

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN A LOCAL RETAIL MINIMARKET: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF THESIS MART KENDARI

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Abstract. Leadership in retail organizations must be capable of adapting decision-making, communication, motivation, and supervision to operational dynamics and employee needs. At Thesis Mart Kendari, there is a need to understand how leadership practices are applied in managing operational activities and how these leadership behaviors are perceived by employees. This study aims to analyze effective leadership practices and employee perceptions of leadership behavior, as well as their relationship with performance, motivation, teamwork, service discipline, operational coordination, and the achievement of organizational goals. The study employs a descriptive qualitative case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. Informants were selected purposively and included the owner, the personnel manager, and cashiers. Data were analyzed through stages of reduction, presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification, with validity tested via source and technique triangulation. The results indicate that leadership practices at Thesis Mart Kendari are reasonably effective, characterized by situational decision-making, direct communication, the provision of motivation, leading by example, and operational supervision. These behaviors are linked to performance, motivation, teamwork, service discipline, operational coordination, and the achievement of organizational goals.

Keywords: Effective Leadership, Retail Management, Employee Performance, Qualitative Case Study, Minimarket

Abstrak. Kepemimpinan dalam organisasi ritel perlu mampu menyesuaikan pengambilan keputusan, komunikasi, motivasi, dan pengawasan dengan dinamika operasional serta kebutuhan karyawan. Pada Thesis Mart Kendari, terdapat kebutuhan untuk memahami bagaimana praktik kepemimpinan diterapkan dalam mengelola aktivitas operasional dan bagaimana perilaku kepemimpinan tersebut dipersepsikan oleh karyawan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis praktik kepemimpinan efektif dan persepsi karyawan terhadap perilaku kepemimpinan serta keterkaitannya dengan kinerja, motivasi, kerja sama tim, disiplin pelayanan, koordinasi operasional, dan pencapaian tujuan organisasi. Penelitian menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Informan dipilih secara *purposive*, meliputi *owner*, manajer personalia, dan kasir. Data dianalisis melalui tahap reduksi data, penyajian data, penarikan kesimpulan, dan verifikasi, serta diuji keabsahannya melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik kepemimpinan di Thesis Mart Kendari tergolong cukup efektif melalui pengambilan keputusan situasional, komunikasi langsung, pemberian motivasi, keteladanan, dan pengawasan operasional. Perilaku tersebut berkaitan dengan kinerja, motivasi, kerja sama tim, disiplin pelayanan, koordinasi operasional, dan pencapaian tujuan organisasi.

Kata Kunci: Kepemimpinan Efektif, Manajemen Ritel, Kinerja Karyawan, Studi Kasus Kualitatif, Minimarket

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership remains a central mechanism through which organizations translate limited resources into coordinated action, employee motivation, service quality, and performance outcomes. In service and retail settings, leadership is especially consequential because employees interact directly with customers, respond to operational pressures, and must maintain discipline, speed, and accuracy in daily work. Recent leadership scholarship shows that leadership effectiveness cannot be assessed only from formal authority; it must also be understood through observable behaviours, employee interpretations, and organizational consequences (Fischer et al., 2020; Siangchokyoo et al., 2020). Small retail organizations are often managed through close interpersonal supervision, informal communication, and rapid operational decision-making. Unlike large retail chains with standardized human resource systems, local minimarkets and small stores frequently depend on owners or managers as the primary source of direction, motivation, conflict resolution, service discipline, and work coordination. This makes leadership an important practical factor in determining how employees understand their roles, comply with service standards, cooperate with colleagues, and support organizational targets (Pattnaik & Pattnaik, 2020; Qalati et al., 2022).

Empirical studies in Indonesia provide evidence that leadership is relevant to employee outcomes in small retail businesses. Abdullah et al. (2021), for example, found that leadership, together with reward and punishment, significantly affected employee performance at Toko Dua Sekawan in Ternate. Similarly, Galantika et al. (2023) reported that transformational leadership, motivation, and work discipline had positive and significant effects on employee performance at Soka Minimarket Badung. More recently, Komalasari et al. (2025) examined leadership style, motivation, and work environment in Marlin Group retail stores and found that motivation significantly affected employee performance, whereas leadership style did not show a significant effect. These findings indicate that the role of leadership in retail settings may vary according to organizational context, leadership practices, and other factors affecting employee performance.

