



## LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AND EMPLOYEE JOB PERFORMANCE IN VIETNAMESE BANKS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>DOI: 10.52932/jfmr.v4i1en.741</p> <p><i>Received:</i> January 17, 2025</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> November 14, 2025</p> <p><i>Published:</i> March 25, 2026</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Commercial bank, Employee job performance, Leadership behaviour, Organisational culture</p> <p><b>JEL codes:</b> D29, M14, M10</p>	<p>This study explores the impact of leadership behaviour on employee job performance and the mediating role of organisational culture in Vietnamese commercial banks. Data are collected from 561 full-time employees at 31 joint stock commercial banks, out of 800 distributed survey forms through three channels, including internal email, direct distribution at branches/transaction offices, and social networks (a valid response rate reached 70.1%). The data were analyzed using covariance structural equation modelling (CB-SEM). The results showed that leadership behavior has a direct, positive, and statistically significant impact on employee performance at commercial banks. Organizational culture also has a positive impact on performance, and there is a statistically significant mediating effect in the relationship between leadership behavior and performance. However, the level of mediation is relatively small, suggesting that the impact of leadership behavior on performance mainly occurs through the direct channel, while the transmission channel through culture plays an additional supporting role. The study contributes to extending the application of Total Leadership theory and organizational culture theoretical framework to the context of emerging market banking, clarifying the direct and indirect impact mechanisms influenced by the characteristics of control, compliance, and performance pressure in the industry. In practical terms, the results suggest that bank managers should prioritize developing directive, supportive, and participative leadership behaviors, while reinforcing positive cultural values such as transparency, collaboration, and trust to enhance employee performance. These help enhance organisational competitiveness in the banking industry, which is undergoing rapid technological, human resources, and customer behaviour changes.</p>

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## 1. Introduction

In an increasingly competitive and volatile banking industry, leadership behaviour plays a key role in the survival and sustainable development of the organisation (Sánchez-García et al. 2024). The Vietnamese banking industry, as the backbone of the national financial system, is under tremendous pressure to improve work performance and human resource quality, especially in the context of digital transformation, changing customer behaviour and increasing market demands (Wang, 2019). In that context, leadership behaviour guides strategy, shapes organisational culture, and promotes employee performance. Many studies have shown that effective leadership behaviours, especially with a positive organisational culture, can increase job satisfaction and improve employee job performance (Tsai, 2011). Leaders play a central role in managing stressors and creating a positive work environment, thereby improving morale and productivity (López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). Recognition serves as a strong motivator, satisfying employees' intrinsic needs for esteem and belonging. Jo and Shin (2025) show that recognition significantly impacts job satisfaction and morale, leading to enhanced employee outcomes. In addition, Braun et al. (2013) and Zhu et al. (2004) indicate that ethical leadership significantly contributes to the development of employee identity and psychological empowerment, which in turn leads to enhanced job performance and organizational commitment. While Ethical leaders tend to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment, as ethical leaders model integrity and accountability (Serang et al., 2024).

However, the impact of leadership behaviours is different. When leaders adopt participative behaviours, employees feel valued and empowered, increasing morale and productivity (Baldonado, 2019). For example, supportive leadership behaviours can reduce

job stress and improve performance outcomes (Sandya & Kumar, 2024).

In addition, organisational culture is a fundamental factor that helps connect leadership behaviour with employee performance. Organisational culture is expressed through shared values, norms, and beliefs that create a directional work environment and strongly influence employee engagement and adaptability (Schein, 2010). A positive culture helps strengthen trust, communication, and cooperation, improving work performance (Dang & Pham, 2020). Employees who identify with organisational culture tend to be more proactive and committed to their work (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). However, the role of leadership and organisational culture has been widely studied. However, does leadership behaviour significantly impact employee performance, and what role does organisational culture play in mediating this relationship? Very few studies still focus on the mediating role of organisational culture in the relationship between leadership behaviour and performance, especially in Vietnamese commercial banks. Mardikaningsih (2016) mainly confirms the direct relationship between leadership and performance, but has not clarified the influence mechanism through organisational culture, especially in emerging market conditions.

In the context of the increasingly competitive Vietnamese financial and banking market, maintaining a high-performing workforce has become a key priority for commercial banks. However, employee performance does not only come from individual capacity but is also strongly influenced by leadership behavior and internal cultural characteristics. While there is much evidence internationally showing the role of leadership and organizational culture on work efficiency, in Vietnam, in-depth studies in the banking industry are still limited,

especially studies examining the indirect impact mechanism through organizational culture. From that gap, this study was conducted to clarify the relationship between leadership behavior and work performance of employees with one year or more of seniority at 31 Vietnamese joint stock commercial banks and, at the same time, explore the mediating role of organizational culture in this relationship. Based on the Total Leadership theoretical framework (Avolio, 2011), the study argues that effective leadership behaviors, such as inspiring, goal-oriented, and supportive employees, will improve work performance, especially when reinforced by a positive organizational culture. The SEM analysis method, along with a representative sample from commercial banks in Vietnam, is employed to ensure the reliability and general validity of the results. The study adds empirical evidence in the context of Vietnamese banks, where organisational culture and leadership behaviours are specifically influenced by the East Asian governance model. This expands the understanding of the indirect impact mechanism of leadership through organizational culture as an important mediating variable. In terms of management, the findings offer practical implications for banks to enhance their leadership style, foster a positive work environment, and promote employee performance, ultimately contributing to improved competitiveness and enhanced human resource quality.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Theoretical background

