

## Culture-Leadership Fit in Fashion Industry Medium Enterprise in Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT:** This study examines the culture-leadership alignment at PT Tunggol Ritel Indonesia (TRI), a medium-sized Indonesian fashion enterprise facing revenue volatility and a widening gap between sales targets and realization. The study started from the proposition that these issues reflected a misalignment between organizational culture and its leadership approach. Using the Integrated Culture Framework, a census survey of 84 employees measured current and preferred culture across eight styles. Descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used to compare profiles and identify culture gaps, while attribute-level analysis highlighted priority behaviors. The results show significant gaps for all styles, with employees favouring a blended culture in which “caring” is the “north star”, supported by “safety”, “order”, and “learning”. A literature-based keyword matching analysis was then applied to leadership styles to assess their fit with the target culture mix. Servant leadership was chosen as the best match with the target culture mix. The study contributes to the culture-leadership alignment literature in emerging fashion markets. It provides practical guidance for medium-sized firms designing culture change initiatives.

**KEYWORDS:** culture-leadership alignment, fashion enterprise, leadership style, organizational culture.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry remains a vital sector within Indonesia's creative economy, serving not only as a fundamental human need of identity but also as a significant contributor to economic welfare and cultural expression (Corner, 2020). Revenue of Indonesia's fashion market is projected to reach US\$8.75 billion in 2025 and expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2025-2029) of 2.09%, resulting in a projected market volume of US\$9.51 billion by 2029 (Statista, 2025b). In addition, apparel and footwear are the largest contributors to the ever-growing Indonesian textile industry, supporting exports, and an estimated 843,000 workers in large and medium-scale apparel manufacturing in 2024 (Statista, 2025a). Despite their growth and contribution to the Indonesian economy, fashion SMEs face fierce competition and rapid market shifts. Consumers have become more value-conscious, demanding affordability, quality, and variety (Tam et al., 2005). The post-pandemic “new normal” has further intensified these challenges, requiring strategic adaptation, yet many SMEs continue to struggle in developing the internal capacity to respond effectively (Anjaningrum et al., 2024; Hanelt et al., 2021).

One of the most critical internal enablers of sustained competitiveness is organizational culture. According to the report from McKinsey (2025), healthy cultures are strongly correlated with business success: companies with strong cultural foundations enjoy 3 times greater total returns to shareholders (TSR), 2.5 times higher Return on Invested Capital (ROIC), and an 18% increase in EBITDA within a year. Despite these, McKinsey reports that 70% of organization transformations fail due to people and culture-related challenges, highlighting how critical yet difficult it is to establish a healthy organizational culture (Hancock et al., 2021). Building culture is especially challenging in SMEs, where leadership capacity may be stretched thin. As León et al. (2025) observe, many leaders mistakenly assume that they simply need to role model it rather than work on it. However, creating culture does not have an end date, requiring leaders to continually focus on evolving it, alignment with evolving business strategies, and leadership commitment. According to PwC's Global Culture Survey (2021), the most significant cultural benefits are seen when leaders act authentically and embed culture into daily behaviors across the organization. Culture cannot be managed by slogans or top-down mandates, it must be lived.

This article responds to these challenges by examining culture-leadership fit in the context of SMEs in Indonesia's fashion sector, by focusing on PT Tunggol Ritel Indonesia (TRI). TRI is a medium-sized fashion enterprise based in West Jakarta, Indonesia, founded in 2020. TRI operates primarily through e-commerce and social media platforms, with production managed in-house. The



company employs 84 employees and has adopted a hybrid model, particularly within its marketing and creative teams. Despite steady revenue growth, TRI consistently falls short of its monthly sales targets.

Evidence from the creative economy in Indonesia shows that SMEs often face performance issues not because of strategy, but because internal norms, expectations, and coordination mechanisms are weak or misaligned (Anjaningrum et al., 2024). Global research also indicates that misalignment between culture and strategy is now one of the most common root causes of execution failure, especially in hybrid or digitally enabled organizations (McKinsey, 2023; Groysberg et al., 2021). Other research also suggests such symptoms are often manifestations of culture–strategy misalignment, where the enacted culture does not reinforce the behaviors required to achieve organizational goals (Biggs et al., 2025; Groysberg et al., 2021). At the same time, leadership plays a critical role in shaping, reinforcing, and sustaining cultural norms, particularly in SMEs where leadership influence is more concentrated (León et al., 2025; Baig et al., 2021).

