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Leadership Practices in Improving Employee Motivation: A Qualitative Case Study of an Indonesian Financial Leasing Branch

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ABSTRACT

Employee motivation remains a critical challenge for organizations operating in highly competitive service industries, particularly within the financial leasing sector, where employees are required to achieve demanding performance targets while maintaining high-quality customer service. In this context, leadership practices play an essential role in shaping employees' work experiences and sustaining their motivation. This study aims to explore leadership practices employed by branch managers in improving employee motivation within Company X, an Indonesian financial leasing company. A qualitative case study approach was adopted to obtain an in-depth understanding of leadership practices as experienced by organizational members. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and non-participant observations involving purposively selected participants with direct experience of the organization's leadership processes. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and meaningful themes emerging from participants' experiences. The findings revealed four major leadership practices that contributed to employee motivation: open and supportive communication, recognition and appreciation, participative decision-making, and coaching for employee development. These practices were perceived by employees as creating a supportive work environment characterized by trust, collaboration, continuous learning, and meaningful interpersonal relationships. The study demonstrates that employee motivation is influenced not only by organizational policies or financial incentives but also by leaders' consistent managerial behaviors embedded in daily workplace interactions. The findings contribute to the growing literature on leadership practices by providing qualitative evidence from the Indonesian financial leasing industry, a context that has received limited scholarly attention. From a practical perspective, the study suggests that managers can strengthen employee motivation by fostering open communication, recognizing employee contributions, encouraging collaborative decision-making, and providing continuous developmental support. These findings offer valuable implications for leadership development in financial service organizations and other service-based industries operating in dynamic and competitive environments.

Keywords: Leadership Practices; Employee Motivation; Qualitative Case Study; Financial Leasing Industry; Human Resource Management

INTRODUCTION

The financial leasing industry has experienced substantial changes driven by digital transformation, increasing market competition, and rising customer expectations. These developments have intensified organizational demands for service quality, operational efficiency, and sustainable business performance. In such a dynamic environment, employees are expected not only to achieve organizational targets but also to demonstrate adaptability, commitment, and proactive work behavior. Consequently, organizations increasingly recognize that maintaining employee motivation is no longer solely dependent on compensation systems but also on managerial

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practices that foster trust, engagement, and psychological support within the workplace (Girardi & Sarate, 2021; Hidayat, 2025).

Leadership has consistently been recognized as one of the most influential organizational factors shaping employee attitudes and behaviors. Rather than merely directing employees to accomplish assigned tasks, contemporary leadership emphasizes creating supportive working conditions, encouraging collaboration, and facilitating individual growth. Leadership practices such as effective communication, recognition, empowerment, and participative decision-making enable employees to perceive their work as meaningful while strengthening organizational commitment (Atiku & Van Wyk, 2024). Recent empirical evidence further suggests that positive leadership practices contribute significantly to employee engagement, organizational resilience, and long-term organizational sustainability across different organizational settings (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022).

Employee motivation remains a central issue in human resource management because it directly influences work performance, organizational commitment, and employees' willingness to contribute beyond formal job responsibilities. Previous studies have demonstrated that leadership behaviors capable of supporting employee autonomy, providing constructive feedback, and acknowledging employee contributions encourage higher levels of intrinsic motivation and positive workplace outcomes (Collie, 2023). Similarly, transformational leadership has been found to improve employee motivation through stronger interpersonal relationships, greater job satisfaction, and increased psychological attachment to organizational goals (Vinh et al., 2022).

Although the relationship between leadership and employee motivation has been widely investigated, existing studies have predominantly employed quantitative approaches emphasizing statistical relationships among organizational variables. Such findings have substantially enriched theoretical understanding but provide limited insight into how leadership practices are enacted in everyday managerial contexts, particularly within financial leasing organizations characterized by demanding performance targets and intensive employee interactions. Exploring leadership practices through a qualitative case study offers an opportunity to capture the experiences, perceptions, and managerial strategies that cannot be fully explained through survey-based research alone. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how leadership practices are implemented to improve employee motivation in the context of an Indonesian financial leasing branch office.

