

# **FOLLOWERSHIP AND WORK CLIMATE INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF KUBE SPHERE COMPANY**

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## **ARTICLE HISTORY**

**Received:** 24 March 2023

**Revised:** 12 April 2023

**Published:** 24 April 2023

## **ABSTRACT**

This research aimed to study personal factors, followership, and work climate that influence the performance of Kube Sphere company employees. The sample group used in this research consists of 150 employees of the company—data collection by questionnaire and sampling using the convenience sampling method. Data were analyzed by t-test, F-test, and multiple regression analysis. The research found that personal factors, namely gender, age, education, and income were different, affected employee performance no differently. Followership, namely conformist follower and effective follower, affects employee performance at a statistically significant 0.05 level with a predictive power of 61%. And work climate, namely structure, responsibility, support, and commitment, affect employee performance at a statistically significant 0.05 level, which has a predictive power of 68.2%.

**Keywords:** Personal Factors, Followership, Work Climate, Employee Performance

**CITATION INFORMATION:** Liu, K., & Kenikasahmanworakhun, P. (2023). Followership and Work Climate Influencing Employee Performance: A Case Study of Kube Sphere Company. *Procedia of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(4), 10.

## INTRODUCTION

Today's China faces rapid social and economic changes affecting society and the economy, causing fierce competition that rapidly affects organizations. It is necessary to adapt to keep up with the changes that occur. This is important for enabling an organization or agency to operate efficiently. There must be confidence that efficiency and effectiveness are equal to or greater than those of competitors. If employees develop and create a proper understanding of their roles, they will be able to work well, efficiently, and effectively for the organization. Therefore, the organization must have skills in the management process and create guidelines for developing its effective operational potential.

The generally accepted key management factors are people, money, material, and management. Above all, people are essential in most management tasks because they impact the organization's success more than other factors. Therefore, the performance of human resources has gone well according to their responsible task and has been effective as intended. Organizations must therefore prioritize human resource development, including focusing on staff. It is a driving force for personnel to realize their full potential and efficiency. Improving operational efficiency will focus on people when the worker or employee with the potential to work efficiently means organizational performance. Which organization will be successful and survive depends on the human resource management of that organization. Any organization will undoubtedly be successful if its personnel are knowledgeable. Another factor that affects the performance of personnel in an organization is the work climate. An organization with a good work climate will motivate its employees to work by, among other things, fostering love and unity, maintaining good morale by performing their duties with joy and willingness and taking the initiative to reduce conflict among employees. It can be seen that the work climate impacts work behavior and is essential to personnel at all levels of the organization. It is also essential to management, whether at the management level or among other employees. This is in line with Stringer's (2002) concept that work climate is the perception of the environment that affects performance, which reflects the attitudes and values of people in the organization who express their feelings or perceive their feelings both directly and indirectly without our being able to touch them, which affects the behavior of individuals in the organization, including various processes in the organization.

Followership is another vital factor related to leadership, as it is the basic role of a person that is constantly changed depending on the situation; that is, every person who has a leadership role today used to be a follower. In fact, most people hold a high position of authority, but some stand above them in the position of master or commander. Therefore, people more often have the opportunity to be followers than leaders, or before they become leaders, they must first have been followers. The management of today's organizations, which have evolved into successful and high-performing enterprises, must rely on the knowledge and skills of two groups of people, namely the leaders (executives or supervisors) and the followers (operators), who must always be together because this is necessary for the work to be done. The followers are considered to play an essential role in the collaboration and synergies that lead to success in the operation.

Kube Sphere Enterprise is a company that provides native operating system infrastructures in a distributed, multi-tenant commercial cloud. Based on the open-source capabilities of the Kubernetes kernel, it extends capabilities in various core business scenarios, including multi-cloud cluster management, microservices governance, and application management. The commercial plug-in center is highly modular to meet business needs in different scenarios with a robust enterprise-class cloud-native foundation. Comprehensive expert solutions and service support help enterprises with digital transformation and operations at scale.