However, TRI has three critical uncertainties that remain unresolved:

1. It is unknown whether the current organizational culture actually supports or contradicts the behaviors needed to achieve strategic goals.
2. The magnitude and nature of the discrepancy between current and preferred culture remain unclear.
3. No evidence exists on what leadership style is most compatible with shaping and sustaining the desired culture.

Without empirical clarity on these issues, TRI risks maintaining organizational norms that inhibit coordination, creativity, and execution, patterns widely documented in SMEs with weak culture–leadership alignment (Hanelt et al., 2021; Anjaningrum et al., 2024; León et al., 2025). Therefore, this study aims to diagnose the alignment between TRI's existing organizational culture and the cultural environment desired by its employees, and to identify the leadership style that best supports the formation of the preferred culture by answering the following questions:

1. What is the current organizational culture perceived by employees at TRI?
2. What is the preferred organizational culture desired by employees?
3. What discrepancies or gaps exist between the current and preferred culture?
4. Which leadership style best aligns with and supports the formation of the preferred culture?

The study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it addresses an empirical gap by focusing on the alignment between leadership behaviors and cultural expectations in SMEs in Indonesia (TRI). Second, it offers evidence from a real operating context in the fashion industry, where creative, marketing, and operational functions must coordinate across on-site and remote settings. Third, it provides actionable implications for SME leaders seeking to design culture and leadership practices that enhance cross-team collaboration and performance.

## II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

### A. Organizational Performance

Richard et al. (2009) define organizational performance as a multidimensional construct that reflects how effectively an organization achieves its intended objectives and consists of three key domains: (a) financial performance, which includes metrics such as profits, return on assets, and return on investment; (b) product market performance, including indicators like sales and market share; and (c) shareholder return, measured through total shareholder return and economic value added. They also emphasize that performance is firm-specific, as each organization selects indicators that fit its strategic goals and context. In line with this view, this study focuses on financial-based metrics especially sales performance, as the primary indicator of TRI's organizational performance.

### B. Organizational Culture

Denison & Mishra (1995) define organizational culture as an underlying values, protocols, beliefs, and assumptions which are well-rooted in the structure of the organizations held by the organizational members that demonstrate and strengthen those basic principles. The definition is strengthened by Schein (2010) that said organizational culture is constructed by group members to cope with adaptation and integration issues that influence the behavior of employees within the organization with the more profound value of culture. Researchers at Spencer Stuart have interactively refined the list of cultural styles across over the past two decades and they constructed a Spencer Stuart's Cultural Alignment Framework which was further explained as an Integrated Culture Framework in Harvard Business Review by Groysberg et al. (2018).

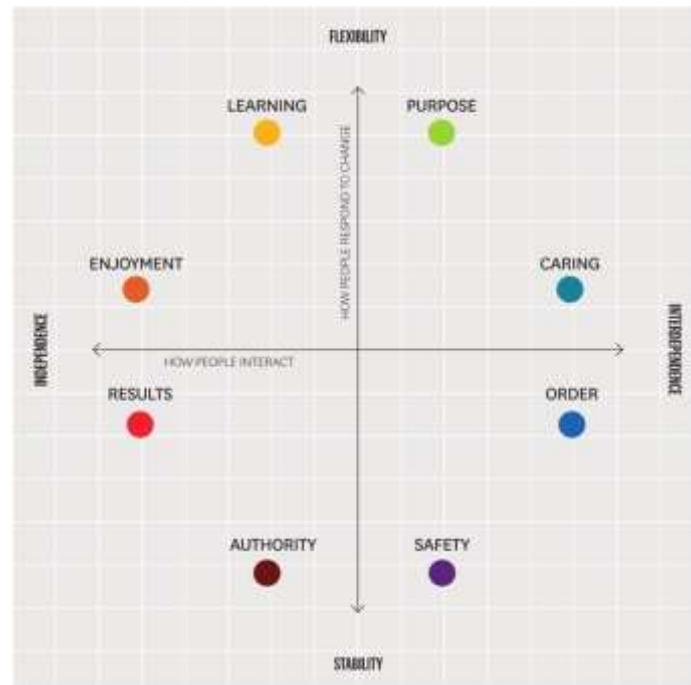


Figure 1. Integrated Culture Framework (Groysberg et al., 2018)