Despite these studies, most previous research on leadership in retail and small business contexts has focused on testing the statistical effect of particular leadership styles on employee performance. Less attention has been given to how leadership is practiced and experienced in the daily operations of small, owner-managed retail organizations, including how leaders make situational decisions, communicate directly with employees, provide motivation, demonstrate role

models, and supervise operational activities. This represents an important gap because leadership effectiveness in small organizations may emerge from a combination of behaviours rather than from a single formal leadership style.

This study addresses this gap by examining leadership as a lived organizational practice at Thesis Mart Kendari, a local minimarket in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The study specifically analyzes how effective leadership is practiced, how employees perceive the leader's behaviours, and how these practices are reflected in employee performance, motivation, teamwork, service discipline, operational coordination, and organizational goal attainment. By using a qualitative case study approach, this research provides contextual evidence of leadership effectiveness in a small retail organization and complements previous quantitative studies that have primarily examined statistical relationships between leadership style and employee outcomes.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative case-study design. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the research aimed to understand leadership as a contextual, socially interpreted, and experience-based phenomenon rather than to test statistical relationships. Qualitative inquiry is suitable for exploring how participants make sense of organizational processes, workplace interaction, and leadership behaviour in real-world settings (Bingham, 2023; Lim, 2025; Tong et al., 2007). The research site was Thesis Mart Kendari, a local minimarket located in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The site was selected purposively because it represents a small retail organization in which the owner is directly involved in daily operations, employee supervision, decision-making, and customer service standards. This context allows leadership practices to be observed in close proximity to operational routines.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on predefined inclusion criteria. Informants were required to (1) have direct involvement in the daily operations of Thesis Mart Kendari, (2) have direct experience with the leadership practices examined in the study, and (3) be able to provide relevant and detailed information about decision-making, communication, supervision, motivation, and employee management. Based on these criteria, three informants were included: the owner, the personnel manager, and a cashier. The owner served as the key informant because he holds primary responsibility for strategic and operational decisions. The personnel manager provided a middle-level perspective on employee management, while the

cashier represented the operational employee perspective. The three informants were considered adequate because they represented the three principal organizational perspectives relevant to the research focus: organizational leadership, managerial implementation, and employee experience. Data saturation was also considered when the interviews no longer produced substantially new information relevant to the analytical domains.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. Interviews focused on decision-making, communication, motivation, role modelling, supervision, task orientation, relationship orientation, change orientation, transformational leadership behaviours, and perceived organizational outcomes. Observation was used to understand daily leadership interactions, work coordination, and operational supervision. Documentation supported contextual understanding of the organization, informant roles, and internal structure. Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative process consisting of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. Interview and observation data were grouped into three analytical domains: effective leadership practices, employee perceptions of leadership style and behaviour, and organizational effects of leadership. Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, member checking, and transparent thematic categorization (Bingham, 2023; Walsh et al., 2020).

Table 1. Informant Profile

Informant	Position	Education	Role in the Study
I1	Owner	Diploma III	Key informant; strategic and operational leadership
I2	Personnel Manager	Bachelor degree	Middle-level HR and employee management perspective
I3	Cashier	Senior high school	Operational employee perspective

RESULTS

The findings are organized into three domains: leadership practices, employee perceptions of leadership style and behaviour, and organizational implications of leadership. Across interviews and observations, leadership at Thesis Mart Kendari was consistently described as direct, operational, and situational. The owner played a dominant role in decision-making and supervision while still allowing limited discussion when issues directly involved employees or operational managers. The first theme concerns effective leadership practices. Decision-making was perceived as relatively fast and practical, particularly when operational problems required immediate response. The owner reported that simple problems were resolved directly, while more complex

issues were discussed with the manager. The personnel manager and cashier confirmed that decisions were generally timely, although employee involvement remained selective. This indicates a leadership pattern that combines directive decision-making with limited participation.

