








# “The influence of leadership styles on employee performance in telecom companies of Bangladesh”

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# THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN TELECOM COMPANIES OF BANGLADESH

## Abstract

Leadership styles have drawn much attention in a cutthroat business world. As a result, the standardization of human resources management goals has gained much popularity. However, if there is a meaningful and established process to be used in leadership activities, an organization may be able to realize its purpose within the specified time. This study aims to determine how several leadership styles – transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, democratic leadership, and transactional leadership – affect employee performance. The data were obtained using a self-reported questionnaire adapted from prior studies; the paper employed purposive and convenience sampling methods to receive information from 260 employees of several telecommunication companies in Bangladesh. For this study purpose, SPSS version 26.0 was used to conduct the necessary statistical analyses, and the construct reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's (α) coefficient value of 0.70 or higher. According to the findings, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, democratic leadership, and transactional leadership have a favorable relationship with employee performance in telecom organizations. Thus, decision-makers and other practitioners need to learn how to recognize diverse leadership philosophies and their effects on employee performance from an organizational perspective. Finally, the study recommends that leaders transition from highly traditional leadership styles to more participative and positive ones.

## Keywords

transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, democratic leadership, transaction leadership, employee performance

## JEL Classification

M10, M12, M30

## INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamistic and intensely competitive business environment, effective leadership is crucial in determining an organization's success and growth. Leaders influence and guide members toward achieving common goals, yet not all leaders manage their teams similarly. It is well-known that different leadership philosophies can significantly impact how workers feel about their workplaces, how engaged they are in their work, and how they perform (Gutu et al., 2022). However, different leadership philosophies can elicit various reactions from workers, ranging from higher motivation, productivity, and satisfaction to worse morale and subpar work output.

The present research indicates that, sustainable competitive advantage is now necessary due to globalization that calls for regular product and system management improvements. Therefore, the most valuable assets are people, and they can create a sustained competitive advantage through creative thinking. Besides, leaders play a crucial influ-

ence on the behavior of organizations because they articulate and exemplify the principles and ideals for achieving the goals of an organization (Edeh et al., 2023). Organizations can learn essential lessons about the best methods to lead their teams by investigating various leadership philosophies (Thanh et al., 2022). The most competitive sector in Bangladesh's economy is the telecommunications sector. Still, Bangladesh has been immobilized by a lack of human capital (Islam et al., 2018), making it challenging to lead employees more quickly in terms of their job skills.

In commercial organizations, many people work in mid-level positions, with far fewer in leadership position. In this regard, leadership styles also vary depending on the individual, status, and type of company. Likewise, in the telecommunications industry, the leadership styles used by executives and managers significantly affect overall performance, employee motivation, and corporate culture. Besides, to stay ahead in this fast-moving sector, managers or leaders must manage difficult obstacles and seize new opportunities brought about by technical breakthroughs and changing client needs. In Bangladesh, insufficient emphasis has been paid to how democratic, transformational, charismatic, and transactional leadership styles collectively affect employee performance, which is essential for achieving organizational goals. Therefore, Bangladeshi leaders should consider all types of significant leadership styles, including transformational, charismatic, democratic, and transactional leadership, to increase employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities.

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## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizations are working very hard to attain their goals in the current competitive environment, while leadership styles for employee performance are one of the critical research areas in management (Hetland et al., 2018). Employees are seen as a major asset for every firm, and their performance largely determines how well it runs (Ahmed et al., 2023; Zayed et al., 2022; Islam et al., 2022). Consequently, leaders have a big part to play in assisting workers in a company in honing their knowledge, abilities, and skills (Khuwaja et al., 2020), and they can easily attract and keep a quality team in order to achieve company goals (Lan et al., 2019; Kumar & Sharma, 2018). Research on the impact of leadership philosophies on worker performance is vast.

