

A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Styles and Organizational Culture within Same Company and Different European Countries

Laura Raluca CIUI

Universitatea “Aurel Vlaicu” Arad, Arad, România

Gabriela-Sorina VANCU

Universitatea “Aurel Vlaicu” Arad, Arad, România

lauraciui@yahoo.com

Cristian Iulian MOLDOVAN

Universitatea “Aurel Vlaicu” Arad, Arad, România

moldovan_cristian.iulian@yahoo.de

Abstract. *Leadership and organizational culture are central to organizational effectiveness, and their interaction becomes especially relevant in multinational firms that operate across distinct national settings. This study investigates how leadership styles and organizational culture coexist within one multinational organization across three European locations: Germany, the Czech Republic, and Romania, where corporate values are intended to remain consistent while managerial practices may adapt to local expectations. The research uses a comparative quantitative design based on an online questionnaire administered to employees in the three locations. The instrument captured perceptions of leadership behaviors and culture-related experiences through structured statements on a five-point response scale. A total of 124 valid responses were collected, enabling cross-location comparisons and interpretation of patterns associated with tenure, team stability, and workforce structure. Findings suggest that the organizational culture is perceived as strongly present in all three locations, supported by standardized processes, shared communication routines, and recurring feedback mechanisms. At the same time, leadership expectations and evaluations vary by context: stable teams emphasize supportive and relationship-oriented leadership, whereas newer or more dynamic teams prioritize clarity, structure, and decisiveness. The study contributes to cross-national management by showing that a cohesive corporate culture can be sustained across countries while leadership practices remain locally credible and responsive, with implications for engagement and performance in multinational teams.*

Keywords: leadership styles, organizational culture, cross-national management, multinational organizations, workplace values, comparative survey.

Introduction

Leadership and organizational culture have become core concepts for understanding how organizations coordinate work, sustain engagement, and achieve performance outcomes. Beyond academic debate, they shape everyday decisions, behavioural norms, and the ways employees interpret strategic priorities in both private and public organizations.

Leadership influences motivation and commitment, supports retention, and helps translate declared values into routine practices. Leaders do not only allocate tasks; they frame priorities, shape communication, and set expectations for how teams respond to change and uncertainty.

These issues are amplified in multinational companies, where a coherent corporate identity must be maintained across sites embedded in different national environments. Multinationals

typically promote common values and standards, but employees bring culturally grounded expectations about authority, communication, and acceptable leadership behaviour.

To examine this challenge, the present study uses a multinational company as a case organization, given its explicit leadership principles and its emphasis on standardized culture across operations. The analysis focuses on corporate office in Germany, the Czech Republic, and Romania, and it explores how corporate cultural consistency is sustained while leadership perceptions differ across locations.

Empirically, the study draws on employee survey data collected across the three sites using a structured questionnaire designed to capture leadership practices, organizational values, and perceived cultural alignment.

Literature review

Leadership and organizational culture are interdependent: leadership contributes to the formation and reinforcement of culture, while culture sets boundaries for which leadership behaviours are regarded as credible and appropriate (Schein, 2010). This reciprocal relationship becomes more visible in multinational settings, where organizational identity must be sustained across units shaped by different national cultures.

From this perspective, leadership can be understood as a social process through which shared meanings and behavioural expectations are enacted and reproduced. Organizational culture, in turn, provides an interpretive frame that makes certain leadership actions appear legitimate while rendering others less convincing.

Social learning theory offers a useful lens for explaining how these patterns are maintained. Individuals learn not only through direct outcomes but also by observing which behaviours are rewarded, normalized, or tolerated (Bandura, 1977). In organizations, this implies that managers adapt their leadership conduct to implicit norms, and employees assess leadership through expectations developed in their local context.

Although leadership styles and influence strategies have been widely studied, fewer contributions examine both dimensions together in a consistent analytical framework (Howell & Higgins, 1990; Charbonneau, 2004). This is important because outcomes such as commitment and performance depend not only on general leadership style, but also on the influence tactics leaders use to shape attitudes and behaviour.

