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IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN CHINA'S TEXTILE INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The textile sector in China is a pivotal element in the international economy, but it also faces mounting demands for sustainable practices in the context of competitive pressures and labor-intensive nature. This calls for sustainable leadership that has become a necessary requirement for improving the performance of employees. This research aims to explore the effect of sustainable leadership style, specifically sustainable autocratic leadership, sustainable participative leadership, and sustainable laissez-faire leadership, towards the performance of employees in the textile sector in the Chinese economy, using sustainable organizational commitment. The research tables a positivist paradigm and employs a deductive perspective, specifically adopting the cross-section study approach in relation to a primary investigation focusing on employees working in textile companies in the context of the Chinese economy. The research makes use of the PLS-SEM with the help of the SmartPLS. These results indicate that sustainable laissez-faire leadership has a strong and positive impact on both organizational commitment and performance, as well as organizational commitment having a positive impact on performance. Sustainable participative leadership has been found to influence performance positively, but it has been negatively related to organizational commitment, indicating some context or culture prevailing in labor-intensive textile settings. In fact, sustainable autocratic leadership has been found not to influence performance or organizational commitment negatively or positively. Finally, regression analysis indicates that organizational commitment has played a significant role as a mediator between sustainable laissez-faire leadership and performance, whereas the mediating role of autocratic as well as participative leadership has been weak and insignificant. This paper makes several contributions to the existing body of literature on sustainable leadership, including the comparison of various leadership practices and their role within a sustainability paradigm and establishing the pivotal role of psychological commitment. In terms of implications, the results are important to textile organizations in China and developing countries, and the role of autonomy-supportive and sustainability-focused leadership practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

The textile industry has remained one of the integral parts of the Chinese economy, providing employment for millions of people and representing a considerable share of textile production in the global economy. At the end of 2022, China's textile industry was reported to provide jobs for more than 14 million workers in about 40,000 textile-related enterprises, which contributed about 2.5% of the GDP of China. At the end of the same year, China was able to produce more than half of the total textile production in the world, providing textile business of about 3.2 trillion RMB in China. Because of this huge labor force and economic significance, the performance of workers in textile industries in China not only affects the industries but also has macroeconomic implications. In the current decade, China's textile industry has experienced greater adoption of sustainable manufacturing processes, with recycled or regenerated fibers representing about 45% of the total in 2022, more than 80% of textile waste having been or being recycled/reused, and shares of eco-friendly/organic textiles having increased significantly. While transformation to sustainable processes poses a challenge in terms of material and the environment, it also has to address changes in behavior at the organizational or people management level. In this changing scenario, leadership style plays paramount roles in determining motivation, commitment, and performance of employees.

"Sustainable leadership," in its widest definition, can thus be referred to as a leadership approach attempting to marry economic outcomes with a broader approach of taking into consideration the concerns of short-term production as well as long-term sustainability of human and organizational factors. Below the widest definition of sustainable leadership, a number of different leadership approaches can then be used, some of which include transformational leadership, transactional leadership, autocratic leadership, participative leadership, and laissez-faire leadership, depending on the implications of the approach on the workers and how they are managed or left on their own. For example, the traditional "full range" leadership model proposes a classification of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, or laissez-faire leadership.

A "sustainable transformational leadership style" may include inspiring workers towards collective long-run goals (such as sustainability and well-being), intellectually stimulating them, and building trust. A "sustainable transactional leadership style" may include effective communication of clear expectations, using rewards or corrective feedback contingently on reaching such expectations of sustainable practices. A "sustainable autocratic leadership style," although less frequently applied from a contemporary theoretical basis, may include decision centralization together with effective enforcement of sustainable standards. A "sustainable participative leadership style" may include adopting a decision-making role for employees, encouraging them to adopt sustainable practices as their own. Finally, a "sustainable laissez-faire leadership style," which is ideal when a supporting environment is present, may permit autonomy together with self-regulation of employees towards sustainability and performance. However, such leadership styles have never been investigated collectively from a "sustainable leadership" perspective around China's textile industries regarding HRM practices and sustainable orientations together with their performance outcomes.