#### *Social Exchange Theory (SET)*

According to SET (Blau, 1964), the relationship between leaders and employees is maintained based on the principles of exchange and reciprocity. When leaders show support, respect, transparency, or recognition of contributions, employees form positive feelings

about the organization's care and fairness. This perception motivates them to respond with greater cooperation, commitment, and effort in their work, thereby enhancing individual performance (Jiatong et al., 2022). Thus, SET explains that leadership behavior not only creates psychological motivation for employees but also forms long-term exchange expectations through trust and commitment. This exchange mechanism, when occurring regularly and consistently, is reinforced as a collective norm and contributes to the formation of organizational culture. Shared values such as support, cooperation, information sharing, and trust are maintained internally, creating a positive cultural environment that shapes employee behavior and guides how they perform their work (Peng & Kim, 2020). Sekiguchi et al. (2008) assert that culture acts as a conduit through which leadership behaviors influence employee motivation and performance through shared expectations and internal cohesion. Similarly, Chen et al. (2013) show that the formation of exchange and support norms in the organization helps employees increase voluntary behavior, cooperation, and improve work performance. In addition, studies on ethical leadership also reinforce the argument of SET. When leaders act fairly, transparently, and respectfully, employees develop higher levels of trust and loyalty, which, in turn, increase motivation and performance (Xia et al., 2024; Ouakouak et al., 2020). It is reciprocity, the core element of SET, that explains why employees tend to reward positive leadership behaviors with increased effort and performance. From an organizational perspective, culture serves as a transmission mechanism for this process. A supportive and cohesive culture helps maintain positive exchange norms and amplifies the impact of leadership on performance (Xenikou & Simosi, 2006). Therefore, SET provides a suitable theoretical basis for explaining that leaders create positive interactions, which

accumulate into cultural norms and ultimately improve employee performance.

### *Resource Support Theory (RST)*

According to RST, employee performance depends significantly on the resources provided by the organization, including work tools, information, training, feedback, and psychological support (Hobfoll, 1989). When leaders play a supportive role, such as providing guidance, handling obstacles, facilitating access to information, or recognizing efforts, employees feel that they have the resources to complete tasks, thereby improving motivation and performance. Recent studies have demonstrated that effective leadership styles, particularly transformational leadership, are closely associated with a highly engaged, committed, and productive workforce (Katou et al., 2021; Park et al., 2021). This effect not only occurs at the individual level but is maintained and spread through collective norms, thereby forming a supportive organisational culture. A cultural environment that encourages collaboration, information sharing, and open communication enables employees to access resources more efficiently, reduces coordination conflicts, and enhances work productivity. Xenikou and Simosi (2006) note that a positive culture can amplify the benefits of effective leadership styles, as supportive cultural norms enhance employees' initiative and cooperativeness, thereby improving collective performance. In addition, employee engagement is considered a direct result of a resource-rich environment. Park et al. (2021) demonstrate that employees who receive adequate training, information, and support from their leaders exhibit higher levels of engagement, resulting in superior performance. This is a crucial example of how leaders offer tools to create a culture of support, boost engagement, and enhance performance. Similarly, Fard and Zarghamifard (2020) found that employees who perceive organizational

support tend to express higher job satisfaction, commitment, and better performance. This confirms that leadership practices tailored to employee needs, such as providing timely feedback, empowering employees, and offering learning opportunities, contribute to the formation of a supportive culture and promote performance. A culture based on trust, shared values, and collaboration helps employees reduce work stress and better cope with compliance requirements and KPI pressures, thereby facilitating high performance (Alharbi et al., 2022).

### **2.2. Hypotheses development**

#### *The Relationship Between Leadership Behaviour and Employee Job Performance*

According to Northouse (2013) and Yukl (2008), an essential component of effective leadership is building positive relationships with employees through authority, direction, and commitment. Chiniara and Bentein (2016) demonstrate that leadership can strongly predict need satisfaction, improving job performance. Moreover, the study was conducted within a Canadian company, limiting the generalisation ability. In the context of Chinese banking, Wang et al. (2019) show that meeting employees' spiritual needs improves performance. They also emphasise that the study needs to be extended to other countries and industries for verification. Results from Spain (López-Cabarcos et al., 2022) further confirm the critical role of leadership behaviour in enhancing motivation and performance, but are limited by small sample sizes or industry specificity, leading to low representativeness.