The framework in Figure 1 above two primary dimensions of culture. Looking at the people interaction, organizations differ in how they approach interaction and coordination among people, ranging from high independence to strong interdependence. In more independent cultures, there is a strong emphasis on personal autonomy, individual achievements, and internal competition. In contrast, interdependent cultures value relationship-building, teamwork, and collective efforts. From the response to change spectrum, cultures falling between two ends: stability and flexibility. Cultures that prioritize stability focus on maintaining order, consistency, and the status quo. They often rely on structured rules, formal hierarchies, and efficiency-driven systems. Meanwhile, cultures that emphasize flexibility are more open to innovation, change, diversity, and long-term thinking.

The Integrated Culture Framework (ICF) was adopted for its greater granularity (eight styles) and diagnostic clarity for comparing current versus preferred culture in fast-changing SMEs using the two axes: how people interact (independence – interdependence) and how they respond to change (stability – flexibility). Using this framework, leaders can model the impact of culture on their business and assess its alignment with strategy. Therefore, this framework is well-suited to define individuals’ styles and the values of leaders and employees (Groysberg et al., 2018). This makes it valuable in SMEs context, where understanding the gap between leadership approach and employee expectations is key to driving meaningful organizational change.

### C. Leadership Style

According to Mullins (2005), a leader is someone who delegates tasks and aligns the actions of their subordinates toward clearly defined objectives, while leadership is commonly defined as the process of guiding and influencing others to achieve specific goals. Expanding on this, Nanjundeswaraswamy et al. (2024) describe leadership as a dynamic social process, where influence is exercised through the intentional engagement of team members to willingly contribute to the realization of organizational goals. Fiedler’s contingency model argues that successful leadership depends on the alignment between leadership style and contextual elements such as task structure and the quality of leader–member relations (Strube et al., 1981 as cited in Nanjundeswaraswamy et al. (2024). This model emphasizes the importance of selecting leadership styles that fit specific environments to achieve optimal results. In addition, the path-goal theory suggests that leaders should tailor their behavior to match their followers' readiness and maturity levels, using a balance of supportive and directive approaches based on situational needs (Bonebright et al., 2012). These theories emphasize that effective leaders are those who can flexibly apply various styles in response to the needs of their teams and the organizational context.



**D. Culture-Leadership Alignment**

Organizational performance is closely intertwined with both culture and leadership. Leaders create and sustain organizational culture by embedding values, setting priorities, designing reward systems, and shaping structures and routines (Schein, 2004; Groysberg et al., 2018). Their traits and leadership styles influence how employees perceive the work environment, which in turn directs everyday behavior, commitment, and productivity (Giberson et al., 2009; Sarros et al., 2011). A strong, value-based culture provides consistency, guides decision-making, and supports collaboration and accountability, thereby enhancing overall effectiveness and employee engagement. At the same time, leadership style directly affects performance outcomes, which can motivate employees and support quality (Teoman & Ulengin, 2018; Baig et al., 2021). Thus, leadership shapes culture, culture shapes behavior, and together they form a reinforcing system that drives organizational performance as depicted in the Figure 2.