There are empirical studies in developing countries which unveiled that leadership style played a significant role in influencing organizational performance. As examples, it was revealed that both transactional and transformational leadership styles had positive significant effects on performance; although quantitatively different, both styles were important for assured performance. On the same note, research was conducted in small and medium-sized enterprises concerning transformational leadership and job performance; it was revealed that transformational leadership significantly predicts positive job performance in SMEs. But concerning the actual topic at hand, and taking into consideration that China is under huge external and domestic pressure concerning their manufacturing industry and sustainable development and competitiveness in the highly labor-intensive manufacturing industry in China today, there clearly is a research vacuum in the literature as there are

hardly any findings about what impacts sustainable leadership styles have on worker performance and if organizational commitment acts as a mediator in those findings. Organizational commitment is likely influenced by worker attachment to their organizations and impacts worker reaction to their leadership; especially if those goals include sustainable development and are postured toward eventual fruition at a far later date than short-term bottom-line goals or personal financial gain.

Thus, this research aims to explore the effect of sustainable leadership styles on employee performance within the textile industry of China, with a specific interest in organizational commitment as a mediator. The research questions include: What is the effect of sustainable leadership styles, namely transformational, transactional, autocratic, participative, and laissez-faire, on employee performance within the textile industry of China? To what extent can organizational commitment serve as a mediator between sustainable leadership styles and employee performance? In order to respond to the research question, several research objectives have been set, which include the examination of the relationship between sustainable leadership style and employee performance among textile industry employees in China.

The study assumes importance not only within the Chinese textile sector but also within textile organizations operating in countries such as Pakistan. Therefore, taking into consideration the importance of textile within Pakistan's economy and job generation aspects, knowing the role of sustainable leadership and its influence on employee performance through organizational commitment is of great importance. Implementation of sustainable leadership concepts is not only important within the Pakistani textile sector but also within textile organizations operating globally due to the rise of the concept of sustainability. Furthermore, through the identification of leadership styles that influence commitment and performance within organizations, the proposed study can provide an influence within textile economies that require the motivation and commitment of workers toward improved economies and societal standards.

In conclusion, given the changes occurring in China's textiles sector due to economic and sustainability factors, an examination of sustainable leadership and its influence on employee performance through psychological mechanisms can answer an important research question that remains absent in literary works. The results can make significant contributions to theoretical bodies of knowledge and practical circles in Pakistan or any economy that relies on textiles and seeks to develop its leadership based on sustainable development principles.

The textile industry across the globe is witnessing a dramatic change due to the demands and needs for sustainability, the latest technologies, and rising expectations from the employees. Since China holds the position of the world's largest textile provider and exporter, the pressure to sustain their competitiveness amidst the needs for sustainability across the world is substantial. This changeover period has created an unprecedented focus and need for leadership practices that not only improve the productivity outcomes but also create long-term employee well-being, commitment, and sustainable organizational culture. Though the textile industry across China has undergone remarkable development, the industry still faces the problems of high employee turnover, repetitive tasks, stressful work environments, and limited opportunities for participating in decision-making. These problems often result in reduced employee performance, decreased workplace engagement, and decreased overall productivity outcomes for the organization. In this muddled situation, the need for and the adoption of different styles and practices related to organizational leadership are critical to influence the attitudes and behaviors of the employees. Sustainable leadership practices that consider the values related to long-term organizational success, human focus, and the adoption of the latest technologies and environmentally sustainable practices are increasingly entrusted to the domain of prime necessities rather than choosing those related to organization and management.

Previous research work done on leadership practices in labor-intensive industries primarily relates to traditional styles such as transformational, transactional, and so on. But only a few studies have been done from a sustainability perspective. Few studies have been conducted to measure the

significance of multiple sustainability styles such as sustainable transformational, sustainable transactional, sustainable autocratic, sustainable participative, and sustainable laissez-faire styles, which impact employee performance in the textile industry. The psychological mechanisms relating sustainability for performance are, therefore, largely unattended. Organizational commitment, an important psychological antecedent showing the psychological affinity between employees and their organization, serves as a significant performance indicator for retaining employees. When a leader brings integrity, justice, and participative practices into their organization, it ultimately proves beneficial for the development of organizational commitment, which, in turn, affects performance. But there is a lack of empirical support from previous research, which shows the effect of sustainability styles in the textile industry based in China. It is an important concern as, in this industry, there are high levels of stress, monotony, and a lack of empowerment. Therefore, it becomes important for these leadership styles from the sustainability point of view to create a sense of organizational commitment, because only then will it result in performance.

