

# The Impact of Multifactor Leadership Style and Organizational Performance toward Employee Performance: A Case Study of Harbin Institute of Technology, Heilongjiang, China

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Received: 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Accepted for publication: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023

Published: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023

## Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to identify the impact of multi-factor leadership style and organizational culture on employee performance at Harbin Institute of Technology. The quantitative approach with a five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to determine the level, the relationship, and influence of multi-factor leadership style and organizational culture on employee performance. A sample size of 144 respondents was selected from the organization of this study. The set of questionnaires was distributed to the employees of the Harbin Institute of Technology located in Heilongjiang Province, China. In analyzing data collection, SPSS software Version 23 was used. Descriptive Analysis was applied to find the level of the variables in the study and Pearson's correlation and regression analysis were used to find the relationship and the influence of the predictor variables on the response variable.

**Keywords:** Leadership styles, MLQ leadership, organizational culture, workplace culture, employee performance

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## Introduction

The focus of this research study was to determine the impact on employee performance due to multi-factor leadership style and organizational culture for the Harbin Institute of Technology. The primary existence of the private company as in the case of Harbin Institute of Technology is to make a profit. To realize profit besides selling the product at a competitive price, the organization will have to manage the resources efficiently. The resources of an organization are human, and employees are the key to its success. It is therefore important that the company takes the necessary steps to ensure that their well-being is taken care of. Doing so will allow the employees to perform at their best.

The multi-factor leadership style and workplace culture are the key determinants to ensure employees are always at high motivation levels. The environment within the organization can influence positively employee performance. Leaders are the ones that make or break the organizations. Successful businesses are driven by strong and effective leaders (Taty & Basir, 2016). In the current dynamic environment of businesses, the need for strong leadership styles is highly sought to steer businesses to high performance (Hurduzeu, 2015).

Some people would argue that leaders are born and some would say that leaders are to be nurtured. Both arguments are right to some extent. The inborn qualities that make a leader are not sufficient to make someone a good leader (Saeed, Hussain, Ali, & Hussain, 2016). Accumulation of experiences, acquisition of knowledge, and development of personal qualities are all recommended to make someone an effective leader (Northouse, 2016). The attributes to be an effective leader are vision, integrity, dedication, self-confidence, intellectual drive and knowledge, charisma, courage, creativity, good values, and ethics (Northouse, 2016).

## Literature Review

In today's world, leaders are expected to respond to the change. World has witnessed major changes in the global business environment that have altered the way businesses are being conducted and required adjustments from the leaders to adapt to the dynamic change to manage the organizations. Kotter (2001) states that leadership is about managing change. He stresses that among the factors contributing to the change is the business world becoming more competitive and volatile, technological advancement, the deregulation of the markets, and greater competition in the international markets (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018).

Kotter (2001) emphasizes that there is a difference between management and leadership. Management is to deal with the complexity of the organization such as its practices and procedures. A leader is expected to cope with the change. If the organization has strong leadership but weak management, it is no better. If the reverse, strong management but weak leadership is also not a good combination. The challenge is to find the right balance between strong leadership and strong management (Kotter, 2001).

Business today requires organizations to operate at optimal levels due to competition from many fronts if they want to stay relevant in their businesses. Leaders need supportive teams to execute and manage the complexity of the business. Leaders have the power to influence people to execute the realized goals. Therefore, for the sake of the organization, motivated employees will perform to their capabilities under the influence of effective leaders. In the current scenario, leaders are not only expected to lead and motivate the team but also leaders are expected to take care of the well-being of their employees (Kotter, 2001).

Another factor besides having influenced leaders or good leadership styles which can boost the performance of employees is having the right kind of culture at the workplace. Organizational culture is a set of values and norms shared by organization members and expressed through symbols understood by the team members (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayiv, & Sanders, 1990; Janicijevic, Nikcevic, & Vasic, 2018). The organizational culture is created through social interaction among the organization members and it is a collective and not individual construct and shared across the group (Schein, 2004).

