

Influence of Leadership Styles Towards Employee Morale in the E-Commerce Industry in Beijing, China

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this research is to comprehensively examine how various leadership styles influence the dynamic e-commerce sector in Beijing. The theoretical framework encompasses three prominent leadership styles: authoritative, transformational, and delegative. The rapid growth of e-commerce has initiated a fundamental transformation in operational practices, providing consumers with the convenience of online shopping while significantly increasing employment opportunities. Within this intricate e-commerce ecosystem, Beijing stands as a pivotal hub, highlighting China's significant position in the global e-commerce landscape. This study conducts an in-depth investigation into the complex interactions between leadership dynamics and employee morale within the e-commerce context of Beijing. To gain empirical insights, a quantitative research methodology was employed, ensuring rigor throughout the investigative process. The primary instrument utilized for data collection was an online survey, meticulously designed to assess the nuanced impacts of leadership on employee morale. Participants were carefully selected from prominent e-commerce enterprises located in Beijing, the capital of China. To ensure statistical robustness, the collection of valid responses was constrained to a total of 393. Reflecting the study's theoretical underpinnings, the findings affirm one of the original hypotheses. Specifically, the results reveal a significant negative correlation between authoritarian leadership and employee morale. This elucidates a clear depiction of the detrimental relationship between this particular leadership style and employee satisfaction in Beijing's e-commerce sector.

Keywords: Leadership, E-Commerce, Authoritative Leadership, Transformative Leadership, Delegative Leadership

INTRODUCTION

The exponential rise of the e-commerce sector has fundamentally transformed how firms operate, providing customers with convenient access to online purchasing and generating a significant number of job opportunities. As a major player in the global e-commerce market, China has experienced substantial growth in this industry, with Beijing emerging as a key hub for e-commerce businesses (Vasudevan et al., 2024). Employee satisfaction is a critical factor influencing organizational performance across all sectors, including e-commerce. While low morale can lead to decreased performance, higher turnover, and widespread inefficiencies, strong morale contributes to enhanced productivity, job satisfaction, and employee dedication (Olley, 2022). The leadership styles adopted by managers and supervisors significantly impact employee satisfaction and can influence workplace culture.

Organizational research has identified and thoroughly examined several leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire (Hussain & Hassan, 2016). Each style possesses unique traits and effects employee productivity and morale in various ways.

Understanding how different leadership philosophies impact employee morale is particularly crucial in the context of Beijing's booming e-commerce sector, characterized by rapid technological advancements, intense competition, and evolving consumer demands (Sadia, & Aylin, 2024). Effective leadership is essential in this highly competitive industry for cultivating a positive workplace culture, motivating employees, and enhancing their overall well-being.

However, limited studies have specifically addressed the impact of leadership styles on employee satisfaction within Beijing's e-commerce sector. Most existing research tends to focus on broader organizational contexts or different industries, resulting in a knowledge gap regarding the e-commerce industry specifically.

This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the effects of three leadership styles authoritative, transformational, and delegative on employee satisfaction within the e-commerce sector in Beijing, China. By exploring the relationship between leadership styles and employee morale, this research seeks to provide valuable insights for optimizing leadership practices to improve employee satisfaction in e-commerce organizations operating in Beijing.

China is the largest global market for e-commerce, with nearly fifty percent of all transactions occurring within its borders (Nwogbo et al., 2025). Recent studies have indicated that turnover rates in Beijing's e-commerce industry have escalated, reaching 30.7% from 2021 to 2023 (Mwaisaka et al., 2019). Turnover rates and employee morale are intricately connected; thus, employee morale emerges as a key factor for driving organizational efficiency. Elevated employee morale is closely associated with enhanced performance, satisfaction, and engagement within the workplace, which can be directly influenced by the leadership philosophy employed by a company (Tuasikal et al., 2024).

Despite the growing significance of the e-commerce sector, there is a dearth of research specifically investigating the predominant leadership styles within this industry and their effects on employee morale. Current literature often extrapolates conclusions from various organizational contexts or sectors, failing to capture the unique characteristics and dynamics of the e-commerce industry. This knowledge gap limits Beijing-based e-commerce companies' ability to refine their leadership strategies and foster environments that promote strong employee morale.