Employee motivation can be understood not merely as an organizational outcome but as a dynamic psychological process influenced by the quality of leadership interactions within the workplace. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) explains that employees are more likely to demonstrate sustained motivation when their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. Rather than relying exclusively on external rewards or organizational control, leaders are expected to create supportive environments where employees experience meaningful participation, personal growth, and interpersonal trust. Consequently, leadership practices should be viewed as everyday managerial behaviors that shape employees' motivational experiences through continuous social interaction rather than isolated managerial interventions (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Classical motivation theories likewise emphasize that effective leadership extends beyond financial incentives. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory distinguishes between factors preventing dissatisfaction and factors genuinely stimulating employee motivation, suggesting that recognition, responsibility, achievement, and opportunities for development constitute essential motivational drivers. Contemporary organizational research further reinforces this perspective by arguing that leaders play a central role in creating organizational climates that encourage employees to internalize organizational values and willingly contribute beyond formal job requirements. Accordingly, leadership practices represent practical mechanisms through which organizations translate managerial intentions into employees' motivational experiences and organizational commitment (Deci et al., 2017; Herzberg, 1968).

Despite considerable theoretical and empirical development, previous studies have largely concentrated on identifying statistical relationships between leadership styles and employee outcomes. While these studies successfully explain whether leadership influences employee motivation, considerably less attention has been devoted to understanding how leadership practices are implemented in everyday organizational settings from the perspectives of organizational actors themselves. This limitation becomes particularly relevant within financial leasing organizations, where branch managers simultaneously balance organizational performance targets, customer satisfaction, operational effectiveness, and employee well-being. A qualitative exploration therefore offers opportunities to capture leadership practices as lived managerial experiences that may remain overlooked within conventional survey-based investigations (Yukl, 2013).

Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore leadership practices employed by branch managers in improving employee motivation within Company X, an Indonesian financial leasing company with a branch office in Bandung. To preserve organizational confidentiality, the company's identity is anonymized throughout this article. Unlike previous studies that predominantly examined causal relationships using quantitative designs, the present research seeks to understand how leadership practices are enacted through the lived experiences of managers and employees within their organizational setting. The novelty of this study lies in its qualitative exploration of leadership practices in the Indonesian financial leasing industry, a context that has received relatively limited scholarly attention despite its strategic contribution to the national financial sector. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by extending qualitative perspectives on leadership practices and employee motivation, while practically providing evidence-based insights for managers seeking to cultivate motivational leadership practices in highly competitive financial service organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Practices in Contemporary Organizations

Leadership has evolved from being understood primarily as the exercise of authority to becoming a process of influencing, supporting, and facilitating employees in achieving both individual and organizational goals. Contemporary leadership emphasizes continuous interaction between leaders and employees through communication, guidance, trust-building, and collaborative decision-making rather than relying solely on formal authority or positional power. Accordingly, effective leadership is reflected not only in organizational outcomes but also in the quality of daily managerial practices that shape employees' work experiences and organizational relationships (Northouse, 2022; Yukl, 2013).

Rather than focusing exclusively on leadership styles, recent organizational research increasingly adopts the concept of leadership practices to explain how leadership is enacted within everyday organizational contexts. Leadership practices encompass observable managerial behaviors such as providing constructive feedback, recognizing employee contributions, encouraging participation, supporting professional development, and fostering open communication. These practices represent practical manifestations of leadership that employees directly experience during routine organizational activities, making them more relevant for understanding organizational dynamics than abstract leadership classifications alone (Atiku & Van Wyk, 2024).

Leadership practices have also become increasingly important as organizations face more complex and rapidly changing business environments. Organizational sustainability, innovation, and employee resilience are no longer determined solely by strategic planning but also by leaders' ability to cultivate supportive workplace environments where employees feel valued, trusted, and motivated to contribute. Sustainable leadership therefore requires leaders to consistently demonstrate behaviors that promote collaboration, organizational learning, adaptability, and long-term employee development rather than concentrating exclusively on short-term performance achievement (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022).