Figure 2. Performance-Culture-Leadership Framework

**III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**A. Data Collection Method**

This study used a quantitative, with a survey method and a questionnaire as the main instrument based on the ICF by Groysberg et al. (2018). The purpose of this data collection is to gather responses about both the existing and the preferred organizational culture from all 84 employees at TRI. This study adopted a census approach, so no sampling technique was used since the total population size was manageable (N = 84). Respondents were asked to rate each item twice, reflecting two perspectives. First, they evaluated the current organizational culture by indicating the extent to which each attribute represents the existing conditions at TRI. Second, they rated the preferred organizational culture or the cultural traits they believe should be adopted. To encourage decisive responses, the questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale without a neutral option. Respondents selected a rating from 1 (Strongly Disagree) until 4 (Strongly Agree) for each statement. The main objective was to identify overall gaps between current and preferred culture to inform appropriate leadership and cultural change strategies; tenure and position differences were not analysed, as the focus was on capturing the company-wide cultural profile.

All questionnaire statements were developed based on the eight organizational culture styles in the Integrated Culture Framework by Groysberg et al. (2018). From the article, each style is described by a specific type of work environment, that first translated into indicators, which reflect the key characteristics of each culture style, and then further translated into statements suitable for survey use. To strengthen content validity, items were also adapted from Hernandez and Malagar (2019), then modified and contextualized for TRI as a medium-sized fashion company in Indonesia so that the language and examples were relevant and easily understood. The variable operationalization used for this questionnaire has been tested through an internal pilot study (Lancaster et al., 2004), conducted on 25 August 2025 with 14 employees. Participants were asked to complete all items and then provide feedback regarding any statements they find confusing or unclear.

Table I. Variable Operationalization (Groysberg et al., 2018; Hernandez & Malagar, 2019)

Variable	Work Environment	Indicator	Statement
Caring	Warm, collaborative, and welcoming places where people help and support one another. Employees are united by loyalty	Warm	C1: My workplace feels friendly and welcoming to everyone, including me.
		Collaborative	C2: There is good teamwork between me, my team and other departments.
		Loyalty	C3: I am loyal to my company



<b>Purpose</b>	Tolerant, compassionate places where people try to do good for the long-term future of the world. Employees are united by a focus on sustainability and global communities	Tolerant	P1: My workplace respects different opinions
		Purposeful	P2: My work feels meaningful and connected to the company's long-term goals.
		Sustainable	P3: My company supports sustainability and encourages actions that benefit society and the environment
<b>Learning</b>	Inventive and open-minded places where people spark new ideas and explore alternatives. Employees are united by curiosity	Innovative	L1: I am encouraged to think creatively and look for new ways to improve my work.
		Open-minded	L2: My leaders and colleagues welcome and consider input and feedback from employees.
		Curious	L3: My curiosity is valued and I feel supported to keep learning.
<b>Enjoyment</b>	Light-hearted places where people tend to do what makes them happy. Employees are united by playfulness and stimulation.	Fun	E1: I can feel a good balance between serious work and enjoyable activities in the office.
		Playful	E2: I am encouraged to keep a relaxed and enjoyable attitude while working.
		Stimulating	E3: My work activities are engaging
<b>Results</b>	Outcome-oriented and merit-based places where people aspire to achieve top performance. Employees are united by a drive for capability and success	Outcome-oriented	R1: My company sets clear performance targets for me.
		Achievement	R2: I am recognized when I successfully reach those targets.
		Merit-based	R3: I am fairly rewarded for the contributions I make at work
<b>Authority</b>	Competitive places where people strive to gain personal advantage. Employees are united by strong control	Competitive	A1: I am motivated to perform better than others and gain recognition for my efforts.
		Controlling	A2: My leaders expect me to follow the rules strictly.
		Commanding	A3: My leaders give me clear directions for my work.
<b>Safety</b>	Predictable places where people are risk-conscious and think things through carefully. Employees are united by a desire to feel protected and anticipate change	Predictable	S1: I work in a consistent and well-structured environment.
		Risk-averse	S2: My company makes decisions carefully and avoids unnecessary risks.
		Protected	S3: My company makes me feel safe and protected (in terms of safety, health, and a sense of security at work).
<b>Order</b>	Methodical places where people tend to play by the rules and want to fit in. Employees are united by cooperation	Disciplined	O1: I personally follow the rules and procedures set in my company.
		Organized	O2: My work tasks are structured and coordinated clearly.
		Cooperative	O3: I work respectfully with others and help maintain team harmony



**B. Data Analysis Method**

The data was analysed using a descriptive and comparative quantitative analysis approach. The analysis began by importing all the current and preferred responses from 84 employees of TRI (N = 84), then the dataset was screened for missing values and out-of-range scores (1–4). Internal consistency of the culture scale was then examined using Cronbach’s alpha, If the data passed the reliability check, then a respondent-level composites score was created by averaging the three items belonging to each of the eight culture styles, separately for current and preferred conditions.

