline in appraisal results indicates that the interaction between leadership style, corporate culture, employee motivation, and job satisfaction has not yet been optimized.

A review of prior studies shows broad support for the idea that effective leadership improves job satisfaction (Firdawati & Masram, 2023; Prasetyo et al., 2021; Wiradyatmika, 2022) and that leadership also improves performance directly (Faizi et al., 2022; Indriani, 2021; Khasanah et al., 2023). Corporate culture has likewise been found to strengthen both job satisfaction and performance (Utomo & Widiastuti, 2023; Adriani et al., 2023; Lianasari & Ahmadi, 2022; Nurhidayanti & Jaya, 2024), and employee motivation has been confirmed as a critical internal driver of both outcomes (Kusumastuti & Edris, 2022; Noverahman et al., 2023; Patawari et al., 2023; Pawerangi & Kamase, 2022; Muchtar et al., 2023). Job satisfaction, in turn, has been shown to act as a bridge toward superior performance (Faizi et al., 2022; Yusuf & Isriana, 2023; Fatari et al., 2023; Egemen, 2024). At the same time, several gaps remain unresolved: most previous studies were conducted in public-sector or government institutions whose bureaucratic, non-profit character differs substantially from a profit-oriented private importer such as PT Mitra Utama Makmur; findings on the satisfaction-performance link are not entirely consistent, as Goetz and Wald (2022) found that job satisfaction and organizational commitment can even have a negative relationship with performance within organizations that mix permanent and temporary employment; and very few studies have simultaneously integrated leadership, corporate culture, and motivation into a single comprehensive model with job satisfaction as a mediating variable within the specific context of import-commodity trading. Building on this background, the present study was undertaken to examine the influence of leadership, corporate culture, and employee motivation on employee performance through job satisfaction at PT Mitra Utama Makmur, with the aim of providing an empirical contribution on how the company can optimize its performance by harmonizing leadership, culture, and motivation.

Leadership

Leadership is defined as the process of influencing others to work voluntarily and enthusiastically toward a common goal (Aisah, 2020; Syahputra, Bahri, & Rambe, 2020), with the leader's vital role being to provide direction, motivation, and a personal example. Contemporary research emphasizes that effective leadership must combine broad competence, ethical behavior, and a genuinely human-relations approach toward subordinates (Arsyad, 2025). Building on Bass's (1985) transformational-leadership framework, leadership can be observed through indicators such as the leader's ability to innovate, to think conceptually, to communicate intent and objectives clearly, to grasp and distil information accurately, and to encourage employees to work according to their responsibilities (Thoha, 2010).

Corporate Culture

Corporate culture is defined as the system of values, beliefs, habits, and basic assumptions shared and held in common by members of an organization, which distinguishes it from other organizations and acts as a social glue that provides unwritten guidance on how members should think, act, and resolve problems (Alvesson, 2020; Sumarto, 2020). A strong culture is typically identified through shared core values, behavioral norms, and a system of symbols, stories, and rituals that reinforce those values, and it functions to differentiate the organization, to serve as an informal control mechanism, and to strengthen employee commitment and loyalty. In this study, corporate culture is measured through four indicators: risk-calculated innovativeness, results orientation, orientation toward the interests of all employees, and attention to detail in carrying out tasks (Sulaksono Hari, 2015).

Employee Motivation

Motivation is the psychological drive that determines the direction, intensity, and persistence of an individual's effort to achieve a goal. Employees who are motivated - whether intrinsically or extrinsically - tend to work with greater enthusiasm, perceive their tasks as more meaningful, and view obstacles as challenges worth overcoming. In this study, motivation is measured through five indicators adapted from Maslow's hierarchy of needs: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and the need for achievement (Adha et al., 2019).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was first conceptualized by Herzberg's Two-Factor (Motivation-Hygiene) Theory, which distinguishes motivator factors that raise satisfaction - such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and personal growth - from hygiene factors whose absence causes dissatisfaction, such as pay, working conditions, co-worker relationships, and company policy. Job satisfaction can be understood as an emotional response to various aspects of a job, reflecting the gap between the rewards an employee receives and what he or she believes should be received (Afandi, 2018). A company that succeeds in improving job satisfaction typically benefits from faster task completion, fewer errors, lower absenteeism, lower turnover, and higher productivity. In this study, job satisfaction is measured through five indicators: the work itself, pay, promotion, supervision, and co-workers (Afandi, 2018).