Within service-based organizations, particularly those operating in highly competitive industries, leadership practices are expected to facilitate both organizational effectiveness and employee well-being simultaneously. Branch managers regularly interact with employees in situations involving operational challenges, customer expectations, and performance pressures, making their daily leadership behaviors particularly influential. Consequently, understanding leadership through the lens of observable practices provides a more comprehensive perspective for examining how managerial actions shape employees' perceptions, motivation, and organizational commitment within specific organizational contexts, including financial leasing companies (Atiku & Van Wyk, 2024; Yukl, 2013).

Leadership Practices and Employee Motivation

Employee motivation has long been recognized as one of the fundamental determinants of organizational effectiveness because it influences employees' willingness to exert effort, sustain performance, and contribute to organizational objectives. Classical motivational perspectives argue that employee motivation cannot be explained solely through financial rewards or external incentives. Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory distinguishes between hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction and motivational factors such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for personal growth that encourage employees to perform beyond minimum expectations. These motivational factors are closely associated with managerial behaviors, suggesting that leadership practices constitute an essential mechanism through which organizations foster meaningful and sustainable employee motivation (Herzberg, 1968).

Contemporary motivational research further explains employee motivation through Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to this perspective, employees become intrinsically motivated when leaders create supportive work environments that encourage participation, acknowledge individual contributions, and facilitate professional development. Leadership practices characterized by trust, constructive communication, and employee empowerment therefore contribute not only to higher work motivation but also to stronger organizational commitment and psychological well-being. Consequently, motivation is viewed as an outcome of continuous interpersonal interactions rather than a direct consequence of managerial authority or organizational control (Deci et al., 2017; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Recent empirical studies consistently support the proposition that leadership practices play a significant role in strengthening employee motivation across different organizational settings. Employees who perceive their leaders as supportive, participative, and autonomy-enhancing tend to demonstrate higher levels of work engagement, job satisfaction, and positive organizational behaviors. Conversely, leadership behaviors characterized by excessive control and limited employee involvement may reduce intrinsic motivation and increase negative workplace outcomes. These findings indicate that leadership practices influence motivation through employees' subjective experiences of managerial support rather than through formal organizational structures alone (Collie, 2023; Vinh et al., 2022).

Within organizational practice, leadership behaviors that encourage recognition, constructive feedback, employee participation, and interpersonal support have also been associated with broader organizational outcomes, including improved employee performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and long-term organizational commitment. Such evidence suggests that employee motivation functions as an important pathway linking leadership practices with organizational effectiveness. Nevertheless, understanding this relationship requires attention not only to measurable organizational outcomes but also to employees' lived experiences regarding how leadership is practiced in their daily work environment. This perspective provides a strong rationale for adopting a qualitative approach to explore leadership practices within the context of financial leasing organizations (Collie, 2023; Hidayat, 2025).

Conceptual Position of the Study

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that leadership contributes positively to employee motivation, engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational performance across various organizational contexts. However, most existing research has primarily adopted quantitative approaches that examine causal relationships among leadership variables using survey-based instruments and statistical analyses. While these studies provide valuable empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of leadership, they offer relatively limited explanations of how leadership practices are actually enacted in everyday organizational settings. As a result, the practical processes through which managers influence employee motivation remain insufficiently explored, particularly from the perspectives of organizational actors themselves (Atiku & Van Wyk, 2024; Collie, 2023; Vinh et al., 2022).

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This limitation becomes increasingly relevant within financial leasing organizations, where branch managers operate in environments characterized by demanding performance targets, continuous customer interactions, operational pressures, and diverse employee expectations. Leadership within such organizations extends beyond managerial authority and formal organizational structures, requiring continuous interpersonal interactions that involve communication, recognition, guidance, coaching, and problem-solving. Although previous research has examined transformational leadership and leadership effectiveness within financial institutions, relatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how leadership practices are experienced and interpreted in the daily operational context of financial leasing branch offices, particularly through qualitative inquiry (Girardi & Sarate, 2021; Yukl, 2013).