A glaring lack of extensive studies concerning sustainable leadership practices in the Chinese textile industry brings about an important knowledge gap that hampers the capacity of the managers to create efficient human resource strategies that meet contemporary sustainability requirements. Understanding the varied impacts of sustainable leadership styles towards the efficacy of workers' performance and the role of organizational commitment in intensifying such relationships is very important in assisting the development of leadership structures that will ensure sustainable competitiveness. There are important insights that the results of this research study will bring to textile organizations in China as they attempt to promote their performances through sustainable human resource management practices. Moreover, the study possesses important implications for the textile industry in Pakistan as it is currently faced with important constraints concerning worker turnover, unutilized workers' empowerment, and the need to promote sustainability in their practices.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Theoretical Background

Leadership is widely regarded as a critical antecedent of employee behavior, organizational commitment, and performance outcomes. The notion of sustainable leadership has recently emerged as a wider paradigm that surpasses traditional models by integrating economic, social, and environmental with long-term organizational welfare objectives. A recent systematic review argues that leadership styles, in particular those with a sustainability orientation, are increasingly associated with "sustainable performance" defined not only in financial terms but also in human, social, and environmental dimensions.

In this paradigm, established styles-transformational, transactional, participative, laissez-faire-can be reframed under the lens of "sustainable leadership." For instance, "sustainable transformational leadership" would encompass inspiring and motivating employees not only for organizational goals but also for ethical, environmental, and long-run societal objectives; fostering employee well-being, development, and organizational citizenship; and building trust and shared vision for sustainable growth. The theoretical logic suggests that such leadership can nurture intrinsic motivation, align personal values with organizational values, and build a culture of sustainability and commitment.

On the other hand, "sustainable transactional leadership" may use clear structures, reward/punishment systems, and adherence to standards, including environmental and social practices that make sure of compliance and stable performance. Participative or democratic leadership, when set within a sustainability framework, can grant a voice to employees in decisions, raise their sense of ownership, and amplify commitment to the organization's sustainable goals. Even "laissez-faire" leadership, although highly risky, could theoretically permit autonomy and self-regulation among experienced employees who are committed to sustainability ideals, but it would depend very strongly on employees' self-motivation and alignment with organizational goals.

Theoretical approaches to organizational commitment do suggest that leadership behaviours–

support, empowerment, vision, and fairness—have strong effects on employees' emotional attachment, identification with organizational values, and willingness to expend effort. If through sustainable leadership a work environment can be created that is characterized by a longer time focus, ethicality, and supportiveness, employees are more likely to internalize organizational values and feel psychologically safe and valued. By doing so, they commit more to the organization for a longer period of time. This commitment then translates into higher performance, discretionary behaviors, loyalty, and lower turnover. These theoretical links form the basis for developing hypotheses about how various forms of sustainable leadership will predict employee performance, possibly via organizational commitment as a mediator.

1.2. Empirical Review

There are empirical works on the styles of leadership and implications of commitment and performance, and these works give strong support, although these are linked mostly to conventional and not 'sustainable' styles of leadership practices. A recent example of an empirical work involving 845 employees of hotels in China demonstrated the positive effects of transformational leadership practices toward affective and work-related commitment and performance, and these effects are, to some extent, mediated partially through employee engagement. In another recent empirical study, the improvement of performance and OCB, and communication as mediators or moderators of retention under transformational leadership practices in SMEs was found.

Moreover, a systematic literature review that explored the relation between leadership styles and sustainable performance emphasized that transformational/sustainable leadership styles receive the highest attention, and that leadership plays a pivotal role in achieving sustainable organizational performance, economic, social, and environmental, over financial maximization. A general literature review that examined "sustainable leadership → organizational culture/employee well-being/innovation/commitment" pathways revealed that collaborative/participative leadership leads to organizational culture, learning, and employee well-being, all factors that are critical to sustainability.

In non-service-oriented sectors, such as manufacturing, which are relatively labor-intensive, research has also identified the connection that exists between leadership style and the performance of employees. In this case, in 2025, research undertaken in the Jordanian banking sector "confirmed that the effect of both transactional and transformational leadership on the performance of employees was significant, with the conclusion being that truly, leadership style definitely influences performance." In the garment manufacturing sector, research on "authentic leadership," published in 2022, noted that the relationship between leadership style and employees' performance was affected by organizational commitment.