Transformational leadership encourages followers to identify with organizational objectives and goals and to foresee beyond their expectations (Buil et al., 2019). The purpose of this leadership is to motivate team members to reach their maximum potential and deliver their best work which entails developing a vision for the group or team, successfully conveying that vision, and empowering and encouraging team members to work toward realizing that vision (Hetland et al., 2018). Consequently, focusing on maximizing individual interests, transactional leadership emphasizes

the interaction between the leader and the followers. In contrast, transformational leader aims to establish an economic exchange with their followers, which assists in growing performance (Eliyana et al., 2019).

Moreover, transformational leadership is prevalent in rewarding excellent employee performance and establishing specific goals for followers to grow employee knowledge, skills, and abilities (Lasrado & Kassem, 2021). Previous studies also explained that employee performance is impacted by the transformational leadership style because some indicators like charisma, inspiration, individualized attention, and intellectual stimulation increase employee comfort and motivation without putting them under pressure to perform to the leader's expectations (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). In addition, numerous research studies positively correlate employee performance and transformative leadership. Transformational leaders encourage and inspire their subordinates to put aside their own interests and work toward accomplishing the organization's objectives (Birasnav et al., 2019). Patiar and Wang (2016) showed that these leaders are likelier to inspire and engage workers.

Moreover, this leadership style, which is characterized by inspiring and motivating followers, creating a shared vision, and promoting individual and organizational progress, significantly im-

proves employee performance (Tepper et al., 2018). Henceforth, a positive organizational culture that encourages innovation, cooperation, and learning is also more likely to be fostered by transformational leaders, which might result in greater organizational performance and outcomes for the workers and the business (Herman & Chiu, 2014). On the other hand, the transformational leadership style is more suitable and favored by followers in a service-oriented work environment because it makes them feel at ease, increasing their motivation for growing performance (Breevaart et al., 2014).

Charismatic leadership pertains to the extent of a leader's way over their adherents and the nature of their relationship with them that inspires and motivates their subordinates by drawing on their unique personal traits, charm, and persuasiveness (Shamir et al., 1993). In contrast, charismatic leaders can significantly affect organizational staff performance (Zhang & Wei, 2021). Furthermore, charismatic leaders can motivate their followers to perform at a high level by giving their work a sense of meaning and purpose (Banks et al., 2017). They can also develop a compelling vision for their team or organization, which can help align employees' goals with the organization's goals and increase employee engagement and commitment (Supratman et al., 2021; De Hoogh et al., 2004). Charismatic leaders can articulate their goals and expectations compellingly and understandably, enhancing employee engagement and productivity. They may inspire excitement and enthusiasm among workers, increasing output and creativity (Meslec et al., 2020). However, a compelling vision can be created and effectively communicated to the workforce by charismatic leaders; this direction leads to higher levels of employee engagement (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Moreover, charismatic leaders can significantly positively affect employee performance. It is crucial to balance their charisma, evidence-based decision-making, accountability, and employee empowerment (Antonakis et al., 2016; Aragón-Correa et al., 2008).

Democratic leadership involves team members in settling on the choice by soliciting their opinions and feedback and incorporating their viewpoints into the decision-making process (Ojokuku et al., 2012). Democratic leadership is often referred to as participative leadership. Consequently, the

democratic leadership style is the mannerism and rhythm of a person while dealing with subordinate government leaders and communities. This strategy involves assigning work to subordinates fairly and equitably. Past studies also said democratic leadership can boost worker productivity for several reasons, like giving employees a voice in decision-making that can foster empowerment and ownership and employee engagement, motivation, and performance (Hilton et al., 2021). Additionally, democratic leadership improves employee performance by fostering more substantial organizational commitment, better problem-solving skills, and higher levels of job satisfaction, which help to grow employee and organizational performance (Basit et al., 2017). Moreover, democratic leadership influences others in a way consistent with fundamental democratic procedures and ideals, such as self-determination, inclusivity, equitable involvement, and deliberation which assist to grow employee performance (Alam et al., 2021).