Based on these considerations, the present study positions leadership practices as observable managerial behaviors that shape employee motivation through continuous workplace interactions rather than as abstract leadership styles or organizational attributes. Guided by contemporary leadership perspectives and employee motivation theory, this study adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore how branch managers implement leadership practices in improving employee motivation within an Indonesian financial leasing company. By emphasizing employees' and managers' lived experiences, this study is expected to enrich the qualitative understanding of leadership practices in service organizations while extending existing leadership literature beyond predominantly variable-oriented and quantitative perspectives (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Northouse, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore leadership practices in improving employee motivation within the context of Company X, an Indonesian financial leasing company with a branch office in Bandung. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of leadership practices rather than to examine statistical relationships among variables. The case study design enabled an in-depth exploration of leadership practices within their real organizational setting, allowing the researcher to capture the complexity of managerial interactions and employee experiences in everyday organizational life (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in leadership processes and daily organizational activities at Company X. The study involved managerial personnel and employees who possessed relevant experience regarding leadership implementation and employee motivation within the branch office. The purposive sampling strategy ensured that participants were capable of providing rich, contextually grounded information that addressed the objectives of the study. This approach is widely recommended in qualitative research because it prioritizes information-rich cases rather than statistical representation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Participant Code	**Position**	**Years of Service**
P1	Branch Manager	12
P2	Supervisor	8
P3	Supervisor	6

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P4	Employee	5
P5	Employee	4
P6	Employee	3
P7	Employee	2

Source: Developed by the author based on participant information collected during the study (2026).

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and non-participant observations. The interview guide contained open-ended questions focusing on leadership practices, communication, employee recognition, managerial support, work motivation, and organizational experiences. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to describe their experiences freely, while follow-up questions were used to clarify responses and explore emerging themes. In addition, observational field notes were recorded to capture workplace interactions, leadership behaviors, and organizational situations that complemented the interview data collected at Company X (Yin, 2018).

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, participants received an explanation regarding the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of all information provided. Informed consent was obtained before each interview commenced, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. To protect organizational confidentiality, the actual identity of the company is not disclosed in this article and is therefore referred to as Company X, while all participant identities were anonymized using participant codes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The interview transcripts and observational field notes were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-stage procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The coding process remained iterative throughout the analysis, allowing themes to emerge inductively from participants' experiences while maintaining consistency with the research objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study adopted the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was enhanced through triangulation between interview findings and observational evidence, while dependability and confirmability were supported by maintaining an audit trail documenting the research procedures and analytical decisions. Transferability was addressed by providing a sufficiently detailed description of the organizational setting, participant characteristics, and research process, enabling readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar organizational contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULTS

The thematic analysis of interview transcripts and observational field notes generated four major themes that describe how leadership practices were experienced by participants at Company X. Rather than representing isolated managerial behaviors, these themes reflect interconnected leadership practices that collectively contributed to employees' motivation within the organizational context. Throughout the coding process, recurring patterns consistently emerged across participants' narratives, indicating that leadership was perceived primarily through daily managerial interactions rather than through formal organizational structures or leadership labels.

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The identified themes were developed inductively from participants' experiences following the six-stage thematic analysis procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Initial codes derived from interview transcripts were systematically refined into broader categories before being synthesized into overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The resulting themes capture the leadership practices that participants considered most influential in shaping their work experiences, organizational relationships, and motivational responses. Table 2 summarizes the four principal themes identified in this study.

Table 2. Major Themes Generated from Thematic Analysis

Theme	Description
Theme 1	Open and Supportive Communication
Theme 2	Recognition and Appreciation
Theme 3	Participative Decision-Making
Theme 4	Coaching and Employee Development

Source: Developed by the author based on thematic analysis of interview transcripts and field observations (2026).