Factors that cause problems and obstacles for the company in developing the quality of work and service. The problem is caused by a shortage of staff and a heavy workload that only allows

time for the full development of work, resulting in the assigned work needing to be completed on time, which affects operational efficiency. And from the review of documents and research, we have found that important factors to ensure that the organization can work efficiently and effectively, or beat the competition, would have to focus on the role of the follower and a working climate conducive to creating efficiency in employee performance. For this reason, the researcher is interested in studying the topic “The role of the follower and the working climate about employee performance: A case study of the company Kube Sphere” as a guide for managers in planning management in the organization, increasing the efficiency of good employee performance, and leading the organization to succeed in the competition.

## **LITERATURE REVIEWS**

### **Concept and theory of followership**

Kelly (1988) defined a follower as a person who acts as a worker in response to organization objectives and who influences the success of leaders and organizations, which is close to the definition by Sullivan (1998) that makes the meaning of being a follower be self-directed, work actively, show commitment to work as a representative of the organization, and agree with a team in the vision and goals of the organization. In addition, Yoder-wise (1999) also defined a follower as a person who uses appropriate and healthy personal behavior that contributes to the success of individuals, groups, teams, and organizations.

From both dimensions, followership can be classified into five characteristics as follows:

- 1) Alienated follower: There is a design expression of highly passive but independent and critical thinking. Most of them had the traits of being influential followers, had experience, and had gone through various obstacles before but later had conflicts with the management. Thus, this followership acts according to one's abilities in the way that exists in criticizing the organization's weaknesses, executives, and colleagues with sarcasm. The alienated follower can think independently but will not participate in solving problems or bugs that they can see in any way.
- 2) Conformist follower: There is a design expression of active thinking but a lack of critical thinking, or, as Thai society is known as a people pleaser, they like to please and live to please others, and doing according to the order, they are willing to do so regardless of what the work looks like, without considering the consequences of how it will work according to that order, although sometimes it is dangerous. According to the most feared adjustment model, personnel deal with conflict. The conformist follower is a product of a strict internal management system and a somewhat authoritarian leader.
- 3) Passive follower: There is a design expression of a lack of independent and critical thinking, without the responsibility to work as assigned and then stop. A new order must be issued if work continues and progress requires scrutiny. Personnel with this behavior leave the operations to the management alone. This type of follower results from excessive management control and using penalties when doing wrongdoing.
- 4) Effective follower: This is the ultimate wish of every form of organization. Personnel with this follower condition have critical thinking, are active, and are independent. Highly motivated and attentive to work; self-management ability; and the ability to correctly analyze one's and the organization's weaknesses and strengths. They prioritize participation over personal and have a high potential for work, resulting in a reasonable conclusion and affecting the organization's progress.
- 5) Pragmatic survivor follower: There are four types of expressions according to the attributes of follower status, but which one to choose depends on the situation at that time and which one will benefit you the most and have the least risk. Personnel with this follower condition will work in survival mode and do whatever it takes to survive in the organization, with the motto “It is better to be safe than regret it later.” A person without a fixed standpoint will change

according to the environment to ensure survival, similar to a color-changing lizard. The characteristics of personnel with this type of follower cause organizational politics.

### **Concept and theory of work climate**

Chaudhary, Rangnekar, and Barua (2014) define the term working climate as a popular word for attitudes that affect relationships with each other in working to achieve the organization's objectives.

Lamberti, Aluja Banet, and Rialp Criado (2022) define working climate as various variables that, when taken together, affect the level of work or performance of operators.

As for the academic definition, climate usually means the feelings of personnel within the organization and factors that affect the work. In other words, it means the perception of personnel within the organization toward the working environment. The climate in the workplace is appropriate to affect the motivation of personnel within the organization. This means that if the executives can manage and maintain a suitable working atmosphere, it will affect the motivation of personnel within the organization. It is like a day when the weather is good and the sky is clear. Everyone wants to work for the best results, but if an organization has an ominous atmosphere, employees will not be motivated to work; similar to how the sky is always overcast, and internal employees want to rest and escape the rain, no one wants to work.