Transactional leadership strongly emphasizes communication between leaders and followers, which entails establishing clear expectations and assigning incentives and penalties per the extent to which those expectations are met (Mwesigwa et al., 2020; Bryant, 2003). Besides, a transactional leadership style focuses on managing followers through rigorous hierarchy, corporate principles, and implementing a constantly watched organizational control system (Lan et al., 2019). This leadership style has been thoroughly investigated, focusing on its effects on employee performance (Silva & Mendis, 2017). It has a significant positive relationship with employee performance (Meirinhos et al., 2023). Moreover, Suprapti et al. (2020) further highlighted that this kind of leadership involves the followers in the interchange of ideas, which affects the followers' performance. Lan et al. (2019) and Tsai et al. (2017) suggest a positive correlation between transactional leadership and worker performance and job satisfaction.

Moreover, the goal-oriented exchanges between leaders and their subordinates are the main focus of this leadership style; it is predicated on the idea of transactions, in which staff members are paid for exceeding expectations and penalized for doing so (Tsai et al., 2017). Therefore, transactional leadership is a crucial factor of organizational

commitment, which assists in growing employee knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly influence employee performance (Bian et al., 2019). Xu and Wang (2019) investigated the connection between transactional leadership and individual and group performance and discovered that individual and group performance positively correlated with transactional leadership.

## 2. AIM

This study aims to examine how several leadership styles (transformational, charismatic, democratic, and transactional) affect employee performance in the telecommunication industry of Bangladesh (Figure 1). Therefore, the study came up with the following hypotheses:

- H1: There is a positive association between transformational leadership and employee performance.*
- H2: There is a positive association between charismatic leadership and employee performance.*
- H3: There is a positive association between democratic leadership and employee performance.*
- H4: There is a positive association between transactional leadership and employee performance.*

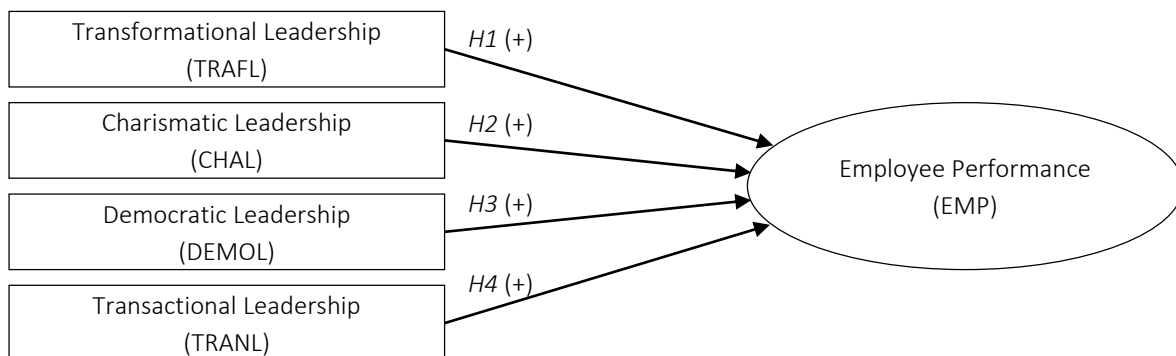
## 3. METHOD

The empirical investigation of telecommunication employees in Bangladesh assessed the offered hypotheses. The population of this study includes

Bangladesh’s mobile telecommunications sector. This study is quantitative and exploratory, where the primary data have been used to investigate the connection between leadership styles and employee performance. Data were collected on the following variables: employee performance (dependent variable) and leadership styles like transformational, charismatic, democratic, and transactional leadership (independent variables). On the other hand, questions were converted back and forth between Bangla and English. Back translations guarantee correctness by providing additional checks and paying close attention to delicate cross-cultural translation concerns.

300 questionnaires, created based on the existing literature, were sent to respondents’ e-mail addresses and Google documents after being acquired from the authorities of the organizations using non-probabilistic purposive sampling. Additionally, convenience sampling was used to pick the respondents from the study’s data. To evaluate the validity, applicability, and clarity of the questionnaires based on the chosen constructs, such as transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, democratic leadership, and transactional leadership, a pilot study was conducted. 280 questionnaires out of 300 were filled out and returned by respondents. After screening the data, it became clear that 20 had to be discarded because of the survey’s inadequate information. As a result, a total valid sample size of  $N = 260$  was used in this investigation with an 87% response rate. Hoe (2008) suggested as a general guideline that any sample size of more than 200 should be considered for multivariate research and would be deemed adequate for data analysis.