Open and Supportive Communication

One of the most consistently reported leadership practices by participants was open and supportive communication between the branch manager and employees. Participants described communication not merely as the delivery of instructions but as a continuous two-way interaction that encouraged employees to express opinions, discuss operational challenges, and seek guidance without hesitation. Regular discussions before major decisions, informal conversations during daily operations, and immediate feedback on work-related issues were perceived as creating a more comfortable working atmosphere. Several participants explained that this communication style reduced anxiety when dealing with demanding customers and challenging performance targets, while simultaneously strengthening their confidence in completing daily responsibilities.

One employee described this experience by stating:

"Whenever we encounter difficulties with customers or financing applications, our branch manager invites us to discuss the situation first. He listens to our opinions before deciding on the next step, so we feel involved rather than simply being instructed." (P4)

Another participant similarly explained:

"Communication here is very open. We can directly express our concerns, whether about sales targets, customer complaints, or operational problems. Instead of blaming us, our manager usually helps us find solutions together." (P2)

These narratives indicate that employees perceived communication as an important leadership practice that encouraged openness, strengthened mutual trust, and created a supportive working environment. Rather than emphasizing hierarchical authority, participants consistently described leadership through approachable interpersonal interactions that facilitated problem-solving and reinforced employees' confidence in carrying out their work responsibilities.

Recognition and Appreciation

Another prominent theme emerging from the interviews was the importance of recognition and appreciation as everyday leadership practices that reinforced employee motivation. Participants consistently explained that appreciation was not limited to formal rewards or financial incentives but was reflected through simple managerial behaviors, such as acknowledging employees' efforts, expressing gratitude for completed tasks, and providing positive feedback after successfully handling challenging customers or achieving operational targets. These seemingly small acts of recognition were perceived as meaningful because they affirmed employees' contributions and encouraged them to maintain consistent performance despite demanding workloads.

One participant explained:

"Even when our monthly target has not been fully achieved, our manager still appreciates the effort we have made. He usually thanks the team during our morning briefing and encourages us to stay optimistic instead of focusing only on the numbers." (P5)

Similarly, another employee stated:

"Whenever someone successfully resolves a difficult customer case or helps another colleague, our manager openly acknowledges it in front of the team. That kind of appreciation makes us feel that our work is valued and motivates us to do better." (P3)

These findings suggest that employees perceived managerial appreciation as an integral component of leadership rather than as an occasional organizational practice. Recognition was experienced through consistent interpersonal interactions embedded in daily work routines, contributing to employees' sense of being respected, trusted, and valued within the organization. Such experiences appeared to strengthen employees' willingness to maintain positive work attitudes and continue contributing to organizational objectives, even under conditions characterized by operational pressure and challenging customer demands.

Participative Decision-Making

The third theme identified from the interviews was participative decision-making, in which employees perceived that they were actively involved in discussing work-related issues before managerial decisions were finalized. Rather than adopting a directive approach, participants described the branch manager as encouraging employees to contribute ideas, evaluate alternative solutions, and share operational experiences during team discussions. This participative approach was particularly evident when addressing customer complaints, improving service processes, and responding to operational challenges. Employees reported that such involvement increased their sense of responsibility because they viewed organizational decisions as collective outcomes rather than unilateral managerial directives.

One participant described the decision-making process as follows:

"Before introducing a new work procedure or responding to recurring customer issues, our manager usually gathers the team to hear different opinions. Even though he makes the final decision, everyone has an opportunity to contribute their ideas." (P6)

Another participant emphasized:

"Our suggestions are genuinely considered. Sometimes the solution proposed by the team is adopted and implemented. That makes us feel trusted because our experience in dealing with customers is taken into account." (P2)

These findings indicate that participative decision-making was perceived as an important leadership practice that strengthened employees' sense of ownership toward organizational activities. By involving employees in discussions and acknowledging their operational knowledge, the branch manager fostered an environment where

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collaboration became a routine part of problem-solving. Participants consistently associated this collaborative process with greater confidence, stronger commitment to organizational decisions, and increased motivation to contribute toward achieving branch performance targets.