In contrast, Kebe et al. (2024) demonstrate that leadership substantially impacts employee performance in banks, emphasising the importance of effective leadership style in maintaining organisational productivity and effectiveness. These mixed results suggest that

the relationship between leadership behaviour and employee performance is not uniform, but is strongly influenced by contextual and organisational characteristics. In addition, many other studies have also shown that the impact of leadership behaviour can vary depending on environmental factors and employee autonomy. Meanwhile, some studies, such as Eliyana et al. (2019), noted a negligible impact of leadership behaviour, especially in environments where employees tend to be highly self-managed. These mixed findings suggest that the effects of leadership behaviour on job performance are not universal, but are strongly influenced by organisational and industry contexts. For the Vietnamese banking industry, where the working environment is highly sales-driven, fiercely competitive, and impacted by financial technology changes, there is still a lack of in-depth research on how leadership behaviours affect employee performance. This gap is significant because banking is a labour-intensive industry, and employee performance is key to achieving strategic goals. Therefore, the current study is expected to add empirical evidence in the Vietnamese context to clarify this relationship.

*Hypothesis H<sub>1</sub>:* Leadership behaviours significantly positively impact bank employees' job performance in Vietnam.

#### *The Relationship Between Leadership Behaviour and Organisational Culture*

The relationship between leadership behaviour and organisational culture is closely interactive and interdependent. Many studies have confirmed that supportive leadership can promote trust and encourage open communication and cooperation between groups, which are key factors to improve organisational effectiveness (Gelfand et al., 2012). In addition, Leadership establishes an ethical culture within organizations that can

significantly boost employee engagement and foster a sense of organizational identification (Burhan et al., 2023). Some other evidence also supports this view. Ali et al. (2021) argue that humble and supportive leadership behaviours can only have their maximum impact when embedded in a positive organisational culture, reflecting the complementary nature of the two. At the project level, organisational culture has also been shown to shape strategy, allocate resources, and develop people-oriented values (Ajmal & Koskinen, 2008). Sharing vision, communicating policies, or training teams requires leadership engagement to foster collaboration and support (Zheng et al., 2019). When employees have faith in their leaders, it positively affects their willingness to cooperate, share knowledge, and engage actively with their tasks (Lee & Rasdi, 2025). Conversely, environments characterized by toxic leadership often evolve into cultures of silence, where employees refrain from innovation and communication due to fear of retribution and a lack of psychological safety (Tsapnidou et al., 2025). This suggests that the impact of leadership behaviours on organisational performance can be positive and negative, depending on style and context. Although many international studies have confirmed this relationship, most have been conducted in healthcare, education, or the public sector; the financial and banking sector still lacks empirical evidence. Particularly in Vietnam, where banks substantially transform technology and governance, the interaction between leadership behaviours and organisational performance has not been fully explored. This gap allows the current study to supplement empirical evidence and shed light on how leadership can shape organisational performance in the banking industry.

*Hypothesis H<sub>2</sub>:* Leadership behaviour significantly impacts organisational culture in Vietnamese commercial banks.

*The relationship Between organisational culture and Employee job performance*

Many studies have confirmed the role of organisational culture in improving employee performance. Kim and Jung (2022) argue that a strong culture can help reduce stress, improving overall performance. In various industries, studies have also shown that a supportive organisational culture can strengthen employee commitment and long-term attachment to the organisation, as in the case of IT employees in India (Khan et al., 2021). Unpleasant experiences, such as workplace bullying and abusive supervision, create a hostile atmosphere where employees may feel their efforts are unnoticed or unappreciated, leading to feelings of helplessness and burnout (Rasool et al., 2021). Even when organisational culture does not encourage initiative and autonomy, employee motivation can be significantly weakened (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). These findings suggest that organisational culture can motivate and enhance performance, but can also have a negative impact if it lacks appropriate support and direction. Furthermore, Nwakoby et al. (2019) found that bureaucratic culture does not significantly influence employee performance in banks. Another finding is that an innovation culture significantly impacts employee performance in banks. However, most of the above studies focus on the public, education, IT, or public service sectors. In contrast, empirical evidence in the banking and finance sector, especially in developing economies like Vietnam, is still limited. Moreover, the nature of the banking industry requires employees to be under high pressure, have large workloads, and have strict sales targets, so organisational culture can play a key role in maintaining motivation and improving performance. This gap raises the need for further research to clarify the relationship between organisational culture and employee performance in Vietnamese banks.

*Hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>*: Positive organisational culture has a positive influence on employee job performance.