Consequently, this study aims to explore the impact of leadership styles specifically authoritative, transformational, and delegative leadership on employee morale within the e-commerce industry in Beijing, China. By filling this critical knowledge gap, the research will equip e-commerce managers and leaders with practical insights to cultivate effective leadership strategies that enhance employee morale and overall satisfaction. Ultimately, this research aspires to contribute to the development of guidelines and interventions aimed at improving employee satisfaction in the e-commerce sector, fostering a positive work environment, and supporting organizational success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The influence of leadership styles on employee morale is an essential aspect of organizational behavior and management, particularly in the fast-evolving e-commerce sector in Beijing, China. In this context, employee morale is often defined as a person's mindset, sense of fulfillment, and overall perspective during their employment (Samad & Abdullah, 2012). This aspect is instrumental in influencing teamwork, innovation, customer satisfaction, staff retention, productivity, and the overall organizational culture. E-commerce businesses that prioritize employee morale are likely to cultivate a productive environment that enhances engagement, loyalty, and performance, thereby contributing to long-term success and growth (Zhang et al., 2015).

Definition of Leadership

Within organizational contexts, leadership encompasses the ability of an individual to motivate, direct, and influence employees towards the achievement of shared goals (Rukmana, 2020). It includes providing guidance, making critical decisions, inspiring team members, and fostering a productive work environment. Notably, leadership is not restricted to those in formal managerial positions; it can also manifest at various organizational levels among individuals with diverse roles and responsibilities. Effective leadership fundamentally revolves around developing a vision for the organization and translating that vision into feasible strategies (Soelistya et al., 2024). Various authors define leadership differently, focusing on aspects such as the ability to influence others towards consensus on objectives (Brahim et al., 2015), and the capacity to instill trust and cooperation among team members (Samad & Abdullah, 2012).

Autocratic Leadership Style

Autocratic leadership is characterized by a centralized decision-making process in which the leader retains full control and imposes strict discipline on subordinates (Yea et al., 2025). Leaders employing this style typically do not solicit input from their subordinates during decision-making and instead make unilateral choices, expecting compliance without feedback.

While autocratic leadership can be advantageous in contexts requiring rapid decisions or tight control, its potential detrimental impact on organizational culture is significant, as it often stifles subordinate input and innovation (Mohiuddin, 2017).

Democratic Leadership Style

Democratic leadership is characterized by involving team members in the decision-making process (Li & Li, 2018). This approach encourages participation and values input from subordinates, often resulting in increased responsibility, adaptability, and morale.

Studies suggest that this leadership style fosters higher employee retention due to elevated engagement levels (Oshagbemi, 2008; Appah et al., 2025). However, the downside includes the possibility of flawed decisions based on inexperienced subordinates' input, which may hinder effectiveness in time-sensitive situations.

Laissez-faire (Delegative) Leadership Style

Also known as delegative leadership, this style grants team members significant autonomy in decision-making (Nwibere, 2013). While it empowers employees to take charge of their tasks, it can lead to ambiguity if leaders lack confidence and do not provide clear guidelines (Oshagbemi, 2008). Delegative leadership nurtures independence and creativity but may not be effective in all scenarios; it requires team members who are self-motivated and capable of independent functioning to thrive (Sakti et al., 2025).

Transformational Leadership Style

Transformational leadership is rooted in the ability to inspire and motivate team members to achieve shared objectives (Olayisade & Awolusi, 2021). It emphasizes clarifying goals, establishing team responsibilities, and creating an environment that fosters innovation and taking risks.