Rožman and Štrukelj (2021) discussed the elements of the work climate as follows:

- 1) Structure, which does not mean only organizational structure. This includes a clear sense of roles and responsibilities. Structural factors are good if employees feel everyone's work is precise and decisions are made based on who is responsible. On the other hand, structural factors are harmful if personnel are confused at work and lack the enthusiasm to come to work each day.
- 2) Standards cover how people take pride in their work. This includes the need to raise the standard of work. When standards are high, employees constantly look for ways to improve their work. Or, if it's easy to explain, it's that personnel within the organization have a need or want to improve their work within the organization. In some organizations, people at all levels actively seek ways to improve their work. But in some organizations, personnel will work in a way that asks them to do it day by day. As for the improvement, there will be a feeling that it is not their duty but the supervisor's responsibility.
- 3) Responsibility means personnel can work independently and be responsible for working independently by themselves. In other words, they don't need to wait for anyone to verify the result or decisions that have been made. If the level of responsibility is high, then there is support from the organization to solve problems independently. But if the level is low, it means that self-determination or risk tolerance exists at a low level.
- 4) Recognition means personnel feel that rewards are appropriate for their work. If the level of recognition is high, people in the organization feel there is a balance between the work done and the rewards they receive. Whenever personnel feel that the rewards they receive are not worth their work, it will impact their future motivation to work, which the returns here do not mean only on the money side.
- 5) Support includes a sense of trust and support in the group. The level of support will be high. If personnel feel they are part of a team and can be helped when needed, these factors will directly affect their morale. Because if personnel know that there are colleagues or supervisors to support them all the time, it will affect their motivation to work.
- 6) Commitment demonstrates pride in being a part of the organization and a willingness to work to achieve the organization's goals. A high level of trust shows that personnel are loyal to the organization. Suppose personnel in some organizations have a high level of trust. In that case, they are very loyal to the organization they work for, which is often found in some educational institutions or some armies.

The six factors that affect work in an organization listed above are all critical issues that affect the motivation of employees in the organization. But at the same time, it is still a factor we can measure and manage correctly and appropriately. Only if we know at what level the current factors in each aspect of the personnel within the organization are and what is affecting the dynamics of these factors.

### **Concept and theory of employee performance**

Performance is defined as a positive relationship with what is devoted to working. Employee performance is evaluated from the standpoint of individual work by comparing it to what is assigned to the job. i.e., the power of work and the results of that work (Utin & Yosepha, 2019). Employee performance means producing works or achievements that are more valuable than the resources used, i.e., producing more things than before without increasing costs or producing everything as much as before but at a lower cost (Pradhan & Jena, 2017).

Harney (2019) defined employee performance in bureaucratic performance, including productivity and effectiveness. This employee performance can be measured in many dimensions. Objectives to be considered are as follows:

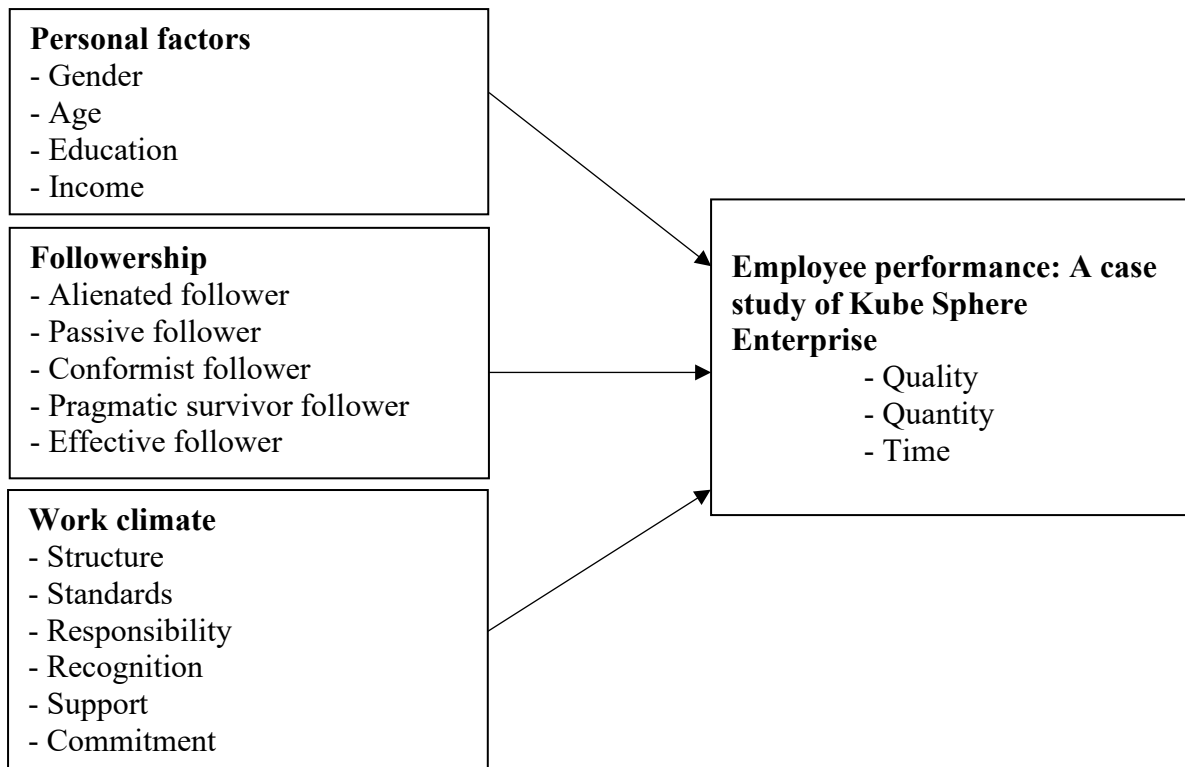
- 1) Performance in the input dimension uses resources such as people, money, materials, technology, etc. Resources that are worthwhile and economically beneficial cause the least loss.
- 2) Performance in the process dimension, i.e., work that is accurate, standardized, faster, and uses more convenient technology.
- 3) Performance in the outcome dimension, i.e., working with quality benefits society and timely profit operators have a good consciousness with their work, and the service is satisfactory to the customer or service recipient.

Peterson and Plowman (1953) defined the meaning of the term performance in business management. In the narrow sense, it means reducing production costs; in the broader sense, it means the quality of effectiveness, competence, and capability in operations. On the business side, to be considered most effective, one must be able to produce goods or services in the desired quantity and quality. Considering the situation and asking for commitments is the most appropriate and least expensive option for finance. Therefore, business efficiency has three components: quality, quantity, and time.

Therefore, three assumptions were established as follows:

- H1: Various personal factors affect Kube Sphere company employee performance differently.
- H2: Followership affects the performance of Kube Sphere company employees.
- H3: Work climate affects the performance of Kube Sphere company employees.

The conceptual framework can be drawn from the literature review, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** conceptual framework

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The population used in this research was 195 Kube Sphere company employees, whose researchers knew a finite population. Therefore, based on the formula for calculating sample sizes of Yamane (1973), the total number of samples was 131 people, but to back up the discrepancy in the data collection, another set of 19 backup sample sizes was determined to obtain 150 samples, and non-probability sampling was conducted using convenience sampling methods. The tools used in this research were a questionnaire created through the study and research of the concepts and theories used in this study. To obtain information on factors affecting followership and the work climate influencing employee performance. This questionnaire is divided into four parts as follows: (1) A questionnaire on respondents' general information; (2) a questionnaire on followership; (3) a questionnaire on work climate; and (4) a questionnaire on employee performance at Kube Sphere company. The questionnaire was measured using a 5-level Likert rating scale, and the reliability of the questionnaire overall was 0.966, greater than 0.7. Thus, the questionnaire was considered reliable. The data were analyzed using the number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. And tested the hypothesis by t-test, F-test, and multiple regression analysis.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The data analysis results of the general information of respondents. It can be concluded that most of the respondents were male (68.67%), aged 21-30 years old (39.33%), had a bachelor's degree (64.67%), and had an income of 5,001-10,000 yuan (49.33%).