*The mediating role of organisational culture in the relationship between leadership behaviour and job performance*

Organisational culture has been found to mediate many relationships, for example, between transformational leadership and change management in virtual teams (Kaur Bagga et al., 2023), total quality management (TQM) and performance in small and medium-sized enterprises (Hilman et al., 2020), and transformational leadership and employee performance (Virgiawan et al., 2021). Many studies have shown that organisational culture significantly impacts the relationship between leadership behaviour and job performance. Leadership influences performance directly and indirectly through shaping and reinforcing organisational culture (Pathiranage, 2019). Without strong leadership, it will not be easy to create a company with a strong and sustainable culture (Tran, 2021). According to Pham et al. (2019), providing employees with opportunities will increase the impact of competencies on human resource management performance. Effective leaders will enhance a supportive culture, which in turn promotes higher performance in employees (Jiatong et al., 2022). Ethical leadership has also been shown to align positively with organizational culture, propelling employees toward improved performance through enhanced job satisfaction and commitment (Sadat & Nilasari, 2022). Leaders who demonstrate adaptive and ethical leadership behaviors significantly enhance organizational culture, which in turn benefits employee performance (Yuliasuti & Tandio, 2020). The following are the hypotheses:

*Hypothesis H<sub>4</sub>*: Organisational culture as a mediator between leadership behaviour and employee job performance.

### 3. Data and methodology

#### 3.1. Data

The survey subjects of the study are employees working at 31 joint stock commercial banks (JSCs) in Vietnam with at least 1 year of experience. These banks account for a large proportion of the national financial system, with an estimated workforce of hundreds of thousands of employees, clearly reflecting the industry's diversity in size, organisational structure, and operating characteristics. The selection of this scope is not intended to count the number of employees in the entire sector fully, but to create a solid, practical foundation for testing the research model. The minimum sample size was determined using G\*Power software, as Nogales et al. (2025) applied in recent quantitative studies. The results show that at least 297 valid observations are needed to ensure statistical reliability. On this basis, the study collected data using a non-probability sampling method, combining purposefulness and convenience, suitable for the actual conditions of accessing bank employees. The questionnaire is distributed through various channels: (i) sent through the human resources department of some banks (if approved); (ii) distributed directly at branches and transaction offices during the field survey; and (iii) distributed online via platforms such as Zalo, Facebook, LinkedIn, and personal emails. Combining multiple survey formats and locations (urban and local, headquarters and branches) increased diversity and minimised sampling bias (*see Appendix 6 online*).

#### 3.2. Research methods

The initial questionnaire is built and completed based on the reference of previous theoretical documents and research. First, the author conducted a pilot survey with 50 employees from several banks to test the preliminary reliability of the scale, adjust the questions, and complete the official

questionnaire. Then, the official survey is deployed on a large scale. The collected data are coded, cleaned and processed. Demographic information is analysed using descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of the research sample.

Data analysis methods include descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modelling (SEM). In the CFA and SEM stages, the study applies Covariance-Based SEM (CB-SEM) using AMOS software, because this method allows for a comprehensive assessment of model fit and rigorous testing of research hypotheses.

*Exploratory factor analysis (EFA).* EFA is used to distil observed variables into principal components and determine the latent structure of the scale. The number of extracted factors is determined based on the criteria: (i) elbow curve shape in the Scree diagram; (ii) cumulative variance percentage; (iii) KMO coefficient  $\geq 0.6$  to ensure sample adequacy, (iv) eigenvalue  $> 1.0$ ; and (v) Bartlett's Test is statistically significant, demonstrating a strong enough correlation between observed variables (Pallant, 2020; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

*Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).* CFA is performed to test the measurement model and evaluate the relationship between latent factors and observed variables. In this study, CFA was conducted using CB-SEM on AMOS to confirm the theoretical structure of the research concepts, including leadership behaviour, organisational culture and work performance. In addition, CFA was also used to assess reliability ( $CR \geq 0.7$ ), convergent validity ( $AVE \geq 0.5$ ) and discriminant validity (ensuring  $MSV < AVE$ ,  $ASV < AVE$ ).

*Assess model fit.* The factor structure determined from EFA was compared with the theoretical model through CFA. Model fit was assessed based on the recommended

indices in CB-SEM, including: Chi-square/df (CMIN/DF), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted GFI (AGFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Root Mean Square Residual (RMR), and PCLOSE (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

*Structural equation modelling (SEM).* After confirming the reliability and validity of the measurement model, SEM was used to test the relationship between the latent variables in the research model. The CB-SEM approach allows for simultaneous assessment of the direct and indirect relationships between leadership behaviour, organisational culture, and job performance, thereby testing the research hypotheses and clarifying the impact mechanism in the context of Vietnamese commercial banks.

#### 4. Result and discussion

Before conducting formal analysis, the 580 collected surveys were checked for missing or incorrect information. The results showed that 19 surveys had missing data in many important items and were removed from the dataset. The remaining surveys fully met the criteria for processing and SEM analysis, so 561 valid surveys were used as the research sample. The missing data rate was 3.28% (19/580), lower than the threshold of 5% according to Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019, indicating that this removal did not affect the statistical quality of the dataset.