Transformational leaders are particularly effective in raising employee morale, enhancing organizational commitment, and driving higher performance outcomes (Zhang et al., 2015; Hidayah, 2025). However, it is crucial to recognize that the impact of transformational leadership may vary based on situational factors, including organizational culture and the traits of followers, which can influence its effectiveness in fostering employee satisfaction and motivation (Notarnicola et al., 2024).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

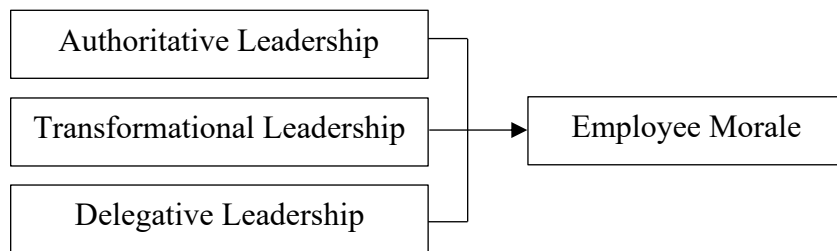


Figure 1: The framework outlining how the independent and dependent variables are related.

Figure 1 illustrates the structure used for this study by showing how the variables are connected to one another. Employee morale in the e-commerce industry is the dependent variable, while the three different leadership philosophies, authoritative leadership, transformational leadership, and delegative leadership are the independent variables.

Hypothesis Development

Based on the study's conceptual framework, the following hypotheses were made:

H1₀: Authoritative leadership has no effect on employee morale.

H1_A: Authoritative leadership has a negative effect on employee morale.

H2₀: Transformational leadership has no effect on employee morale.

H2_A: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on employee morale.

H3₀: Delegative leadership has no effect on young employee morale.

H3_A: Delegative leadership has a negative effect on young employee morale.

METHODOLOGY

This study is conducted in Beijing, China, primarily due to the concentration of numerous e-commerce industries within the region. Beijing is recognized as the core hub for many prominent e-commerce firms, making it an ideal setting to investigate leadership styles and their effects on employee morale. The city hosts the main operations of various well-known organizations, affording a diverse sample for this research Anwar (2013).

A quantitative methodology is employed, facilitating the collection of statistical data through surveys. The study invited 400 employees from e-commerce divisions in Beijing to participate in an online questionnaire designed to assess the influence of different leadership styles on employee morale. A total of 393 valid responses were collected, ensuring a robust sample for analysis.

Data validity was assessed using SPSS software to conduct various statistical analyses. These analyses included reliability tests, descriptive statistics, and correlation assessments to explore relationships between leadership styles and employee morale. Following the data collection, regression analyses will be employed to test the hypotheses concerning the impact of authoritative, transformational, and delegative leadership on employee morale.

FINDINGS

Table 1 summarises the sample's descriptive statistics. The key demographic information collected from all eligible participants is shown in Table 1, both in frequency (n) and percentage (%), with the cumulative frequency equaling the total number of eligible responses (n = 393). These responses included 205 from individuals who

identified as men, making up 52.16 percent of the total, and 188 from participants who identified as women, making up 47.80 percent of the total. It is clear that more male respondents participated in the survey than female respondents given the study's random distribution of questionnaires.

Additionally, participants were asked to indicate their age by choosing from a number of age categories that were offered. According to Table 1, a sizable percentage of respondents, 44%, were between the ages of 31 and 40. Following this predominating age group, participants between the ages of 21 and 30 made up 36.60% of the total. Seven percent of the sample of respondents were between the ages of 41 and 50. This distribution is close to the responses provided by respondents who fall under the age of 20.

In terms of the educational background of the respondents, it was observed that 42.20% of the respondents had received a degree qualification whereas 36.40% had diploma. Following this, 12.7% of the respondents were from high school or below. It is observed from the responds received, only 8.70% of the respondents had a masters degree or above.

Besides, the length of employment of respondents were evaluated. Majority of the respondents, about 47.3% have 1 to 3 years of experience. About 22.1% of the respondents have below than 1 year experience. 16.3% and 10.7% of them have 4 to 6 years and 7 to 9 years of experience respectively. Only 3.6% of them have more than 9 years of working experience. From the data evaluated, 100% of the respondents were found working in a company with a size of more than 12501 employees.