The second leadership practice was communication. Informants reported that work instructions were commonly delivered through direct communication and briefings. This communication pattern supported employees in understanding daily tasks and responding to operational demands during busy periods. However, communication was not always fully two-way. The cashier noted that employees sometimes hesitated to express opinions when the store was crowded or when instructions were unclear. Thus, communication functioned adequately for daily operations but still required greater consistency and openness. The third practice was motivation. The leader motivated employees through direct encouragement, feedback, praise, and occasional bonuses. According to the informants, these practices were associated with maintaining work enthusiasm, particularly when workload increased. Nevertheless, motivational practices were not always tailored to individual employee needs, suggesting that individualized consideration could be strengthened.

The fourth practice was role modelling. The leader was described as disciplined, responsible, and willing to be directly involved in store activities when work demands increased. Employees viewed this behaviour as a positive example and associated it with their own motivation and discipline. However, employees did not respond to the leader's example in exactly the same way, indicating that the perceived value of role modelling varied among staff. The fifth practice was management and supervision. The leader organized tasks according to employee roles and capabilities, supervised work directly, and relied on managerial support for monitoring. Evaluation was generally conducted informally when problems or errors occurred. This practice was perceived as supporting operational continuity, although the organization did not yet have a formal and systematic performance review mechanism.

Table 2. Summary of effective leadership practices

Leadership Dimension	Empirical Evidence	Strength	Area for Improvement
Decision-making	Fast situational decisions; limited employee involvement	Moderate to strong	Increase participatory decision-making for operational issues
Communication	Direct instructions and briefings; occasional misunderstanding	Moderate	Strengthen two-way communication and feedback

Motivation	Encouragement, praise, and bonuses	Moderate to strong	Adjust motivation to individual employee needs
Role modelling	Discipline, responsibility, and direct involvement	Strong	Make role modelling part of shared work culture
Supervision	Direct monitoring and informal evaluation	Moderate	Develop structured and routine performance evaluation

Employee perceptions of leadership were grouped into four behavioural dimensions: task-oriented, relationship-oriented, change-oriented, and transformational. Task-oriented behaviour was evident in clear division of duties, shift briefings, target setting, direct monitoring, and evaluation of operational work. Employees generally perceived these practices as helpful because they clarified responsibilities and reduced work ambiguity. However, new employees and employees facing changes in work procedures still required more detailed instructions. Relationship-oriented behaviour was reflected in open communication, approachability, and attention to employee conditions. The leader was perceived as friendly and not overly distant from employees, contributing to a comfortable work environment. Nevertheless, employees expected more consistent communication and more evenly distributed attention across staff members.

Change-oriented behaviour appeared through periodic adjustments to store layout, service flow, work shift arrangements, and stock-related procedures. The owner and personnel manager described these changes as responses to perceived inefficiencies in daily operations. Employees considered the changes useful, although adaptation was not always immediate. Clearer explanations and mentoring were needed when new work systems were introduced. Transformational leadership was visible in the leader's motivational communication, role modelling, encouragement of employee suggestions, and concern for employee needs. These behaviours reflect idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. However, individualized consideration appeared less developed because some employees still required more personal coaching and development support.

Table 3. Employee Perceptions of Leadership Style and Behaviour

Behavioural Dimension	Observed Practice	Employee Perception	Interpretive Meaning
Task-oriented behaviour	Clear task division, briefing, target setting, supervision	Positive; helpful for work clarity	Leadership supports operational efficiency
Relationship-oriented behaviour	Open interaction, approachability, attention to employees	Positive but not fully consistent	Leadership creates a supportive work climate
Change-oriented behaviour	Layout changes, service-flow adjustment, shift rearrangement	Useful but requires adaptation	Leadership supports incremental operational improvement
Transformational behaviour	Motivation, role modelling, idea sharing, individual concern	Positive but needs stronger individual coaching	Leadership builds engagement and commitment

The third results domain concerns the organizational implications associated with leadership practices. Informants described leadership practices as being related to employee performance, work motivation, teamwork, and organizational goal attainment. Employees associated clearer direction and supervision with better understanding of their responsibilities and more consistent task completion. Similarly, encouragement, appreciation, and support were described as factors accompanying employees' work motivation. Teamwork was reflected in communication, coordination, and mutual assistance among employees. At the organizational level, informants associated leadership practices with smoother store operations, service discipline, work coordination, and orientation toward business targets. These findings should be understood as perceptions and observed patterns within the case rather than as evidence of a causal effect of leadership on organizational outcomes.