The organizational culture is a crucial element in the organization mainly it helps the organization to understand intergroup conflicts and if the organization can develop the right culture, the organization is destined for great success (Schein, 2004). The decisions and actions of the managers and employees undertake and the interactions among the employees are determined by the value and norms of the organizational culture (Janicijevic et al. 2018). To enhance employee performance, the organization must possess strong leadership styles and the right climate of culture at the workplace.

Research findings have shown that employee performance is positively related to the leadership styles employed at the organization and also positively related to the conducive work culture or environment of the organization (Burg-Brown, 2016). Numerous studies on a similar subject have been made by many researchers. In any organization, the success of the organizations will depend on the organizational performance, job satisfaction of the employees, and affective commitment by the employees (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Drucker, 2007). In the same breath, it can be said that the success or failure of any organization depends on employee performance.

Leadership that encourages teamwork, creativity, and innovation, and fosters good communication will lead to increased employee performance, job satisfaction, and increased productivity (Basit, Sebastian, & Hassan, 2017). On the other hand, organizational culture is a factor that can be considered either as a stimulus to employee performance or as a restraining growth to employee performance (Naranjo - Valencia, Jimenez - Jimenez, & Sanz-Valle, 2016). What is not known is whether the employees' performance at Harbin Institute of Technology is affected by the leadership styles and its organizational culture.

Based on the findings done from previous studies, the researcher found that there is a gap to examine the role of leadership styles and organizational culture play in employee performance at Harbin Institute of Technology. To survive in the ever-dynamic environment of manufacturing business and to fend off the competitors from the same industry, there is a need for the Harbin Institute of Technology organization to evaluate the relationship of the top management of the firm and the workplace culture that can bolster the employee performance. Employee performance is important in the manufacturing sector because the workforce is the main catalyst for the progression of other performances such as a falling rate of rejection, increase work efficiency, low turnover, and job satisfaction rate. Because of this, it is necessary to examine the impact of multifactor leadership style and organizational culture on employee performance in the organization.

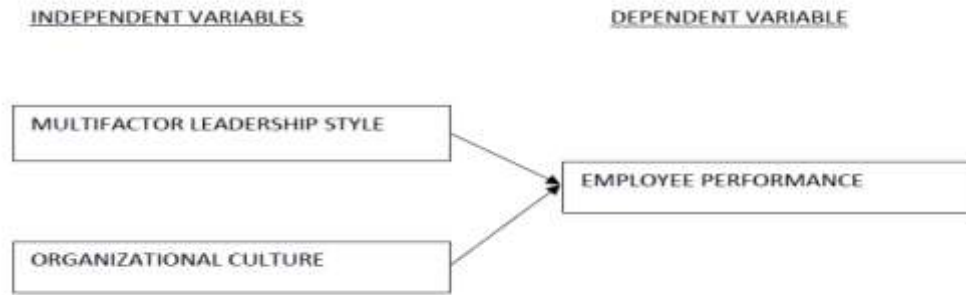


Figure 1: Research Framework

## Research Objectives

From the formulation of the problem, this research was conducted with the aim of:

1. To examine the level of multifactor leadership style, organizational culture, and employee performance at the Harbin Institute of Technology
2. To examine the relationship and influence of multifactor leadership style on employee performance at Harbin Institute of Technology
3. To examine the relationship and influence of organizational culture on employee performance at the Harbin Institute of Technology

## Research Methodology and Data Analysis

Population refers to a complete set of elements of individuals or objects having the same characteristics or traits defined by sampling criteria. Those sampling criteria are established by the researcher. The population for this study is the employees of Harbin Institute of Technology which consists of 232 employees under payroll. The assistant researcher is excluded from this study. As Harbin Institute of Technology represents a research institute in China, the result findings from this study can be used as a benchmark for further study of the research institute in China.

The sample size is considered an important feature in survey research design (Bartlett, Kotlik, & Higgins, 2001; Anandri, 2016). The researcher used a random selection procedure to choose participants and the sample will be representative of the population. The sample was made up of employees of Harbin Institute of Technology from management positions to supervisor levels and general workers are excluded from this study.