Leadership: concepts, styles, and influence mechanisms

Leadership is commonly defined as influence directed toward collective goals. Over time, the field has shifted from trait-based views to behavioural and relational approaches, while retaining the understanding that leadership is inherently contextual (Yukl, 2002).

A frequently used framework distinguishes supportive, task-oriented, and change-oriented leadership (Yukl, 2002). Supportive leadership emphasizes respect, consideration, and attention to employee needs, which can foster psychological safety and trust. Task-oriented leadership focuses on clarity, planning, monitoring, and operational reliability. Change-oriented leadership centres on vision, innovation, and the mobilisation of commitment during transformation (Yukl, 2002). Evidence links these patterns to satisfaction, commitment, and performance, particularly in uncertain environments (Herold et al., 2008).

Leadership is also expressed through influence strategies—deliberate actions aimed at shaping how others think, feel, or act (Van Knippenberg et al., 1999). Influence can be relational, such as recognition and socialising, or more assertive, such as direct pressure and close monitoring. Reactions range from compliance to commitment or resistance depending on perceived legitimacy

and contextual fit. Research further indicates that influence strategies are associated with organizational commitment and leadership effectiveness (Chong, 2014; Chong et al., 2013, 2015).

Scholars continue to debate the direction of causality between leadership and culture: whether leadership primarily shapes culture or whether culture precedes and constrains leadership emergence (Block, 2003; Kwantes & Boglarsky, 2007; Sarros et al., 2002). A widely accepted synthesis is that leadership both shapes and is shaped by culture, understood as shared assumptions and meanings taken for granted in organizational life (Schein, 2010).

Organizational culture: typologies and links to employee outcomes

Organizational culture is typically described as shared values, norms, and assumptions that guide how members interpret their environment and act within it. Culture is sustained through practices and symbols rather than only formal statements (Cooren, 2015). Strong cultures are characterised by clearly prioritised values, broad internal agreement, and consistent reinforcement through everyday managerial decisions (Robbins & Barnwell, 1998).

Early empirical work proposed typologies to make culture comparable across organizations, including distinctions between people- and team-oriented cultures, detail- and consistency-oriented cultures, and innovation-oriented cultures (Denison & Mishra, 1995; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Lok & Crawford, 1999). These cultural patterns have been associated with employee commitment and satisfaction and with organizational performance, suggesting practical consequences for effectiveness (Denison & Mishra, 1995; Silverthorne, 2004; Lok & Crawford, 1999).

Linking back to social learning, culture signals which leadership behaviours and influence tactics are likely to be rewarded. For instance, team-oriented cultures tend to align with supportive leadership and relational influence strategies, whereas detail-oriented cultures often legitimise task-focused leadership and stronger monitoring (O'Reilly et al., 1991; Yukl, 2002; Chong et al., 2013). Innovation-oriented cultures, by contrast, are typically associated with change-oriented leadership and persuasive influence strategies that mobilise commitment for experimentation and adaptation (Yukl, 2002; Chong et al., 2013).

National culture as a contextual boundary for leadership and culture

Cross-country comparisons of organizational culture inevitably involve national culture as a contextual factor that shapes expectations about authority, communication, uncertainty, and cooperation. Hofstede's dimensions are often used to explain why leadership behaviours perceived as appropriate in one country may be interpreted differently in another.

A key methodological distinction is that Hofstede's framework operates at the national level, while this study focuses on organizational culture within one multinational firm. The two levels interact but remain analytically distinct. Organizational practices can be adapted and learned, whereas individual values associated with national culture tend to change more slowly. Consequently, multinational management often relies on translating corporate practices into locally acceptable routines rather than attempting to alter deeper value structures (Kwantes & Dickson, 2001).

Romania, the Czech Republic, and Germany: culturally anchored expectations

Romania is often characterised by higher acceptance of hierarchy and stronger preference for predictability. In workplace terms, this configuration can support leadership that provides clear direction, while also valuing supportive behaviour that reduces uncertainty and strengthens relational security.