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the outcome or level of success an individual achieves in carrying out the tasks and responsibilities assigned in accordance with organizational standards (Aguinis, 2024); it is multidimensional, covering not only the quantity of work completed but also its quality, the efficiency of resource use, initiative, and contribution to overall organizational goals. High employee performance is essential for the achievement of organizational goals, productivity and efficiency gains, sustainable competitive advantage, customer satisfaction, and long-term organizational development. In this study, employee performance is measured through five indicators: quantity, quality, reliability, attendance, and the ability to cooperate with others (Mathis & Jackson, 2018).

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The conceptual model of this study positions leadership, corporate culture, and employee motivation as independent (exogenous) variables, job satisfaction as an intervening variable, and employee performance as the dependent (endogenous) variable. Based on the theoretical review and the empirical studies discussed above, the following seven hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Leadership has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction at PT Mitra Utama Makmur.

H2: Corporate culture has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction at PT Mitra Utama Makmur.

H3: Employee motivation has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction at PT Mitra Utama Makmur.

H4: Leadership has a significant positive effect on employee performance at PT Mitra Utama Makmur.

H5: Corporate culture has a significant positive effect on employee performance at PT Mitra Utama Makmur.

H6: Employee motivation has a significant positive effect on employee performance at PT Mitra Utama Makmur.

H7: Job satisfaction has a significant positive effect on employee performance at PT Mitra Utama Makmur.

Research Method

This study was conducted at PT Mitra Utama Makmur, an imported-fertilizer distribution company located in Kota Tangerang, Banten. A quantitative, correlational approach was used, which emphasizes the analysis of numerical data through statistical methods and seeks to determine the extent to which variation in one variable is associated with variation in one or more other variables (Sugiyono, 2019). The population of the study consisted of the 200 permanent employees of PT Mitra Utama Makmur. Because the population size was relatively small, a saturated sampling technique (total enumeration) was applied, in which the entire population is used as the sample; the study therefore drew on 200 respondents (Sugiyono, 2014).

The research involves five variables: leadership (X1) and corporate culture (X2) and employee motivation (X3) as independent variables, job satisfaction (Y) as an intervening variable, and employee performance (Z) as the dependent variable. The operational definitions and indicators of each variable are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational Definition of Research Variables

Variable	Indicators	Source
Leadership (X1)	Innovative ability; conceptual ability; ability to convey intent and communication objectives; ability to comprehend and distil information; ability to encourage employees to work according to their responsibilities	Thoha (2010)
Corporate Culture (X2)	Risk-calculated innovativeness; results orientation; orientation toward the interests of all employees; attention to detail in tasks	Sulaksono Hari (2015)
Employee Motivation (X3)	Physiological needs; safety needs; social needs; esteem needs; need for achievement	Adha et al. (2019)
Job Satisfaction (Y)	The work itself; pay; promotion; supervision; co-workers	Afandi (2018)
Employee Performance (Z)	Quantity; quality; reliability; attendance; ability to cooperate	Mathis & Jackson (2018)

Data were collected using a questionnaire containing statements scored on a five-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree for positive statements, reversed for negative statements), supplemented by a literature review of theoretical and empirical sources relevant to the research variables (Sugiyono, 2017).