Table 4. Thematic matrix of leadership effects

Outcome Theme	Evidence from Informants	Organizational Implication
Employee performance	Better task completion, service accuracy, and productivity	Leadership clarifies standards and improves work discipline
Work motivation	Encouragement, appreciation, and confidence in serving customers	Leadership strengthens employee commitment and enthusiasm
Teamwork	Communication, coordination, and mutual assistance	Leadership builds cooperation and reduces operational friction
Goal attainment	Smoother operations, target orientation, and improved service	Leadership supports organizational effectiveness and sustainability

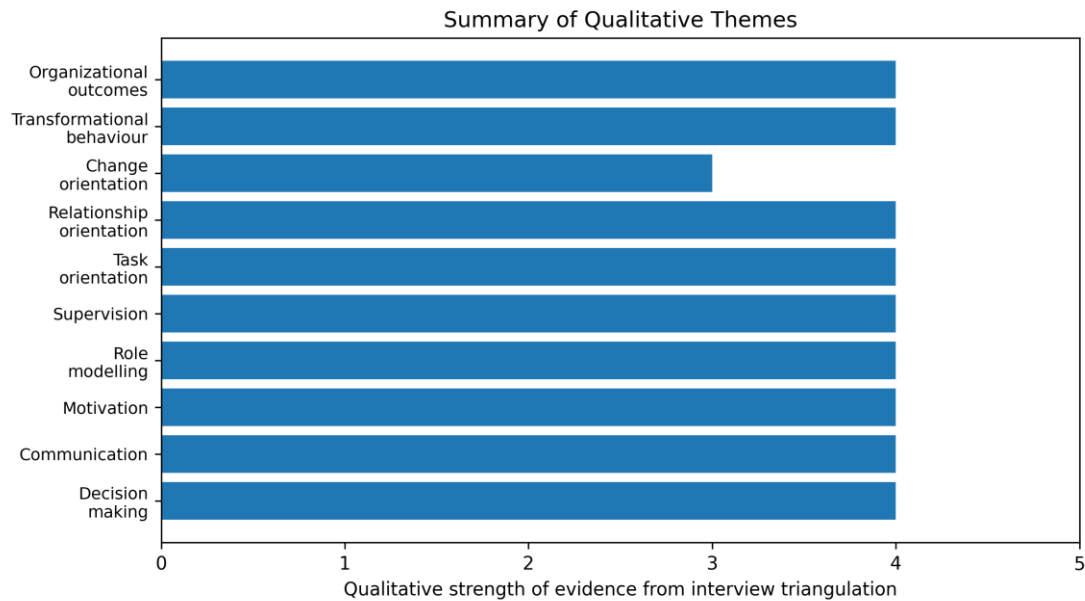


Figure 1. Summary of qualitative themes on effective leadership at thesis mart Kendari

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that effective leadership in a small retail organization is not a single leadership style but a practical combination of directive, relational, adaptive, and transformational behaviours. This supports contemporary leadership research emphasizing that leadership effectiveness is context-dependent and often emerges through behavioural combinations rather than isolated style categories (Fischer et al., 2020; Siangchokyoo et al., 2020). At Thesis Mart Kendari, the leader's direct involvement in operational decision-making was useful because minimarket operations require quick responses to customer flow, stock issues, service problems, and employee coordination.

The leader's task-oriented behaviour was important in clarifying responsibilities, reducing ambiguity, and maintaining operational discipline. This finding is consistent with performance research showing that employee performance depends not only on motivation but also on clear roles, standards, and performance support (Pattnaik & Pattnaik, 2020; Qalati et al., 2022). In small retail contexts, task clarity is particularly important because employees often handle multiple functions, including cashier work, product arrangement, customer service, and stock monitoring.