The research sample consisted of 561 commercial bank employees with a fairly diverse demographic structure and well represented the current banking workforce. In terms of gender, men accounted for 53.65% and women accounted for 46.35%, reflecting a fairly balanced distribution between the two groups. The working age is mainly concentrated from

25 to under 45 years old (62.39%), a group in the career development stage and under high pressure on productivity, in line with the characteristics of the banking industry. The educational level is generally high, 62.92% have university degrees and 26.56% have postgraduate degrees, showing that the workforce is well-trained and has the ability to adapt to increasingly complex professional requirements. The working seniority is relatively dispersed, of which 44.39% have more than 10 years of experience, demonstrating the stability and accumulation of expertise of the long-term workforce; at the same time, the remaining 55.61% belong to the group of young personnel with development potential. Income levels also reflect the characteristics of the banking labor market, concentrated mainly in the group from 15 to under 25 million VND/month (37.25%), followed by the group from 25 to under 35 million VND (18.18%) and the group from 35 to under 45 million VND (17.47%). This distribution shows that the majority of employees are at the average-good income level, consistent with the salary characteristics according to position and seniority in the industry. For the detail see Appendix 1.

##### 4.1. Exploratory factor analysis

The scales tested by EFA showed high reliability, with KMO coefficients ranging from 0.780 to 0.943, and Bartlett's Test all yielded significant results ( $p < 0.000$ ). Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the scales were all above 0.8 and mostly above 0.9, ensuring good internal consistency. Factor loading coefficients of observed variables ranged from 0.548 to 0.882; variables with factor loadings below 0.7 were still above the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010) and should be retained to ensure content validity. The total explained variance of the factors all exceeded 55%, with the job performance scale reaching 78.634%, showing that the measurement model fit the data. Details

of the EFA index and factor loading matrix are presented in Appendix 2.

#### **4.2. Testing normal distribution and model robustness**

The results of the univariate normality test indicate that many observed variables have skewness and kurtosis values within the acceptable range ( $|\text{skew}| < 2$ ;  $|\text{kurtosis}| < 7$ ), which is consistent with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2017). However, at the multivariate level, the data do not meet the standard. The Mardia index indicates that the multivariate kurtosis is 122.387 with a C.R. of 25.630, which exceeds the threshold of 5 proposed by Byrne (2010) and Kline (2023). This indicates that the data violate the multivariate normality assumption, a common feature in studies that use Likert scales.

Due to the violation of multivariate normality, the study applied the bootstrap method with 5,000 replicate samples and bias-corrected confidence intervals to assess the stability of the estimates in SEM. The results show that the bias error of the parameters is very small (approximately 0.000–0.005), and the regression coefficients remain statistically significant after correction. This confirms that the model has high stability, and the estimation results are reliable even when the data do not follow a normal distribution, in accordance with the recommendations of Byrne (2010) and Hair et al. (2010). (Details results are presented in Appendix 4)

#### **4.3. Confirmatory factor analysis**

CFA analysis was used to test the fit of the measurement model and assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the scales. The results showed that most of the scales had factor loadings ranging from 0.55 to 0.88; the model fit indices were all at acceptable levels with TLI,

CFI, and GFI  $> 0.95$ ; RMR  $< 0.04$ ; and RMSEA  $< 0.08$  for most of the scales. CMIN/DF ranged from 1.67 to 3.62, reflecting a good fit.

The Directive Leadership scale alone had an RMSEA of 0.105 and a CMIN/DF of 7.218, which is higher than the recommended threshold. However, the factor loadings were all above 0.5, while the convergent validity and composite reliability (CR  $> 0.7$ , AVE  $> 0.5$ ) still met the requirements. Therefore, the scale was retained to ensure the comprehensiveness of the model and to facilitate comparison with previous studies (Northouse, 2013; Yukl, 2008).

Overall, the CFA results confirmed that the scale structure has a good fit, meeting the requirements of convergent validity and discriminant validity. Details of the CFA index are presented in Appendix 3.

#### **4.4. Reliability, convergence, and discrimination analysis**

The reliability, convergence, and discrimination analysis results show that the scales used in the study met all the essential criteria of consistency and validity. Specifically, the CR (composite reliability) of all factors exceeded the threshold of 0.7, indicating that the scales have a high level of reliability and ensure internal consistency among observed variables. In addition, the factors' AVE (average variance extracted) are all above 0.5, confirming a good level of convergence. That is, the observed variables explain the concepts they represent well. Regarding discrimination, the results show that the MSV of the factors are all smaller than the AVE, indicating that each factor is clearly distinguished from other factors in the model. This is further reinforced by the moderate correlations between the factors, helping to ensure the independence of the research concepts.