The item-by-item questionnaire was scored on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting “Strongly



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model



Disagree” and 5 denoting “Strongly Agree.” This questionnaire was divided into two sections: demographic data and item-by-item survey questions on chosen study variables. SPSS 26.0 was used to examine the study model and the hypotheses, and a 5% threshold of significance was employed to accept interpretations. A Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable to measure reliability (Table 1). The results of the employee survey were evaluated, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression methods.

**Table 1.** Reliability and validity analysis

Construct	Items	Loading	Cronbach's ( $\alpha$ ) value
Transformational Leadership (TRAFI)	TRAL1	0.732	0.784
	TRAL2	0.744	
	TRAL3	0.735	
	TRAL4	0.743	
	TRAL5	0.745	
	TRAL6	0.801	
Charismatic Leadership (CHAL)	CHAL1	0.750	0.817
	CHAL2	0.811	
	CHAL3	0.769	
	CHAL4	0.808	
	CHAL5	0.756	
Democratic Leadership (DEMOL)	DEMOL1	0.643	0.732
	DEMOL2	0.774	
	DEMOL3	0.629	
	DEMOL4	0.736	
	DEMOL5	0.602	
Transactional Leadership (TRANL)	TRANL1	0.650	0.758
	TRANL2	0.766	
	TRANL3	0.719	
	TRANL4	0.746	
	TRANL5	0.671	
Employee Performance (EMP)	EMP1	0.747	0.911
	EMP2	0.638	
	EMP3	0.836	

Table 1 shows that the reliability of the study variables was found acceptable for the constructs of transformational leadership ( $\alpha = .784$ ), charismatic leadership ( $\alpha = .817$ ), democratic leadership ( $\alpha = .732$ ), and transactional leadership ( $\alpha = .758$ ). The survey questionnaire was taken from previous studies where transformational leadership's six items were adapted from Carless et al. (2000), and charismatic leadership's five items were adapted from Waldman et al. (2001). Democratic leadership has five items using the Hilton (2021) scale,

while transactional leadership has five items using the Meirinhos et al. (2023) scale. Three items examined employee performance.

## 4. RESULTS

Table 2 shows the respondents' demographic data. Male and female employees comprised 65% ( $n = 170$ ) and 35% ( $n = 90$ ). In terms of age of the respondents, there were 11% of respondents between the ages of 20-30, 18% of the respondents ( $n = 46$ ) were between 31-40, and 37% were between 41-50 (97 respondents). On the other hand, 42 respondents were between 50-60 while 18% were over 60 years ( $n = 47$ ).

The results show that more than half of the respondents (68%) were married ( $n = 177$ ), and 32% were unmarried ( $n = 83$ ). 3% of respondents ( $n = 8$ ) have earned their SSC certificate. At the same time, 16 participants had an HSC certificate degree, which was 6%, and 14% of respondents had earned an honors certificate ( $n = 35$ ). 142 respondents had a master's degree (55%). In addition, 59 respondents (23%) completed their diploma credentials. According to working experience, 32 respondents (12%) had 1-5 years of work experience, 29% had 5-10 years, and 64 respondents had working experience between 10-15 years. Additionally, 12% of respondents had experience between 15-20 years ( $n = 32$ ), and 22% ( $n = 56$ ) had over 20 years.

The summary of the regression coefficient values,  $R^2$  value, and Durbin-Watson (Durbin & Watson, 1950) values are presented in Table 3. The Durbin-Watson value is 1.858, which falls within the 1.5 to 2.5-point acceptable threshold range. Furthermore, VIF values also fell between 1.00 and 5.00, while tolerance levels ranged between 0.10 and 1.0. Therefore, there are no multi-collinearity problems with the research model. The regression analysis, where  $R^2 = 0.506$  or 50.6%, indicated the variance of this study that comprises four independent variables like transformational leadership (TRAFI), charismatic leadership (CHAL), democratic leadership (DEMOL), and transactional leadership (TRANL) that are acknowledged at a 5% significance level which determines TRAFI, CHAL, DEMOL, TRANL have positive and significant effects on employee performance. Table 3 reflects the summary of the hypotheses testing.