The Czech Republic is frequently positioned as moderately hierarchical with relatively stronger individualism, combined with substantial preference for rules and predictability. This pattern can create expectations for autonomy within clearly defined structures, where leadership is valued for competence and consistency.

Germany is commonly associated with lower power distance, higher individualism, direct communication, and strong emphasis on planning and performance standards. Leadership legitimacy is therefore closely tied to expertise and transparent reasoning, while overly paternalistic styles may be regarded as less appropriate.

Implications for cross-national organizational analysis

Taken together, the literature suggests that leadership and organizational culture are best approached as an integrated system shaped by learning processes and contextual constraints (Schein, 2010; Yukl, 2002). Leadership styles and influence strategies represent complementary channels through which leaders shape behaviour, while organizational culture provides the normative background that defines legitimacy.

Social learning strengthens this argument by clarifying how culturally congruent behaviours are reproduced over time: employees and managers observe what is rewarded and imitate patterns that are treated as appropriate (Bandura, 1977).

In multinational environments, national culture adds an additional interpretive layer that shapes what employees perceive as fair, competent, and trustworthy leadership. The practical gap between declared values and culture often depends on whether leadership behaviours align with locally grounded expectations.

Methodology

This study applies a comparative quantitative design to examine how leadership styles are perceived within a single multinational company operating across three national contexts: Romania, the Czech Republic, and Germany. The analytical premise is that corporate culture can be standardised at the organizational level, while leadership practices may vary across sites in response to local routines and culturally anchored expectations.

The research was conducted in multinational company, where teams across the three locations collaborate under the same reporting structure and participate in regular joint meetings. The units included carrier management in Munich, carrier specialist roles in Prague, and carrier sourcing specialist roles in Iași. The unit of analysis was the individual employee, as the study measures perceptions of leadership behaviours and organizational culture within each team.

The target population included approximately 140 employees across the three locations. All employees were invited to participate, and 124 completed responses were collected, corresponding to a response rate of 89%. Participation was relatively balanced across locations: Germany accounted for 44 responses, Romania for 40, and the Czech Republic for 40. The sample included 74 women and 50 men.

Data were collected through an anonymous online questionnaire distributed via a link. Participation was voluntary and limited to one response per person. To reduce identification risk, results are reported only in aggregated form.

The questionnaire comprised 45 affirmative statements designed to capture leadership styles and culture-related perceptions. Responses were recorded on a five-point frequency scale ranging from never to always. In addition, respondents provided demographic and work-related

information such as location, age group, tenure, role category, and gender to support subgroup interpretation.

Leadership styles were operationalised across ten categories with item groups allocated to autocratic, bureaucratic, charismatic, cultural, democratic, laissez-faire, people-oriented, task-oriented, transformational, and transactional patterns. Organizational culture was assessed through items capturing belonging, alignment with values and ethics, communication quality, freedom to express disagreement, and satisfaction with organizational benefits. National culture was used as a contextual reference in the interpretation, while maintaining a clear distinction between national and organizational levels.

Results and discussions

This section summarises the main descriptive results of the internal survey (N = 124) conducted across the three locations and discusses them in relation to the study's assumptions regarding leadership variability and cultural consistency within the same organizational framework.

Participation was high, which strengthens the descriptive value of the findings for the department. Responses were sufficiently balanced across the three locations to support exploratory cross-location comparison.

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by country and gender. Overall, women represented 60% of participants, while men accounted for 40% (Table 2).

The age profile indicates a predominantly early-to-mid career workforce, with the majority of respondents in the 30–39 category (Table 3). This is relevant because leadership expectations may shift with career stage and accumulated experience.

Role distribution was concentrated in technical profiles, consistent with the operational and analytical nature of the department (Table 4). This context may shape perceptions of effective leadership by increasing emphasis on structure, process adherence, and performance metrics.

Tenure patterns differed across countries (Table 5). Romania displayed a more stable profile with a large share of employees reporting more than five years in the organization, whereas Germany was concentrated in the one-to-two-year segment. The Czech Republic showed an intermediate profile.