**Table 1** shows the average and standard deviation of each factor.

<b>Factors</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}</math></b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Level of opinion</b>
<b>Followership</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>Agree</b>
- Alienated follower	3.92	0.61	Agree
- Passive follower	3.78	0.60	Agree
- Conformist follower	3.84	0.65	Agree
- Pragmatic survivor and follower	3.92	0.66	Agree
- Effective follower	3.95	0.65	Agree
<b>Work climate</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>Agree</b>
- Structure	3.57	0.77	Agree
- Standards	3.60	0.72	Agree
- Responsibility	3.89	0.68	Agree
- Recognition	3.83	0.67	Agree
- Support	3.94	0.68	Agree
- Commitment	4.05	0.69	Agree
<b>Employee performance</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>Agree</b>
- Quality	3.75	0.66	Agree
- Quantity	3.72	0.69	Agree
- Time	3.89	0.64	Agree

From table 1, it was found that most respondents had opinions towards followership, work climate, and employee performance overall, and each aspect is at an agreed level.

**Table 2** shows hypothesis testing of personal factors.

<b>Employee performance</b>	<b>Personal factors</b>			
	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education level</b>	<b>Income</b>
- Quality	-1.839 (0.068)	2.179 (0.074)	0.773 (0.464)	0.964 (0.411)
- Quantity	-1.226 (0.222)	2.034 (0.093)	1.280 (0.281)	0.996 (0.396)
- Time	-0.827 (0.410)	1.258 (0.289)	2.037 (0.134)	0.618 (0.604)
Total	-1.463 (0.146)	2.000 (0.098)	1.569 (0.212)	0.824 (0.483)

\* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

From table 2, it was found that personal factors, namely gender, age, education, and income were different, affected employee performance no differently.

**Table 3** shows hypothesis testing of followership.

<b>Followership</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Constant	0.515	0.223		2.310	0.022*
- Alienated follower	0.099	0.075	0.103	1.306	0.194
- Passive follower	0.114	0.086	0.115	1.323	0.188
- Conformist follower	0.318	0.077	0.353	4.116	0.000*
- Pragmatic survivor and follower	0.149	0.080	0.168	1.858	0.065
- Effective follower	0.164	0.068	0.181	2.434	0.016*
R = 0.789, R <sup>2</sup> = 0.623, Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.610, SE <sub>EST</sub> = 0.367, F = 47.633, Sig. = 0.000*					

\* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

From table 3, it was found that followership, namely conformist follower and effective follower, affected employee performance at a statistically significant 0.05 level, which had a predictive power of 61%.

The aspect that most influenced employee performance was a conformist follower ( $\beta = 0.353$ ), followed by effective follower ( $\beta = 0.181$ ).

It can be written in the form of an unstandardized score and a standardized score as follows:

Unstandardized score:

$$\hat{y} = 0.515 + 0.318 \text{ Conformist follower} + 0.164 \text{ Effective follower}$$

Standardized score:

$$Z_y = 0.353 \text{ Conformist follower} + 0.181 \text{ Effective follower}$$

**Table 4** shows hypothesis testing of work climate

Work climate	b	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	Sig.
Constant	0.497	0.187		2.664	0.009*
- Structure	0.185	0.054	0.244	3.404	0.001*
- Standards	0.076	0.067	0.092	1.126	0.262
- Responsibility	0.154	0.067	0.178	2.299	0.023*
- Recognition	-0.053	0.073	-0.060	-0.725	0.469
- Support	0.256	0.066	0.297	3.857	0.000*
- Commitment	0.233	0.064	0.274	3.671	0.000*
R = 0.834, R <sup>2</sup> = 0.695, Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.682, SE <sub>EST</sub> = 0.332, F = 54.253, Sig. = 0.000*					

\* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

From table 4, it was found that work climate, namely structure, responsibility, support, and commitment, affected employee performance at a statistically significant 0.05 level, which had a predictive power of 68.2%.