**Table 2.** Demographic information

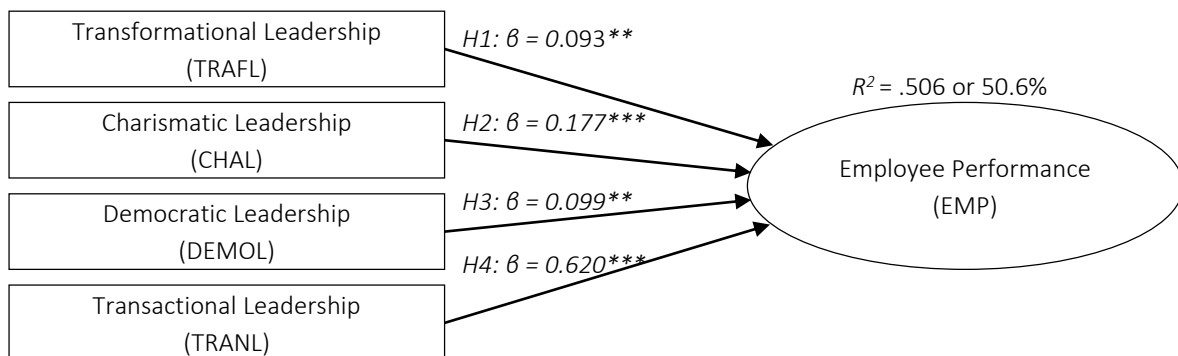
Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	170	65.4
Female	90	34.6
<b>Age</b>		
20 to 30 years	28	10.8
31 to 40 years	46	17.7
41 to 50 years	97	37.3
50-60 years	42	16.2
Above 60 years	47	18.1
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	177	68.1
Unmarried	83	31.9
<b>Education Background</b>		
SSC Certificate	8	3.1
HSC Certificate	16	6.2
Honors Certificate	35	13.5
Master Certificate	142	54.6
Diploma Certificate	59	22.7
<b>Work Experience</b>		
1 to 5 years	32	12.3
5 to 10 years	76	29.2
10 to 15 years	64	24.6
15 to 20 years	32	12.3
Above 20 years	56	21.5

Note:  $n = 260$ .

**Table 3.** Regression coefficient analysis

Variables	$\beta$ value	t-value	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Transformational Leadership (TR AFL)	.093	2.039	.043	.939	1.065
Charismatic Leadership (CHAL)	.177	3.920	<.001***	.952	1.050
Democratic Leadership (DEMOL)	.099	2.163	.031	.924	1.082
Transactional Leadership (TRANL)	.620	13.689	<.001***	.948	1.055

Note:  $R^2 = 0.506$ . Durbin Watson value = 1.858. Dependent variable: Employee Performance (EMP). \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$  ( $n = 260$ ).



Note: \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

**Figure 2.** Regression results

## 5. DISCUSSION

The regression results show that hypothesis 1, which holds that transformational leadership has a favorable and significant impact on employee performance, is accepted by the 5% significance criterion ( $\beta = 0.093$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The findings are consistent with Lasrado and Kassem (2021): transformational leadership often involves praising good employee performance and setting clear objectives for followers to achieve goals. These actions help to expand employees' knowledge, skills, and talents in an organization.

Based on the regression analysis at 5% ( $\beta = 0.177$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), the second hypothesis is accepted: charismatic leadership directly promotes employee performance. According to this study, employees are incredibly motivated to get charismatic behavior from the leader when they want to grow their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Supratman et al. (2021) and De Hoogh et al. (2004) also support this finding. Charismatic leaders can motivate their followers to perform at a high level by giving their work a sense of meaning and purpose. They can also develop a compelling vision for their team or organization, which can help align employees' goals with the organization's goals and increase employee performance, engagement, and commitment.

The third hypothesis is confirmed: democratic leadership and employee performance have a positive relationship at 5% ( $\beta = 0.099$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This relationship indicates that democratic leadership is a crucial factor that helps to motivate employees to improve their performance. These regression findings are connected to earlier research. Because it allows employees to contribute to decision-making and share their innovative ideas and knowledge, democratic leadership positively affects an organization's and its employees' performance (Al Khajeh, 2018).