The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 3.9. SEM-PLS was chosen because it allows simultaneous testing of several dependent variables against several independent variables without requiring restrictive data-distribution assumptions and remains robust for relatively small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2010; Ghazali, 2013). The evaluation of the outer (measurement) model was based on indicator reliability (outer loading factor > 0.70), internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability > 0.70), convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted, AVE, > 0.50), and discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, in which the square root of a construct's AVE should exceed its correlation with other constructs (Hair et al., 2017). The evaluation of the inner (structural) model was based on the coefficient of determination (R-square), the path coefficients, and bootstrapped t-statistics, with a path considered significant when the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05 at the 5% significance level (Hair et al., 2017).

Result and Discussion

Research Result

This study was conducted at PT Mitra Utama Makmur. The population of 200 employees was used in full as the research sample through a saturated sampling technique, producing 200 respondents.

Respondent Characteristics

Based on the questionnaires returned by the 200 respondents, the age distribution shows that the workforce is dominated by younger employees: 36% of respondents are under 30 years old and 32% are aged 31-40, so that 68% of the sample is under 40 years of age, while employees aged 41-50 and above 50 account for 20% and 12% respectively. In terms of gender, the workforce is fairly balanced with a slight male majority: 109 respondents (54.4%) are male and 91 (45.6%) are female. Regarding education, the workforce is highly educated, with 97% of respondents holding a Diploma or higher qualification - 100 respondents (50%)

hold a Bachelor's degree, 94 (47%) hold a Diploma (D3), and 6 (3%) hold a postgraduate degree.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Age	< 30 years	72	36%
	31-40 years	64	32%
	41-50 years	40	20%
	> 50 years	24	12%
Gender	Male	109	54.4%
	Female	91	45.6%
Education	Diploma (D3)	94	47%
	Bachelor's degree (S1)	100	50%
	Postgraduate	6	3%

Descriptive Overview of the Research Variables

Respondents' average scores for each research variable were classified using an interval scale (Sudjana, 2013) ranging from Very Poor (1.00-1.79) to Very Good (4.20-5.00). Table 3 summarizes the mean score and criterion for each variable.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Variable	Mean Score	Criterion
Leadership	2.92	Fairly Good
Corporate Culture	2.96	Fairly Good
Employee Motivation	2.93	Fairly Good
Job Satisfaction	2.98	Fairly Good
Employee Performance	2.98	Fairly Good

All five variables fall within the 'Fairly Good' category, indicating that leadership, corporate culture, employee motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance at PT Mitra Utama Makmur are perceived by employees as adequate but with clear room for improvement. Item-level analysis shows that the leader's ability to convey information clearly (an item under the communication indicator of Leadership) and the timeliness of performance feedback (an item under the results-orientation indicator of Corporate Culture) received the lowest item weights, together with items on peer support (Employee Motivation), pay fairness (Job Satisfaction), and meeting time targets (Employee Performance); these represent the weakest points that management should prioritize for improvement.

Measurement (Outer) Model

The first stage of testing evaluates the reliability of each indicator through its outer loading factor, which reflects the correlation between an indicator and its construct. Processing the data with SmartPLS shows that every indicator in this study has an outer

loading factor above 0.70, meaning all indicators are valid measures of their respective constructs.

Table 4. Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Corporate Culture	0.851	0.876	0.887	0.506
Leadership	0.908	0.913	0.924	0.551
Job Satisfaction	0.918	0.924	0.931	0.578
Employee Performance	0.906	0.912	0.922	0.545
Employee Motivation	0.936	0.939	0.946	0.639

Table 4 shows that all constructs have a Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability above 0.70, confirming adequate internal consistency reliability, and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above 0.50 for every construct, confirming adequate convergent validity - each latent variable explains more than half of the variance of its own indicators.

Discriminant validity was subsequently tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, under which the square root of a construct's AVE should be larger than its correlation with any other construct.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

	Corporate Culture	Leadership	Job Satisfaction	Employee Performance	Employee Motivation
Corporate Culture	0.712				
Leadership	0.710	0.742			
Job Satisfaction	0.706	0.740	0.760		
Employee Performance	0.708	0.726	0.715	0.738	
Employee Motivation	0.702	0.735	0.756	0.732	0.799

The diagonal values (the square root of each construct's AVE) are consistently larger than the off-diagonal correlation values in the same row and column, indicating that the discriminant validity requirement is satisfied for every construct in the model.