**Table 2.** Results of reliability, convergence, and discrimination analysis

	CR	AVE	MSV	JP	OC	LB
JP	0.948	0.787	0.115	<b>0.887</b>		
OC	0.846	0.647	0.101	0.318***	<b>0.804</b>	
LB	0.819	0.603	0.115	0.339***	0.236***	<b>0.776</b>

*Note:* \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

#### 4.5. Model fit summary

The model testing results show that the research model fits the data well. Specifically:

The model's Chi-square/df ratio (CMIN/DF) is 1.701, less than the 3-point cutoff, suggesting that the model fits the data quite well. Our research model shows significant improvement compared to the independent model, which has a CMIN/DF value of 24.709.

The actual and projected covariance matrices differ by a tiny amount, as indicated by the RMR (Root Mean Square Residual) of 0.038. The model matches the data with a GFI of 0.902, above the 0.9 requirement. The model has effectively compensated for its complexity, as evidenced by the AGFI of 0.890, near the 0.9 criterion. The model maintains a respectable level of simplicity, as shown by the PGFI of 0.801.

The primary comparison indices also support the model's suitability: NFI = 0.936, RFI = 0.931, IFI = 0.972, TLI = 0.970, and CFI = 0.972 are all higher than the threshold of 0.9, demonstrating that the model has a clear improvement compared to the independent model.

The RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) is 0.035, lower than the threshold of 0.08, indicating that the model fits the data well. The 90% confidence interval for RMSEA ranges from 0.032 to 0.039, all within the acceptable range. PCLOSE reaches 1.000, indicating that an RMSEA level less than 0.05 is statistically significant and the model has a satisfactory fit.

The study model's validation indices clearly outperform the baseline models in terms of fit and reliability, and they also show that the model describes the observed according to hypothesis testing results; there is a 99% confidence level in the statistical significance of the links among work performance, organisational culture, and leadership conduct. To be more precise, job performance benefits from organisational culture, and leadership conduct benefits from both. This demonstrates how good leadership conduct enhances productivity and helps create a positive corporate culture, boosting output. This finding highlights how crucial it is to cultivate company culture and leadership behaviour to increase productivity.

#### 4.6. Evaluation of the structural model: Hypothesis testing

From the result in Table 3, leadership behaviour positively impacts organisational culture with a path coefficient of 0.236 ( $p < 0.001$ ). Leadership behaviour can shape an organisation's values, principles, and norms. Leadership can create a positive work environment and encourage employee participation, which may explain why organisations with strong leadership tend to have more positive organisational cultures. Furthermore, organisational culture substantially impacts job performance, with a path coefficient of 0.252 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This result confirms that a supportive and encouraging organisational culture will help employees maximise their potential. However, it is worth noting that this relationship may not always be apparent. Negative organisational culture can

sometimes decrease performance, even when leaders make positive efforts. In particular, leadership behaviour also directly impacts performance with a path coefficient of 0.279 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This direct impact suggests that organisational culture influences performance, and leadership behaviour can motivate and encourage employees through their actions, decisions, and communications. This raises the question of whether other factors, such as employees' perceptions of leadership style or job autonomy, may increase or decrease this effect.

All hypotheses in the research model were supported with high statistical significance, indicating a complex relationship between leadership behaviour, organisational culture, and performance. These results confirm the critical

role of leadership in shaping organisational culture and suggest that leaders can directly influence performance through how they interact with employees. Surprisingly, although organisational culture substantially impacts performance, leadership behaviour appears more dominant in shaping performance. This suggests that, in specific contexts, how leaders interact with and support employees can overcome the influence of organisational culture. Leaders should build a positive culture and develop individual leadership skills to optimise organisational performance. These results open the door for further research to investigate factors that may influence this relationship, such as diversity in leadership styles and differences in employee needs.

**Table 3.** Model analysis results

Research hypothesis	Expected	Path coefficient	P value	Remark
LB ---> OC	Positive	0.236***	0.000	Supported
OC ---> JP	Positive	0.252***	0.000	Supported
LB ---> JP	Positive	0.279***	0.000	Supported

**Note:** \* is 10%, \*\* is 5%, \*\*\* is 1%.

The results of the analysis of the direct and indirect effects of leadership behaviour (LB) on job performance (JP) through organisational culture (OC) show some highlights, especially at the mediation level of organisational culture. With the standardised estimate for the direct effect of 0.279 and statistically significant ( $P$ -value = 0.000), leadership behaviour strongly influences job performance, confirming that leadership behaviour is vital in directly improving job performance.