The researcher handed out the questionnaire to the representatives of the organization for all department representatives how to fill up the questionnaire. The researcher gave them ample time to fill up the questionnaire and would collect it back two weeks later. To ensure the high number of returned questionnaires and high quality of data collection, the researcher followed up with the representatives of the respondents by telephone calls and visits. Voght (2007) stressed that to receive high-quality data collection and high return of the research questionnaires, the researcher needs to make a frequent follow-up with the respondents. The researcher collected the filled questionnaires from the respondent's representatives after the due date. There was a total of 118 returned questionnaires were collected and 26 sets of questionnaires were not returned. The percentage of questionnaires collected was 81.94 percent out of a total of 144 sets of questionnaires distributed. The rate of returned questionnaires is considered high due to persistent follow-up by the researcher. Table 3.2 shows the respondent's responses to the survey questionnaire.

Table 1: Respondent's Response to Survey Questionnaire

Details	N	%
Number of questionnaires distributed	144	100.0
Number of questionnaires returned	118	81.94
Number of questionnaires unreturned	26	18.06
Number of questionnaires uncompleted	0	0
Number of questionnaires used in research	118	81.94

The research instrument in this present study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire survey was used to collect the research data. Chua (2012) asserted that the norm of social science research is to use the questionnaire as a research instrument which is designed specifically to collect data. An instrument is a tool for any specific research and it must be used to collect data and it can be moulded, modified, and tailor-made on the basis that it is adapted from the existing instrument and suit the demand of the researcher (Chua, 2012).

In this study, the researcher utilizes a set of questionnaires as a research instrument and respondents will answer those questionnaire surveys individually. The questionnaire is divided into four parts. The first part is the demographic information about the participants. The second part is the multifactor leadership style questionnaires based on three styles of leadership behavior developed by Bass and Avolio (1995) to examine the multifactor leadership style practiced at the Harbin Institute of Technology organization. The third part is to examine the organizational culture practiced at Harbin Institute of Technology and the last part is to survey the employee performance. Except for the first part, all the other parts used the 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire in the study was based on previous research and the researcher has to make a few adjustments to suit the structure of the organization in the study.

For this study, as mentioned earlier, the researcher will utilize a set questionnaire as an instrument that will be answered by the respondents individually. The said questionnaire consists of three parts that include demographic information, workload, role ambiguity, work environment, and cyber-loafing which have 32 items in total. The components of the questionnaire items are shown in Table 2.-.

Table 2: Number of Items in the Questionnaire

No	Section	Number of Items	Source
1	A: Demographic Information	6	Demography
2	B: Multifactor Leadership Style	45	MLQ-5X – Avilio and Bass (1995)
3	C: Organizational Culture	16	Quinn and Spreitzer’s Instrument (1991)
4	D: Employee Performance	20	Role-based Performance Appraisal – Welbourne T.M., Johnson D.E. and Erez A. (1998)
Total of Items		87	

In summary, the questionnaire survey which acts as a research instrument consists of 87 items and is estimated to take less than 30 minutes to answer all the questions in the questionnaire. Section A in this questionnaire used a nominal scale, and sections B, C, and D used to scale as a unit of measurement utilizing the Likert 5-point scale whereby number 1 represents the statement “Strongly Disagree”, number 2 represents the statement “Disagree”, number 3 represents the statement “Neutral”, number 4 represents the statement “Agree” and finally number 5 represents the statement “Strongly Agree”. Babbie (2007) suggests that the Likert scale is most suitable to measure questionnaire responses from the respondents.

## Findings and Interpretation

As the aim of the study is to examine three objectives which are to identify the level, relationship, and influence between the predictor variables and response variable, this chapter will discuss in detail these three objectives. The objectives of the research had been achieved by deploying the descriptive analysis method by utilizing mean and standard deviation, Pearson’s Correlation Test, and Linear Regression Analysis. In this regard, further discussion will focus on these objectives and their hypotheses testing.