Coaching and Employee Development

The final theme identified in this study was coaching and employee development as an integral component of leadership practices at Company X. Participants consistently described the branch manager as providing guidance beyond routine supervision by assisting employees in overcoming work-related challenges, improving job competencies, and building confidence in handling increasingly complex responsibilities. Rather than emphasizing mistakes or performance deficiencies, coaching was perceived as an ongoing developmental process in which employees received constructive feedback, practical advice, and opportunities to learn from everyday operational experiences. This approach enabled employees to view workplace challenges as opportunities for improvement rather than sources of pressure.

One participant explained:

"Whenever I face difficulties in handling financing applications or communicating with customers, my manager does not immediately criticize my work. Instead, he sits with me, explains what could be improved, and shares his own experience. That makes it easier for me to learn and avoid repeating the same mistakes." (P1)

Another participant shared a similar experience:

"Our manager regularly encourages us to improve our skills through discussions after work evaluations. He always reminds us that performance is important, but continuous learning is equally important for our future career." (P7)

These findings demonstrate that employees perceived coaching as a leadership practice that extended beyond monitoring performance to facilitating personal and professional development. Participants emphasized that constructive guidance, continuous learning, and individualized support enhanced their confidence in performing daily tasks and strengthened their commitment to organizational goals. The consistent presence of developmental support from the branch manager fostered a workplace environment in which employees felt encouraged to improve their competencies while maintaining motivation to contribute to the achievement of branch performance objectives.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that leadership practices contributing to employee motivation at Company X were primarily embedded in daily managerial interactions rather than formal organizational authority. Employees consistently perceived leadership through the branch manager's communication, recognition, participative decision-making, and coaching behaviors. These findings reinforce the contemporary perspective that leadership should be understood as a relational and behavioral process rather than merely a formal position within an organizational hierarchy. From this perspective, leadership effectiveness is reflected through leaders' everyday practices that facilitate employee engagement, trust, and collaboration in achieving organizational objectives, a view that is strongly supported by Yukl (2013) and Northouse (2022). Rather than relying on directive supervision, the branch manager cultivated interpersonal relationships that enabled employees to experience leadership as continuous support within their daily work environment.

The first theme, open and supportive communication, illustrates that employees valued leaders who actively listened, encouraged dialogue, and involved employees in solving operational challenges. Communication was not perceived simply as the transmission of organizational instructions but as a mechanism for building trust and reducing uncertainty within a demanding service environment. This finding extends the work of Atiku and Van Wyk (2024), who argued that leadership practices promoting open interaction strengthen employee engagement through positive workplace relationships. Within Company X, communication also functioned as a practical strategy for maintaining employees' psychological confidence when responding to customer demands, operational issues, and branch performance targets. These findings suggest that communication represents not merely a managerial skill but a motivational practice that shapes employees' daily organizational experiences.

The second theme, recognition and appreciation, further demonstrates that employee motivation was strengthened through consistent acknowledgment of employees' efforts rather than exclusively through material rewards or formal performance evaluation systems. Participants repeatedly emphasized that simple expressions of appreciation, constructive feedback, and public acknowledgment during team meetings generated stronger motivational effects than organizational control mechanisms alone. This finding closely aligns with Herzberg's (1968) proposition that recognition constitutes one of the primary motivational factors encouraging employees to perform beyond minimum organizational expectations. Furthermore, the findings complement Self-Determination Theory by indicating that managerial appreciation contributes to employees' sense of competence and personal value, thereby fostering more sustainable forms of intrinsic motivation within the workplace (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

The findings also support previous empirical evidence suggesting that employee motivation develops through supportive leadership behaviors rather than through transactional managerial relationships alone. Collie (2023) demonstrated that autonomy-supportive leadership positively influences employee motivation by creating psychologically supportive work environments, while Vinh et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership contributes to employee motivation through stronger interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating how such motivational processes are experienced within the operational context of an Indonesian financial leasing company. Instead of explaining leadership as a statistical predictor of employee motivation, this study illustrates how employees interpret managerial behaviors as meaningful workplace experiences that gradually strengthen commitment, confidence, and willingness to contribute toward organizational performance.