These structural differences support a key interpretation: stable teams tend to develop shared routines and relational norms, which can increase the value placed on trust-building and supportive leadership. By contrast, newer or more heterogeneous teams may prioritise clarity, consistent decision rules, and structured guidance.

In line with the study assumptions, the descriptive evidence indicates that leadership is not evaluated as a single uniform construct. Instead, respondents differentiate leadership through behavioural clusters such as task direction, openness to feedback, psychological safety, and support for autonomy, suggesting that employees distinguish between control-oriented and enabling practices.

At the same time, organizational culture appeared cohesive across sites. Respondents described consistent cultural cues, including shared language, standard meeting formats, and recurring feedback routines. These mechanisms function as cultural infrastructure that helps sustain a common organizational identity across locations, even when leadership practices differ in tone or emphasis.

Figures and tables

Table 1. Respondents by country and gender (N = 124)

Location	Female	Male	Total	Share of sample
Czech Republic (Prague)	28	12	40	32%
Germany (Munich)	24	20	44	35%
Romania (Iași)	22	18	40	32%
Total	74	50	124	100%

Source: Author's own research (survey data)

Table 2. Gender distribution (N = 124)

Gender	N	%
Female	74	60%
Male	50	40%
Total	124	100%

Source: Author's own research (survey data)

Table 3. Age categories (N = 124)

Age group	%
20–29	10%
30–39	66%
40–50	18%
50+	6%

Source: Author's own research (survey data)

Table 4. Role distribution (N = 124)

Role	N	%
Engineer	43	35%
IT Engineer	44	35%
Operations Support	19	15%
Procurement Manager	18	15%
Total	124	100%

Source: Author's own research (survey data)

Table 5. Tenure by country (counts)

Tenure	Romania	Czech Republic	Germany
< 1 year	1	0	0
1–2 years	9	24	28
3–5 years	6	16	12
> 5 years	24	0	4

Source: Author's own research (survey data)

Limitations and practical implications

Two limitations should be considered when interpreting these results. First, the study relies on self-reported perceptions, which may reflect response tendencies, temporary team climate, or local dynamics at the time of completion. Second, the analysis is department-specific and based on a modest sample within a single organizational unit, which limits generalisation beyond the selected teams and locations.

Despite these limitations, the findings offer practical value for multinational management. The descriptive differences in tenure and workforce composition suggest that leadership development benefits from a dual approach: maintaining a stable corporate cultural core while adjusting leadership behaviours to local expectations and team maturity. In operational terms, a shared culture does not imply a single leadership style; effective leadership in multinational settings depends on translating corporate principles into locally credible practices.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between leadership styles and organizational culture within same company across three locations—Munich, Prague, and Iași—starting from the premise that leadership and culture mutually reinforce each other and shape employee attitudes and coordination patterns. The review of the literature emphasised that leadership is best understood as a configuration of influence mechanisms that gains meaning in relation to shared norms and culturally grounded expectations.

Empirically, the survey results support the view that a standardized corporate culture can remain recognizable across countries while leadership perceptions vary by local context. Although the sites were comparable in roles and organizational structure, they differed in workforce stability, especially in tenure patterns. These differences appear to shape what employees perceive as credible leadership: stable teams emphasise trust-based coordination and relational consistency, whereas more dynamic contexts place greater weight on clarity, decisive action, and structured guidance.

At the same time, cross-site cultural cohesion is sustained through shared organizational mechanisms, including standard meeting formats, common language, and continuous feedback routines. These practices operate as cultural infrastructure that reduces fragmentation even when leadership behaviours differ across locations.

Overall, the findings suggest that effective multinational management requires preserving a strong cultural core while enabling leadership practices to adapt to local team maturity and national-context expectations. Future research could extend the analysis beyond one department and examine additional organizations or longitudinal changes in leadership perceptions.

Acknowledgments

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Microsoft 365 Copilot for the purpose of language refinement, formatting and translating the manuscript from Romanian. The original article was written and documented entirely in Romanian. The authors have thoroughly reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content of this publication.

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