Structural (Inner) Model

After the outer model was confirmed, the inner (structural) model was tested to evaluate the research hypotheses, beginning with the coefficient of determination (R-square), which measures the combined contribution of the exogenous latent variables to each endogenous latent variable.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

Endogenous Variable	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Job Satisfaction	0.895	0.893
Employee Performance	0.941	0.940

The R-square for job satisfaction is 0.895, meaning that leadership, corporate culture, and employee motivation jointly explain 89.5% of the variance in job satisfaction, with the

remaining 10.5% explained by variables outside this model. The R-square for employee performance is 0.941, meaning that leadership, corporate culture, employee motivation, and job satisfaction jointly explain 94.1% of the variance in employee performance, with the remaining 5.9% explained by other variables.

The path coefficients and their bootstrapped significance were then examined; a path is considered significant when its t-statistic exceeds 1.96 and its p-value is below 0.05.

Table 7. Path Coefficients, T-Statistics, and P-Values

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
H1	Leadership → Job Satisfaction	0.229	3.639	0.000	Supported
H2	Corporate Culture → Job Satisfaction	0.361	2.951	0.000	Supported
H3	Employee Motivation → Job Satisfaction	0.522	7.397	0.000	Supported
H4	Leadership → Employee Performance	0.119	2.659	0.008	Supported
H5	Corporate Culture → Employee Performance	0.135	4.099	0.000	Supported
H6	Employee Motivation → Employee Performance	0.129	5.144	0.000	Supported
H7	Job Satisfaction → Employee Performance	0.692	2.026	0.012	Supported

As shown in Table 7, every hypothesized path is positive and statistically significant, so hypotheses H1 through H7 are all supported. Employee motivation is the strongest predictor of job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.522$), while job satisfaction is by far the strongest predictor of employee performance ($\beta = 0.692$), confirming its central mediating role in the model.

Discussion

The Effect of Leadership on Job Satisfaction

Leadership has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction at PT Mitra Utama Makmur ($\beta = 0.229$; $t = 3.639$; $p = 0.000$). This confirms that a leader's style and behavior is one of the main predictors of employee satisfaction: effective, particularly transformational and participatory, leadership raises satisfaction by offering individualized support, listening to employees' needs, and clarifying organizational roles and vision through transparent communication, whereas an overly autocratic or passive leadership style tends to create role ambiguity and a sense of powerlessness that fuels dissatisfaction. This finding is consistent with Firdawati and Masram (2023), Prasetyo et al. (2021), and Wiradyatmika (2022), who similarly found that leadership has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction.

The Effect of Corporate Culture on Job Satisfaction

Corporate culture has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.361$; $t = 2.951$; $p = 0.000$), the largest coefficient among the three predictors of satisfaction. A culture that emphasizes a human orientation, team collaboration, transparency, flexibility, and innovation tends to make employees feel more connected, motivated, and valued, and a workplace perceived as fair and supportive - a direct product of a strong culture - minimizes stress and conflict and thereby produces higher job satisfaction. This result is consistent with Utomo and Widiastuti (2023), Adriani et al. (2023), and Lianasari and Ahmadi (2022).

The Effect of Employee Motivation on Job Satisfaction

Employee motivation has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.522$; $t = 7.397$; $p = 0.000$), the strongest relationship in the satisfaction model. As the psychological drive that determines the direction, intensity, and persistence of effort, motivation is closely tied to satisfaction: motivated employees work with greater enthusiasm, find their tasks more meaningful, and experience the sense of accomplishment that underlies job satisfaction. This finding aligns with Kusumastuti and Edris (2022), Noverahman et al. (2023), and Patawari et al. (2023).