The relational dimension of leadership was also central. Employees responded positively to approachable communication, attention, and a family-like work atmosphere. This aligns with studies showing that supportive leadership contributes to employee engagement, motivation, and performance by creating a psychologically supportive workplace climate (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020; Gameda & Lee, 2020). However, the findings also show that relational leadership requires consistency. If attention is perceived as uneven, some employees may feel less included or less supported. The change-oriented behaviour found in this study was incremental rather than radical. The leader improved store layout, service flow, shift arrangements, and work procedures based on daily operational evaluation. This indicates that innovation in small retail organizations often occurs through practical micro-adjustments rather than formal strategic transformation. The finding is relevant to transformational and change leadership studies showing that leaders influence performance by encouraging adaptation, learning, and operational improvement (Nguyen et al., 2023; Saif et al., 2024).

Transformational leadership was partially visible through role modelling, motivational direction, and openness to employee ideas. This supports prior evidence that transformational leadership can enhance employee performance through motivation, knowledge sharing, and organizational citizenship behaviours (Khan et al., 2020; Qalati et al., 2022; Saif et al., 2024). Nevertheless, individualized consideration remained a developmental area. The leader was supportive, but coaching and employee development were not yet systematic. For a small retail business, formal training may not be extensive, but regular feedback, mentoring, and skill development can strengthen long-term employee capability. The study also extends leadership research by showing that effectiveness in local minimarkets is highly operationalized. Employees evaluate leadership based on whether the leader helps them work clearly, respond to busy conditions, solve practical problems, feel appreciated, cooperate with others, and serve customers effectively. Thus, leadership effectiveness is not only symbolic or strategic; it is experienced in the ordinary routines of work. This supports the qualitative value of examining leadership through employee interpretation, observed practice, and organizational consequences (Bingham, 2023; Lim, 2025).

Overall, the findings suggest that effective leadership at Thesis Mart Kendari is characterized by behavioural flexibility. Directive behaviour appears useful when immediate operational decisions are required, relational behaviour is important for maintaining supportive interactions,

change-oriented behaviour facilitates practical adaptation, and transformational behaviours provide motivation and role modelling. However, these dimensions are not equally developed. The main areas requiring further attention are participatory decision-making, consistent two-way communication, systematic feedback, and individualized employee development. These findings highlight that leadership effectiveness in a small retail organization may be better understood as a context-sensitive combination of behaviours that respond to both operational demands and employee needs.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that leadership at Thesis Mart Kendari is reasonably effective in supporting employee performance and organizational effectiveness. The leader demonstrates fast situational decision-making, direct communication, motivation, role modelling, and operational supervision. Employees generally perceive the leader positively because he provides task clarity, maintains relationships, encourages adaptation, and shows several transformational behaviours. Effective leadership contributes to improved employee performance, work motivation, teamwork, service discipline, operational coordination, and organizational goal attainment. However, several aspects require improvement, including broader employee participation in decision-making, more consistent two-way communication, structured performance evaluation, stronger individual coaching, and clearer support during operational changes. Theoretically, the study contributes contextual evidence on leadership effectiveness in small retail organizations. Practically, it suggests that owner-managers of local minimarkets should balance task control with relational support, participatory communication, employee development, and continuous operational improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Thesis Mart Kendari should institutionalize routine briefings and feedback sessions so that communication becomes more two-way and less dependent on informal interaction. A simple performance evaluation system should be introduced to monitor service discipline, task completion, customer interaction, teamwork, and punctuality. The leader should also develop individual coaching for employees, especially new staff who require more detailed guidance. Finally, employee suggestions should be documented and reviewed periodically so that operational

improvements become more participatory and sustainable. Future studies should involve more informants across different local minimarkets or retail SMEs to compare leadership patterns across organizational contexts. Quantitative or mixed-method designs may also be used to examine the relationships among leadership behaviour, motivation, job satisfaction, employee engagement, service quality, and performance.

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