Consistent with the fourth hypothesis, transactional leadership directly affects employee performance. This shows that transactional leadership positively and significantly affects employee performance at the 5% level ( $\beta = 0.620$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This result is consistent with earlier research. Transactional leadership is an essential component of organizational commitment that helps employees develop their knowledge, abilities, and skills, directly impacting their workplace performance (Bian et al., 2019).

Leadership philosophies employed in the telecommunication sectors substantially affect the growth and success of businesses operating in this competitive market. With leaders who can inspire, adapt, and promote an innovative culture, businesses may progress toward achieving their goals and staying on the leading edge. By recognizing the consequences of various leadership styles and employing the optimal approach in each situation, telecom leaders can take advantage of the opportunities and challenges presented by technological advancements and shifting consumer needs.

Every employee's participation is vital to the success and production of value for the business. The regression analysis results show a favorable and substantial association between transformational, charismatic, democratic, and transactional leadership and employee performance. Additionally, this study advances the knowledge of the confounding influences of transformational, charismatic, democratic, transactional leadership and employee performance. Therefore, leaders may boost organizational commitment, motivation, and employee engagement by modeling interactional justice, treating staff members with respect and dignity, and outlining decisions and other events that influence their performance (Fassina et al., 2008). As a result, managers would be able to learn more about the behavior and productivity of the subsidiary to improve the performance of both followers or employees and organ organizations.

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## CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the effects of various leadership philosophies, including transformational, charismatic, democratic, and transactional leadership, on employee performance in telecom organizations of Bangladesh. The results support that transformational, charismatic, democratic, and transactional leadership positively and significantly affect employee performance. Under this study, 50.6 %



variance in employee performance has been described in this study by leadership styles. These elements will undoubtedly support acquiring knowledge, skills, and talents that enhance employee performance.

Leaders should pay close attention to being accommodating and attentive to develop employee performance. Influential leaders can take many different shapes. No two people are the same, and no one leadership style is always the best. According to the findings, every organization should use democratic, charismatic, transactional, and transformational leadership styles to boost worker productivity. Managers should encourage employee participation in decision-making to support staff in growing their innovative and creative thinking, which will help achieve organizational goals effectively and efficiently. Henceforth, managers and practitioners might create fresh approaches to encourage and evaluate organizational excellence while considering how leadership styles and worker performance are changing.

Decision-makers and other practitioners need to be taught how to recognize various leadership philosophies and their effects on employee performance from an organizational perspective. Management must know the attitudes and feelings formed through their interactions with subordinates. Henceforth, telecommunications businesses should adopt sound, efficient, and employee-focused leadership techniques to manage the workforce and maintain productivity. This study may spark practitioners, academic researchers, consultants, and board members to expand their understanding and examine policies and awareness. The mobile telecommunications sector in Bangladesh may not represent the situation as a whole. Still, it is a clear example of the importance of a leadership style that practitioners, owners, and policymakers should emphasize to utilize existing practices.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

The study has several limitations. First, only employee self-report metrics were used. Future studies might use a dyadic viewpoint to examine the perspectives of both managers and front-line workers. Second, this study focused on telecommunication companies in the context of Bangladesh. Future research can broaden the scope by examining these variables in the context of other industries, including the hospitality industry, the automobile industry, the construction industry, and government departments. Third, this study used a quantitative approach, so future studies may employ mixed methodologies that combine qualitative and quantitative techniques, such as questionnaires and interviews, to examine some issues and compare the findings thoroughly, or even conduct case studies in specific industries or businesses. Finally, although the current study solely emphasizes four kinds of leadership styles, future research might choose more leadership styles to measure their influence on employee performance. Furthermore, a more relevant outcome-based study that distinguishes between the service and manufacturing sectors can be conducted by collecting additional samples.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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Writing – review & editing: Md. Mobarak Karim, Helaluddin Ahmed, Zita Hajdú, József Popp.

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