The Effect of Leadership on Employee Performance

Leadership has a significant positive effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.119$; $t = 2.659$; $p = 0.008$), the smallest coefficient among the predictors of performance but still significant. Effective leaders - whether transformational, in inspiring a shared vision, or transactional, in providing clear rewards - improve performance by clarifying roles and goals, motivating and developing their people, and creating an ethical, accountable working climate, acting as a catalyst that converts employee potential into concrete results. This finding supports Faizi et al. (2022), Indriani (2021), and Khasanah et al. (2023).

The Effect of Corporate Culture on Employee Performance

Corporate culture has a significant positive effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.135$; $t = 4.099$; $p = 0.000$). Although its direct coefficient on performance is smaller than its effect on job satisfaction, a strong, positive, and well-directed culture - one that emphasizes innovation, accountability, and results - still drives performance by ensuring employees hold values aligned with the organization's strategic goals, which in turn motivates collaboration and discretionary effort. This is consistent with Utomo and Widiastuti (2023), Adriani et al. (2023), and Nurhidayanti and Jaya (2024).

The Effect of Employee Motivation on Employee Performance

Employee motivation has a significant positive effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.129$; $t = 5.144$; $p = 0.000$). Motivation is the internal and external drive that determines the direction, intensity, and persistence of a worker's effort; highly motivated employees focus more, invest more time and energy, and persist through difficulties, converting willingness into action and translating skill into meaningful contribution and higher performance. This finding is in line with Pawerangi and Kamase (2022), Muchtar et al. (2023), and Nurhidayanti and Jaya (2024).

The Effect of Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance

Job satisfaction has a significant positive effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.692$; $t = 2.026$; $p = 0.012$), the largest coefficient in the entire model, confirming job satisfaction as the most dominant predictor of employee performance. Satisfied employees tend to hold a more positive attitude toward their work, show greater engagement, and exhibit lower turnover intention and absenteeism, which together contribute to more stable team performance and productivity; job satisfaction creates the optimal psychological condition that allows employees to maximize their effort and consistently maintain high-quality standards, even though performance also depends on ability, resources, and job design. This result supports Faizi et al. (2022), Yusuf and Isriana (2023), and Fatari et al. (2023).

Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, this study concludes that: (1) leadership has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ($t = 3.639$; $p = 0.000$); (2) corporate culture has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ($t = 2.951$; $p = 0.000$); (3) employee motivation has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ($t = 7.397$; $p = 0.000$); (4) leadership has a significant positive effect on employee performance ($t = 2.659$; $p = 0.008$); (5) corporate culture has a significant positive effect on employee performance ($t = 4.099$; $p = 0.000$); (6) employee motivation has a significant positive effect on employee performance ($t = 5.144$; $p = 0.000$); and (7) job satisfaction has a significant positive effect on employee performance ($t = 2.026$; $p = 0.012$) at PT Mitra Utama Makmur. Job satisfaction is confirmed as an important mediating variable that channels the influence of leadership, corporate culture, and employee motivation toward higher employee performance.

Based on the item-level findings, several practical recommendations are proposed. For leadership, management should provide targeted communication training for supervisors and establish simple feedback mechanisms - such as brief question-and-answer sessions or mandatory summaries - after important information is delivered, so that instructions and objectives are consistently understood. For corporate culture, the company should standardize a performance-feedback procedure that is constructive and delivered on time, supported by training for managers on how to give effective, non-judgmental feedback. For employee motivation, management should strengthen social bonds through team-building activities, cross-functional projects, or knowledge-sharing sessions, and leaders should actively promote a culture of mutual support. For job satisfaction, a comprehensive review of the pay and compensation structure is recommended, benchmarked against industry standards and actual workload, together with greater transparency about how compensation relates to responsibility and performance. Finally, for employee performance, a more accurate workload analysis should be carried out to ensure that time targets are realistic, complemented by training in time management, task prioritization, and the use of tools that improve work efficiency. Beyond these specific measures, PT Mitra Utama Makmur is advised to periodically review its leadership development programs, cultural initiatives, and motivational schemes, since sustaining job satisfaction is the most direct lever for improving employee performance in a company that operates in the fast-moving, globally exposed environment of fertilizer importation.

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