The four themes identified in this study collectively indicate that employee motivation was shaped through the interaction of multiple leadership practices rather than through a single dominant managerial behavior. Communication, recognition, participative decision-making, and coaching emerged as mutually reinforcing practices that created a supportive organizational environment where employees experienced trust, involvement, and continuous professional development. This finding supports the contemporary perspective that leadership should be understood as an integrated social process in which leaders simultaneously facilitate interpersonal relationships, organizational learning, and employee development. Such an interpretation complements the notion of leadership practices proposed by Atiku and Van Wyk (2024) while extending the broader leadership framework advanced by Yukl (2013), emphasizing that leadership effectiveness is embedded in everyday managerial interactions rather than isolated leadership events.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of literature by demonstrating how employee motivation can be understood through employees' lived experiences of leadership practices instead of being viewed solely as an organizational outcome measured through quantitative indicators. While Self-Determination Theory explains that autonomy, competence, and relatedness constitute the psychological foundations of intrinsic motivation, the present findings illustrate how these needs are fulfilled through routine managerial behaviors occurring in everyday organizational life. Employees perceived opportunities to express opinions, receive constructive feedback, obtain recognition, and participate in decision-making as interconnected experiences that strengthened their motivation and organizational commitment. These findings therefore provide qualitative evidence that complements previous conceptual explanations of work motivation developed by Deci and Ryan (2008), Gagné and Deci (2005), and Deci et al. (2017).

The study also offers practical implications for managers operating within financial leasing organizations and other service-based industries characterized by demanding performance targets and intensive customer interactions. The findings suggest that improving employee motivation does not necessarily require extensive structural reforms or costly incentive programs. Instead, relatively simple yet consistent leadership practices, including maintaining open communication, recognizing employee contributions, encouraging participation in operational decision-making, and providing continuous coaching, may generate meaningful improvements in employees' motivation and workplace commitment. Consequently, leadership development initiatives should place greater emphasis on strengthening managers' interpersonal and coaching capabilities in addition to their technical and operational competencies.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted within a single branch office of Company X, and the findings therefore reflect a specific organizational context that may not be directly transferable to all financial leasing companies or other industries. Furthermore, the qualitative case study design emphasizes depth of understanding rather than statistical generalization. Future research may extend the present study by examining leadership practices across multiple branch offices or different financial institutions, as well as integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of leadership practices and employee motivation. Nevertheless, the present study provides valuable contextual evidence demonstrating that leadership practices constitute an important organizational resource for sustaining employee motivation within highly competitive service organizations.

CONCLUSION

This study explored leadership practices in improving employee motivation within Company X, an Indonesian financial leasing company, through a qualitative case study approach. The findings revealed that employee motivation was shaped through four interconnected leadership practices: open and supportive communication, recognition and appreciation, participative decision-making, and coaching for employee development. Rather than perceiving leadership as a formal organizational role or a particular leadership style, participants experienced leadership through consistent managerial behaviors embedded in their daily workplace interactions. These practices fostered trust, strengthened employees' sense of involvement, encouraged continuous learning, and enhanced their willingness to contribute toward organizational goals. The findings therefore demonstrate that leadership practices constitute an important mechanism through which employee motivation can be developed and sustained within highly competitive financial service organizations.

The study contributes to the existing literature by providing qualitative evidence on how leadership practices are experienced and interpreted within the Indonesian financial leasing industry, a context that has received relatively limited scholarly attention. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that managers can strengthen employee motivation by consistently cultivating open communication, recognizing employee contributions, encouraging collaborative decision-making, and providing continuous coaching rather than relying solely on formal authority or financial incentives. Although the findings are limited to a single organizational setting, they offer valuable insights for leadership development in service-based organizations. Future studies are encouraged to examine leadership practices across multiple organizations and industries using broader qualitative or mixed-method approaches to enhance the transferability and comprehensiveness of the findings.

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