### *Objective 1: To examine the level of multifactor leadership style, organizational culture, and employee performance at the Harbin Institute of Technology*

The researcher used descriptive analysis to answer the question “What is the level of multifactor leadership style, organizational culture, and employee performance at Harbin Institute of Technology?” Overall, based on descriptive analysis which utilized mean and standard deviation, the research findings show that overall, the respondents scored multifactor leadership style at a high level (mean = 3.6166, SD = 0.19371) whilst organizational culture weighted at a high level with the mean = 3.4915 and SD = 0.50742 as well. Employee performance scores (mean = 3.45, SD = 4.0568) showed a high level among the respondents.

*Objective 2: To examine the relationship and influence of multifactor leadership style on employee performance at the Harbin Institute of Technology*

For the second objective and in parallel to the research question on the relationship and the influence between independent variable and dependent variable which is “What is the relationship and influence of multifactor leadership style toward employee performance at Harbin Institute of Technology?” To find an answer to this particular question, inferential statistical analysis was employed with Pearson’s correlation test and linear regression analysis with the “Enter “method on a predefined hypothesis. For Pearson’s correlation test, the results yielded  $p\text{-value} = 0.01$  and the correlation coefficient  $r = 0.565$  for the multifactor leadership style. The interpretation of these results indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between the predictor variables and the response variable. This relationship between multifactor leadership and employee performance is considered a strong relationship. Meanwhile, the result of linear regression analysis also shows multifactor leadership style has a significant influence on employee performance with the value  $R = 0.565$  and  $R^2 = 0.319$ . Therefore, the researcher has concluded that the multifactor leadership style has a significant relationship and a significant influence to determine employee performance at the Harbin Institute of Technology.

*Objective 3: To examine the relationship and influence of organizational culture on employee performance at Harbin Institute of Technology.*

This is the third objective of the research paper. This objective led to the question of the relationship and influence of organizational culture on the response variable which is “What is the relationship and influence of organizational culture toward employee performance at Harbin Institute of Technology?” To find an answer to this particular question, inferential statistical analysis was employed with Pearson’s correlation test and linear regression analysis with the “Enter “method on predefined hypotheses. For Pearson’s correlation test, the results yielded  $p\text{-value} = 0.01$  and the correlation coefficient  $r = 0.237$  for organizational culture. The interpretation of these results indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between the predictor variables and response variable but the value of significance is low. This relationship between organizational culture and employee performance is considered a weak relationship. Meanwhile, the result of linear regression analysis also shows organizational culture has only a slightly significant influence on employee performance with the value  $R = 0.237$  and  $R^2 = 0.056$ . Therefore, the researcher has concluded that organizational culture has a very minimal significant influence to determine employee performance at the Harbin Institute of Technology.

There is a leadership style that is practiced at Harbin Institute of Technology Since the research only to find out to what extent the level, the relationship, and the influence of the multifactor leadership style toward employee performance, the researcher is in the opinion that the questionnaire on multifactor leadership style can be broken down further to identify if the Harbin Institute of Technology organization applies a transformational leadership, or transactional leadership, or laissez-faire leadership. As this research concentrates on three objectives as outlined earlier in chapter one, the researcher can suggest Harbin Institute of Technology take a look at the transformation of leadership styles to be the new paradigm in their organization. It is considered the proactive leadership style as its leaders exercise flexibility in the implementation of policies, processes, and procedures with the thought of employees’ implication at the back of their minds (Burg-Brown, 2016). Furthermore, the transformational method is widely used compared to the other leadership styles.

## Conclusion

Harbin Institute of Technology also needs to nurture the ‘right’ organizational culture. As Schein (2004) suggested the basic underlying assumptions are powerful enough to be part of organizational culture. Harbin Institute of Technology must be proactive to instil a culture of cooperation among its employees as the organizational culture can have a direct impact on employee performance. Schein (2004) states that organizational culture relates to the internal environment of the organization which observed people within the organization perform their duties and reach goals set up by the organization.

At the same time, the management of Harbin Institute of Technology needs to be aware that the well beings of the employees are of the utmost importance to bolster employee performance. As long as the employees feel that the basic needs such as food, safety, love, and self-esteem; the employees will concentrate on their work. Employee performance will also increase provided that the organization subscribes to McClelland’s Achievement Theory which called for the need for achievement, need for affiliation, and need for power.

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