Exploratory data analysis (EDA) was done twice: at the composite level to determine the culture style to be applied at TRI, and at the attribute (item) level to identify the actions that must be prioritized. Medians, means, Top-2-Box percentages (share of respondents scoring ≥ 3), and interquartile ranges (IQR) were calculated. Before inferential testing, the distribution of composite difference scores was inspected using skewness and floor/ceiling effects, given the ordinal nature of the 4-point Likert scale. Because several preferred scores showed non-normal and ceiling-skewed patterns, current and preferred composites were compared using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, and effect sizes were reported to indicate the magnitude of change.

Finally, once the target culture mix for TRI was identified, a literature-based mapping was conducted by matching keywords from the dominant culture styles with the core characteristics of various leadership styles. This keyword matching was used to conceptually determine which leadership style best aligns with and supports the desired culture. The key indicators of the target culture styles were translated into concise, action-oriented keywords (e.g., collaboration, support, protection, clear rules, feedback, development). Using the same procedure, keyword lists were also developed for several leadership styles derived from the literature. A keyword-matching was conducted by comparing each keyword in the culture type with the leadership keyword lists to flag explicit matches or clear synonym. A match was marked with number 1 as a simple presence symbol, where non-matches were left blank. each leadership style, the total count of markers was used only as a transparency tool to show how many leadership style keywords that aligns with the culture styles.

**IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**A. Findings on Cultural Style**

All the data have passed the reliability check with the result of the Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.701, indicating that the items within each culture style were measuring a coherent underlying construct. Based on this, analysis on composite level was continued. From all eight culture styles, “order” is the culture style that employees currently perceive at TRI, with the biggest median (3.33) and top-two-box score (88.1%), indicating that the vast majority of employees experience “order” positively and consistently. Following “order”, “caring” is the second highest culture style at TRI today, since it shows the highest T2B% among the other culture style with the low IQR, suggesting a broad and even application among employees.

When asked about the preferred culture, “caring” placed as the style with biggest median (3.67) and top-two-box score even reach 100%, indicating that all respondents rated its composite at 3 – 4. In addition, “learning”, “safety”, and “order” are following behind since they have the top median (3.67) and show high T2B% (97.6% - 98,8%) with tight IQRs, indicating both depth (how far employees want to move up the scale) and breadth (how many want to be firmly at the top levels). This target culture mix shows that “caring” remains the “north star,” supported by elements of “safety” (feeling protected and risk-aware), “order” (clarity, rules, and reliability), and “learning” (openness to ideas and feedback). To see the gap between the current and preferred implementation for each culture style, the radar chart of median is used.



Figure 4. Radar Chart of Median (left) and Radar Chart of Top-two-box (right)

The median gap shows how far the respondent wants to move on a 1–4 Likert scale. It answers, “how much improvement does the employee want?” while showing the depth / intensity metric that robust for ordinal data. The gap analysis shows that “safety” has the largest gap, with a median difference of 0.83, a 48% T2B% gap, and the highest current IQR (up to 1.00), indicating uneven implementation. “Caring” is confirmed as the target culture, but its small T2B% gap suggests it only needs to be maintained or deepened rather than urgent implementation. Prioritizing “safety” while sustaining “caring” allows TRI to close the biggest gaps quickly while creating consistent foundations for the desired culture.