The aspect that most influenced employee performance was support ( $\beta = 0.297$ ), followed by commitment ( $\beta = 0.274$ ), structure ( $\beta = 0.244$ ), and responsibility ( $\beta = 0.178$ ), respectively.

It can be written in the form of an unstandardized score and a standardized score as follows:

Unstandardized score:

$$\hat{y} = 0.497 + 0.185 \text{ Structure} + 0.154 \text{ Responsibility} + 0.256 \text{ Support} + 0.233 \text{ Commitment}$$

Standardized score:

$$Z_y = 0.244 \text{ Structure} + 0.178 \text{ Responsibility} + 0.297 \text{ Support} + 0.274 \text{ Commitment}$$

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The discussion results according to objective (1) found that personal factors, namely gender, age, education, and income were different, affected employee performance no differently, which is contrary to the assumptions set. This demonstrates that, while personal factors are essential, they may not be the most critical factor in employee performance. Other factors have a more significant impact, such as job satisfaction, the working environment, the quality of supervision, etc. Another possible explanation is that the personal factors used are few and do not cover all parts of the personal factors. As a result, the test criteria may not be used to show the difference in employee performance. This finding differs from previous research conducted by Hapompwe, Mulenga, Siwale, and Kukano (2020), who conducted a quantitative study on the impact of age and gender diversity on employee performance in organizations—a case study of the Zambia Compulsory Standards Agency (ZCSA). The research found that age diversity and gender affect employee performance at the Zambia Compulsory Standards Agency (ZCSA). And the research of Juwita, Tarmizi, Susetyo, and Soebyakto (2017) studied the effects of income, gender, age, education, working period, insurance, training, and worker status on outsourced and in-house worker performance in manufacturing companies in South



Sumatera. The research found that income, gender, education, insurance, training, and working status had a statistically significant effect on outsourced and local workers' performance in South Sumatera in manufacturing companies.

The discussion results according to objective (2) found that followership, namely conformist follower and effective follower, affect employee performance at a statistically significant 0.05 level, which has a predictive power of 61%, which is according to the assumptions set. Because followership profoundly affects employee performance, demonstrating a willingness and readiness to obey orders. The concept of followership is as popular as leadership. Therefore, identifying what kind of follower pattern affects employee performance poses great educational challenges. Therefore, if the organization has effectively developed followers for employees, it will cultivate and promote a working environment that encourages employees to take the initiative and challenge themselves at work, including participating in the organization's performance with efficiency. This research found that two types of followership affect employee performance: conformist follower and effective follower. This explains how effective follower are essential to employee performance because the follower is a model that focuses more on high-performing tasks than other aspects—demonstrated effort and determination to meet standards and fulfill assigned roles and missions to their full potential. And in terms, a conformist follower is a form of follower that can adjust one's behavior to roles and situations that change appropriately. There is also an initiative to help create new things or innovate at work to make themselves able to survive in that situation. However, this type of followership often occurs without disputing orders given. But it's a willingness to take action without any caveats. Walia's (2019) research studied the relationship between follow-up style and performance in the service sector. Patterns of follower status, namely passive, exemplary, and conformist, had a statistically significant positive correlation with performance in the service sector. However, the alienated follower pattern had a statistically significant negative correlation with performance in the service sector. And according to Ntiamoah's (2018) research, who studied the influence of followership behaviors on employee job performance in some selected public universities in Ghana. The results revealed that pragmatic and exemplary followership positively correlated with employee job performance in some selected public universities in Ghana, with statistical significance.