The SEM results (Table 3) show that leadership behavior (LB) has a positive and statistically significant impact on organizational culture (OC) ( $\beta = 0.236$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) as well as directly on job performance (JP) ( $\beta = 0.279$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). At the same time, OC also significantly

affects JP ( $\beta = 0.252$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These findings meet the necessary conditions to test the mediating role of OC in the LB–JP relationship. The analysis results (Table 4) show that, in addition to the direct impact, LB also indirectly affects JP through OC with a standardized coefficient of 0.060 ( $p = 0.004$ ), demonstrating that the mediating effect exists and is statistically significant. However, the level of mediation is not large. Based on the path coefficients,  $LB \rightarrow OC$  ( $\beta = 0.236$ ) and  $OC \rightarrow JP$  ( $\beta = 0.252$ ), the indirect effect reached 0.0595. When combined with the direct effect ( $\beta = 0.279$ ), the total effect reached 0.339, corresponding to a VAF of 17.7%. Since this value is lower than the 20% threshold, organizational culture only plays a very weak mediating role in the relationship

between leadership behavior and work performance. This indicates that the majority of the impact of LB on JP occurs through the

direct channel, while the transmission channel through OC contributes a small but statistically significant proportion.

**Table 4.** The mediating role of organisational culture

Research Hypothesis	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	VAF (%)	Result
LB → OC → JP	0.279	0.06	0.339	17.70%	Negligible mediation

#### 4.7. Discussion

The current study examined some novel thoughts to contribute to ethical leadership literature. The study sheds light on the prevailing unethical practices in organizations, specifically in the banking sector, and identifies the positive role of ethical leadership. It also emphasized that ethical leaders are essential to motivate employees to generate an ethical voice through the mechanisms of identification and other psychological elements (psychological ownership and psychological safety). These mechanisms have not been discussed in the literature so far. Based on these arguments, the current study concluded that ethical leaders are the best source for employees/subordinates to generate an ethical voice. We also examined that relational and organizational identification contribute more to developing employees' psychological safety and psychological empowerment. The results of the current study holistically provide more significant insights into an ethical leader-related theory. Literature suggests that ethical leaders can contribute more in the current era; therefore,

The study's results confirm that leadership behaviors positively and statistically significantly impact employee performance in Vietnamese commercial banks ( $\beta = 0.279$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This shows that even in a specific environment with KPI pressure, a strict hierarchy, and close supervision, leadership behaviours such as direction, support, and participation are still key drivers for maintaining and improving

performance. This finding is consistent with recent evidence in the banking context (Kebe et al. 2024), emphasizing the decisive role of effective leadership behaviors. Compared to previous studies in Canada, China, or Indonesia (Wang et al., 2019; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016), which are limited in scale and generalizability, this study adds empirical evidence in a highly standardized industry, thereby expanding the scope of application of leadership theory. The results also suggest that the impact of leadership on performance is not universal but strongly depends on organizational characteristics and industry context. Sodiq et al. (2024) noted that leaders in banks also require attention. In the case of Vietnamese banks, the presence of frontline leaders becomes an indispensable factor in guiding, supporting, and ensuring employee performance. In addition, leadership behavior also has a positive and statistically significant impact on organizational culture ( $\beta = 0.236$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming a close interaction between the two factors. It is reinforced by recent studies, which show that supportive leadership can promote trust, open communication, and cooperation, core components of a positive culture (Gelfand et al., 2012). Similarly, Ali et al. (2021) emphasize that supportive leadership only maximizes its impact in a favorable cultural environment. At the same time, Lee and Rasdi (2025) continue to affirm the role of leadership in creating cooperation and trust. Burhan et al. (2023) suggest that banks should prioritize developing such leaders

to gain a competitive edge and promote a bottom-up approach. Therefore, leaders are not only operators within the existing cultural framework but also establish culture, which can make or break the foundation of organizational culture. In the context of Vietnamese banks, where extensive technological and governance transformation is taking place, this finding emphasizes the proactive role of leadership in shaping culture to enhance adaptability and maintain organizational effectiveness.

Furthermore, the relationship between organisational culture and employee performance was positive and statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.252$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), consistent with previous evidence that a strong culture reduces stress and improves performance (Kim & Jung, 2022). Many recent studies also show that a supportive culture strengthens employee commitment and engagement in different industries (Khan et al., 2021). However, if the culture is negative or bureaucratic, it reduces motivation and performance (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019; Nwakoby et al., 2019). Therefore, in Vietnamese banks, where employees are subject to sales pressure and strict standardisation processes, this finding emphasises the role of culture as a softer mechanism to maintain motivation and cooperation. However, since most of the previous evidence has focused on the public, education, or IT sectors, the current study adds data from the banking sector to identify the boundary conditions for culture to maximise its leverage on employee performance.

Finally, a notable finding concerns the mediating role of organizational culture in the relationship between leadership behavior and work performance. The results show that LB has not only a direct effect on JP ( $\beta = 0.279$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) but also an indirect effect through OC ( $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). This result is consistent with previous studies that emphasize culture as

a channel for transmitting leadership values to employee behavior (Kaur Bagga et al., 2023), as a bridge between quality management strategy and labor performance (Hilman et al., 2020), or between leadership style and work results (Virgiawan et al., 2021). This reinforces Pathiranage's (2019) argument that culture serves as a strategic tool for leaders to spread norms and align employee behavior in the desired direction.