After identifying the preferred culture styles, the analysis proceeds to the attribute level to set implementation priorities within the style. Only attributes that show both a large median gap and T2B% gap are prioritized because they most strongly can ‘pull up’ the culture as a whole, while the remaining attributes are maintained or monitored rather than pushed as an immediate change. The focus is on “safety” and “learning”, which show the largest and broadest gaps, while “caring” and “order” are the two cultures that already relatively established today, so they are sustained and sharpened rather than refitted. From the analysis of “safety and “learning”, three items stand out, which are S2 (careful, risk-aware decisions), S3 (feeling safe and protected at work), and L2 (leaders and colleagues welcome employee input). Each attributes show a big gap on both median and top-two-box, indicating that not only is the typical (central) respondent asking for a higher level, but a large share of employees also want that improvement, or it can conclude that the need is both deep (large median) and broad (large T2B%).

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was then used to compare current and preferred composites. For all eight culture styles, the median preferred score was significantly higher than the median current score, with p-values below 0.001 and large effect sizes. These results confirm a meaningful gap between how employees currently experience the culture at TRI and how they would like it to be in the future.

## ***B. Findings on Leadership Style***

The result of the keyword-matching analysis shows that servant leadership obtained the highest total score of 20, ahead of democratic (18) and authentic (15), making it the most compatible style with TRI’s target culture mix. Importantly, servant leadership does not only fit one culture, it supports all four preferred cultures at once: “caring” (6) through empathy, active listening, and well-being support, “safety” (4) through stewardship, caretaker responsibility, and guardianship, “order” (5) through clear goals, follow-through, and responsibility without heavy-handed control, “learning” (5) through coaching, active listening, and invite input.

## ***C. Discussion***

Based on the analysis, TRI should strengthen four target cultures: “caring”, “safety”, “order”, and “learning”. The Wilcoxon results and median gaps show that, for all eight culture styles, employees’ preferred scores are significantly higher than their what they currently experiencing now, with especially large gaps in “safety”. In other words, there is a clear misalignment between the culture that the employee currently lives in with the culture that they want. The significant gaps between employees’ preferred and experienced culture at TRI indicate a culture–employee misfit. Chubova et al. (2024) argue that organizational culture is a powerful factor that can increase or decrease organizational effectiveness, as misfit between employees and the prevailing culture constrains motivation and productivity. Therefore, it explains why TRI’s organizational performance has not met its expectations. The literature also shows that organizations do not operate with only one culture. Groysberg et al. (2018), conceptualizes culture as a combination of styles, instead of a single type. This supports the idea that instead of choosing one dominant culture, TRI can rather manage a blended culture profile. Groysberg et al. (2018) note that a culture which emphasizes both “order” and “caring” tends to encourage teamwork, trust, and respect in the team, and that climate foster strong loyalty, retention of talent, lack of conflict, and high levels of engagement. However, even though the survey indicates that “order” and “caring” are currently the most outstanding relative to the other six culture types, this does not mean they are sufficient, and the benefits were not felt thoroughly by the employees. TRI’s interview-based business issues point to gaps in how these values are enforced. The targets are set top-down with limited structure and feedback, cross-team collaboration is weak, and many employees report low sense of belonging and inconsistent direction. This suggests that “order” has not translated into reliable, predictable execution, while “caring” has not yet created sufficient voice that support collaboration in the company.

Moreover, servant leadership strongly fits TRI’s target culture mix. van Dierendonck (2011) shows that servant leaders naturally embody “caring” through empathy and support, create psychological safety by building trust, reinforce “order” through fairness

and consistent stewardship, and promote “learning” by encouraging feedback, reflection, and experimentation. Together, these behaviors align closely with and can effectively sustain the four cultures that TRI aims to strengthen.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to (1) assess the current and preferred organizational culture within TRI, and (2) recommend a leadership style that aligns with and supports the proposed organizational culture change, in the context of improving TRI’s performance. Using a quantitative Likert-scale survey based on the Integrated Culture Framework by Groysberg et al. (2018), the findings show that “order” is currently “order” is the strongest culture at TRI, followed by “caring”. The target culture mix at TRI is “caring” as the north-star culture, complemented by “safety” (S2, S3), “order”, and “learning” (L2). Through a keyword-matching analysis between the target culture mix and various leadership styles, servant leadership was identified as the style that best aligns with and can support the implementation of the target culture mix. Overall, the study provided a structured framework for aligning leadership behaviors and culture at TRI. This alignment is expected to support improvements in organizational performance.

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