Table 1: Respondents' socio-demographics

Demographic characteristics		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	205	52.16
	Female	188	47.80
Age	< 20 years old	28	7.10
	21-30 years old	144	36.60
	31-40 years old	173	44.00
	41-50 years old	28	7.10
	>51 years old	20	5.10
Length of service	< 1 year	87	22.10
	1 - 3 years	186	47.30
	4 - 6 years	64	16.30
	7 - 9 years	42	10.70
	> 9 years	14	3.60

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis is a comprehensive statistical technique widely used across various fields to explore the intricate relationships between a dependent variable and multiple independent variables (Rai et al., 2020). This method, an advanced version of basic linear regression analysis, enables a more thorough investigation of the interactions among various independent variables and the dependent variable. By evaluating the assigned coefficients for these independent variables, multiple regression analysis provides vital insights into the strength and directionality of their relationships with the dependent variable (Asamani et al., 2016).

In this study, the impact of different leadership philosophies authoritative, transformational, and delegative on employee morale in Beijing's e-commerce industry was examined. The research utilized multiple regression to

help elucidate the complex relationships among these variables. Notably, the analysis sought to predict the value of the dependent variable using several independent factors. The analysis of variance facilitated an understanding of the significant relationships between employee morale and the factors influencing it within e-commerce firms (Harmoko & Bangun, 2024).

The R-square value obtained from the regression analysis elucidates the proportional effect of the proposed model on employee morale. If the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is upheld; conversely, if the p-value for the alternative hypothesis exceeds 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis (Milinković & Kovačević, 2020).

The findings indicated that the correlation coefficient (R) value was 0.165, suggesting a weak relationship between the independent and dependent variables. A higher correlation coefficient would signify a stronger relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Schober et al., 2018). The R-squared value, or the coefficient of determination, was calculated at just 0.027 percent, indicating that the three independent variables examined in this study can explain approximately 2.0% of the variability in employee morale within Beijing's e-commerce industry (Rodriguez et al., 2017).

Table 2 Multiple Regression Analysis

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	40.796	2.219		18.389	0.000
Total ALS	-0.112	0.053	-0.111	-2.133	0.034
Total TLS	0.049	0.062	0.041	0.792	0.429
Total DLS	-0.072	0.050	-0.076	-1.442	0.150

Table 2 shows that the significant values for the independent variables of transformational and delegative leadership styles are 0.429 and 0.150, respectively, both exceeding the threshold of 0.05. Consequently, the regression results indicate that these independent factors have a minimal effect on employee morale (Jawoosh et al., 2022).

Conversely, the research uncovered a significant impact of authoritative leadership on employee morale, reflected in a statistically significant value of 0.034 and a regression coefficient of -0.111. This negative regression coefficient suggests a potential inverse relationship between the independent and dependent variables. These findings are consistent with existing literature and prior studies (Udin et al., 2019). Specifically, a study by Kebede & Demeke (2017) corroborated the adverse effect of authoritarian leadership styles on employee morale. This association may be attributed to the nature of autocratic leadership, which tends to enforce strict authority and control over subordinates, thereby impacting their overall emotional well-being and motivation. Such findings serve to reinforce the idea that leadership style plays a crucial role in shaping the workplace environment and enhancing employee engagement and performance.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to carefully examine how authoritative, transformational, and delegative leadership styles affect employee morale in e-commerce companies in Beijing, China. The study's findings revealed a complex interaction between these leadership philosophies and the various factors influencing employee morale. This insight clarified the specific challenges and opportunities present within this unique context.

Notably, the relationship between delegative and transformational leadership styles and employee morale proved

to be intricate and challenging to isolate. While the study found no clear connection between the various leadership philosophies and overall employee morale, it did identify a significant pattern: a negative correlation between authoritative leadership style and employee morale. This indicates that, among the leadership philosophies considered, authoritative leadership is the least preferred.

The significance of this study extends beyond its immediate conclusions, offering avenues for further investigation. By providing a comprehensive analysis of different leadership styles and their effects on employee morale within Beijing's dynamic e-commerce sector, this research lays a strong foundation for future studies. Exploring additional factors such as the effects of cultural nuances on leadership dynamics, the implications of technological advancements, and potential long-term outcomes associated with specific leadership philosophies can yield deeper insights into enhancing employee morale for sustainable success in this vibrant sector.

In conclusion, this study serves not only as a resource for understanding leadership paradigms but also as a platform for further research into the complex interplay between leadership styles and employee morale in Beijing's flourishing e-commerce landscape.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to report regarding the present study

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