However, the magnitude of the indirect impact is significantly smaller than the direct impact, reflecting that organizational culture in Vietnamese banks has not yet become a strong lever to amplify the influence of leadership on performance. The banking context with high KPI pressure, tight control mechanisms, and heavy dependence on administrative orders often makes employees respond directly to superiors' instructions rather than to abstract or long-term cultural values. In addition, the rapid digital transformation and change in business processes create pressure for immediate efficiency, making it difficult for cultural impact to spread as strongly and as slowly as the direct influence from leadership. This explains why, although the indirect effect is statistically significant, organizational culture plays only a weak mediating role in the LB-JP relationship.

## 5. Inclusions và implications

### 5.1. Conclusion

This study examines the relationship between leadership behavior (LB), organizational culture (OC), and employee performance (JP) in Vietnamese joint stock commercial banks. Survey data from 31 banks, analyzed using structural covariance equation modeling (CB-SEM), shows that LB has a direct, positive, and statistically significant impact on JP. OC also positively affects JP, and there is a statistically significant mediating effect in the LB  $\rightarrow$  JP

relationship. However, the level of mediation is small, indicating that most of the impact of LB is transmitted directly through executive, supervisory, and supportive behaviors, while organizational culture plays a complementary role. This finding clarifies that in the context of Vietnamese banks, where KPI pressure, hierarchical structure, and high compliance requirements exist, leadership is still the main channel of influence, while organizational culture contributes to reinforcing and stabilizing work behavior. The study contributes to the literature by extending the application of the Total Leadership model and organizational culture framework in the context of emerging market banking, demonstrating the dual impact of leadership: directly and indirectly through culture. OC is therefore not a static factor but can be shaped by leaders to support work performance, thereby adding empirical value to the research on leadership and culture in high-pressure environments.

In terms of governance, the results suggest that banks should prioritize the development of practical leadership behaviors (directing, supporting, and participating) while simultaneously building a culture based on transparency, collaboration, and trust. This can be achieved through two-way dialogue, recognition mechanisms, incentives for innovation, and the integration of cultural indicators into performance appraisal systems. When culture is clearly operationalized and measured, the leadership effect becomes more sustainable and less dependent on direct supervision.

## **5.2. Implications**

The results of the study show that leadership behavior has a significantly stronger direct impact on employee performance than the indirect impact through organizational culture. The indirect effect ( $\beta = 0.06$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ) is statistically significant but accounts for a

small proportion compared to the direct effect ( $\beta = 0.279$ ), indicating that organizational culture only plays a supporting role and has not become a strong lever to impact performance. This implies that in the context of Vietnamese banks, where KPI pressure, compliance, and strict operating procedures still dominate work behavior, direct direction, orientation, and support from leaders continue to be the main channel of impact. However, the statistically significant intermediate results show that organizational culture still contributes to strengthening the impact of leadership, especially in engagement, support, and cooperation behaviors. Therefore, investing in internal culture still brings management value, but it needs to be operationalized in a specific and measurable way rather than just a slogan. A practical approach is to integrate cultural indicators into the performance evaluation system, for example, the level of coordination between departments, business improvement initiatives, or the level of support for colleagues. When culture is integrated into KPIs, employees are motivated to demonstrate positive behavior, and culture becomes a tangible management factor.

In addition, leadership development programs should not only focus on operating and monitoring skills but also extend to culture-building competencies such as communicating core values, providing positive feedback, recognizing contributions, and encouraging initiatives. This helps leadership behavior have a broader impact, rather than just an individual-level or administrative-order impact.

Finally, the results show that employees respond not only to job requirements but also to the environment in which they work. Banks can therefore strengthen two-way dialogue mechanisms such as regular culture surveys, idea-sharing forums, or open exchanges between leaders and employees. When employees become the creators of culture

rather than just complying, work commitment and performance are likely to improve more consistently.

In the competitive and rapidly changing context of the banking industry, combining the two elements, effective leadership behavior and a healthy organizational culture, remains a valuable approach. Although the indirect impact is limited, cultivating the right culture can help maintain motivation, reduce conflict, and improve the workforce's adaptability in the long term.

The study still has some limitations. The Directive Leadership scale showed some poor model fit indices (RMSEA = 0.105; CMIN/DF = 7.218), although the factor loadings, CR, and AVE met the standards, suggesting that further refinement is needed to better reflect the cultural and governance context of Vietnamese banks. The cross-sectional design also limits the ability to determine causal relationships. Further studies should use longitudinal designs

or mediation models to better understand the transmission process over time. In addition, the study only focused on commercial banks and did not have complete data on the size of the entire industry's workforce, which limits the ability to generalize. Future studies can expand the sample to other banking segments or collect baseline data on the characteristics of the entire industry's workforce to increase reliability and comparability.

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