The discussion results, according to objective (3), found that work climate, namely structure, responsibility, support, and commitment, affect employee performance at a statistically significant 0.05 level, which has a predictive power of 68.2%, which is according to the assumptions set. This work climate is one of the factors that affect employee performance. Because a working climate conducive to work will enable employees to work efficiently in terms of quality, quantity, and time, if the organization promotes and improves this working climate for fully qualified employees, it will enable the organization to achieve its goals. The results of this research found that structure affects employee performance. That means establishing a precise level in the chain of command that lets employees know who to listen to or send feedback to. To enable themselves to work smoothly. Subsequently, the job responsibilities that affect employee performance reflect the scope and roles one has to take responsibility for. As a result, employees must comply with those boundaries or regulations to devote themselves to the most efficient work they own. However, support is also an element that affects employee performance. That shows the organization's level of promotion and support in terms of various resources sufficient for their performance. It will help them have the equipment, including various costs, that helps them effectively achieve the work goals they are responsible for. And finally, a work climate of commitment is essential for all employees, as it demonstrates the level of dedication and loyalty of employees toward the organization. It was found that people with high commitment are more likely to work with physical and mental dedication because they see that work or problems in the organization are their duties. All the

above findings indicate that the working climate is an essential factor that affects employee performance. Creating a structured and supportive environment fosters collaboration and standards of practice effectively. The findings align with Obeng, Quansah, Cobbinah, and Danso (2020), who studied organizational climate and employee performance: Examining the mediating role of organizational commitment and moderating role of perceived organizational support. They found that organizational climate has a statistically significant direct influence on employee performance. And the research of Atta, Hussain Lashari, Hussain Rana, Atta, and Hasnain Nazir (2019) conducted a study on the role of organizational climate on employee performance: An empirical study of government hospitals of Lahore, Pakistan. They found that organizational climate has a statistically significant effect on employee performance.

### **Implications of the study**

1) Executives or managers of the company should provide fair administration to all employees without discriminating or imposing specific conditions that differ according to personal factors. This research found that not all personal variables affect performance. In addition, it is recommended that plans and strategies for improving performance be made available to all employees. Taking into account that everyone must be given opportunities that are in line with their wishes.

2) Executives or managers of the company should pay attention to creating training courses and incubating followership for employees because followership plays a vital role in performance. In particular, conformist follower and effective follower patterns significantly affected employee performance. In terms of the execution of orders without any caveat and working for maximum efficiency.

3) Executives or managers of the company should pay attention to creating and promoting a working climate for employees in the organization because it significantly affects employee performance. The recommendations can be classified as follows:

- Structure: Executives or managers of the company should have a clear structure consistent with the chain of command that should eliminate or reduce unnecessary structures to enable employees to understand their roles in that chain of command. It also makes task assignments and feedback information convenient and efficient.

- Responsibility: Executives or managers of the company should specify the extent to which employees must behave appropriately, clearly, and uncomplicatedly. So that employees can understand the limitations of the work they are responsible for. More responsibility leads to employee clarity and stress, harming employee performance.

- Support: Executives or managers of the company should provide adequate support for the needs of employees. Apart from this, it would be best if you also listened to various suggestions to improve the form and budget of that support.

- Commitment: Executives or managers of the company should incentivize employees to be committed to their work and the organization to reduce the turnover rate. It also leads to a sense of the need for employees to participate in the organization's practices with satisfaction.

### **Future Research**

1) Subsequent research should be studied using a qualitative research method. To gain insights from executives and employees about the need for followership and a desirable working atmosphere. To be able to create employee performance using that insight.

2) Subsequent research should study other variables affecting employee performance, such as job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, leadership, etc. Because research relates to employee performance, many variables still indicate that they affect performance.

3) Subsequent research should use the tools of this research to try with other samples to compare the similarities and differences from the research results, especially personal factors, where this research found no difference. This may be found in a sample or another context.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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