In spite of this amount of empirical literature, however, very few studies have attempted to explore more than one leadership styles, viz., transformational, transactional, participative, laissez-faire, and so on, in the concept of "sustainable leadership" with organizational commitment as the mediator. In most empirical studies, more often only transformational and sometimes only the transformational and transactional styles are taken, in the services or SME sectors but seldom in larger units of labor-intensive manufacturing, for example, textiles. This is in spite of the fact that sustainable-oriented leading is also theoretically important in situations where environments are pressed for involvement in the wake of global competition, ethics, green issues, and demands for workers' welfare. In the backdrop of the aforementioned facts, studies embracing leadership style, organizational commitment, and performance together have not received enough attention in the textile sector, particularly in the major manufacturing nations. As far as the enormous labor intensity, pressure, and expectations from the environment for sustainability, and handling employees' complexity in the textile sector are concerned, this represents an enormous gap in the literature.

1.3. Hypotheses Development

It is increasingly recognized that sustainable leadership-which integrates economic, social, and environmental objectives into leadership practice-

significantly affects employee performance. Along with conventional ways of managing, a leader with a sustainability approach affects the staff through leading by example of moral conduct, inspiring ecological awareness, and building an friendly, human-centered workplace (Raza, Imran, Raza, Usman, & Malik, 2025). Indeed, inspirational leadership behavior is of crucial importance for motivating workers to perform well with organizational values and standards of sustainability in labor-intensive industries, such as textiles, where workers face repetitive tasks, high production pressure, and challenges regarding sustainability.

Employee performance is positively affected by sustainable leadership, as confirmed by empirical studies. For instance, Wang et al. (2022) found a great improvement in the performance of employees in the manufacturing and service sectors through the use of transformational leadership styles focused on long-term organizational goals and the well-being of employees. In a similar manner, Averina, Irawanto, and Kurniawati (2023) illustrated the positive impact of management practices that integrate sustainability principles on task performance, employee initiatives, and the quality of work produced. This study emphasizes the role of sustainable leadership in motivating employees to perform even beyond their duties through the alignment of personal values with those of the organization.

Moreover, leaders who emphasize sustainability create an environment of accountability, integrity, and ingenuity that directly affects performance outcomes (Ahsan & Khawaja, 2024). In this type of leadership style, employees view their jobs as contributing to broader organizational and societal needs, thereby increasing employee engagement, motivation, and productivity. Moreover, desirable behaviors that lead to positive performance outcomes are encouraged through sustainable leadership practices that include setting targets for sustainability, providing feedback, and rewarding employees' performant contributions to sustainable outcomes (Salustiano Dos Reis, 2023). In the current competitive and globalized textiles sector, sustainable leadership practices ensure that employees meet strict guidelines of ethics, environmental responsibility, and quality, besides production performance. In the competitive and globalized textiles sector, sustainable leadership ensures that employees in the sector adhere to the dictates of ethics, environment, and quality, apart from the production goals. Performance by the employees is enhanced at the organizational and individual levels by sustainable and productive leadership. This article, therefore, hypothesizes that sustainable leadership positively affects the performance of employees in the textiles sector in China.

H_1: Sustainable leadership (overall) has a positive effect on employee performance in China's textile industry.

H_{1a}: Sustainable participative leadership positively affects employee performance.

H_{1b}: Sustainable autocratic leadership positively affects employee performance.

H_{1c}: Sustainable laissez-faire leadership positively affects employee performance.

However, sustainable leadership is recognized not only for influencing performance outcomes but also for its substantial impact on employees in terms of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment refers to the degree of psychological attachment one feels towards one's organization, including loyalty and identification (Meyer & Allen, 2020). Leaders who lead sustainably build environments where employees feel valuable, supported from an ethical point of view, and deeply connected with the organizational long-term objectives. That alignment encourages employees to increase their emotional and normative bonds with the organization, thereby driving their willingness to contribute and stay with the firm.

There seems to be a strong link between sustainable leadership and commitment to an organization, supported by empirical evidence. According to Wang et al. (2022), transformational leadership, focusing on sustainable goals and outcomes in terms of ethical practices and employee well-being, demonstrates a strong impact on affective commitment to an organization. Members of the organization feel that their leaders are passionate about achieving organizational goals and also concerned about their environmental and social responsibilities, thereby increasing their commitment to the organization. Similarly, Raza, Imran, Raza, Usman, and Malik (2025) stated that sustainable leadership, focusing on

environmental, social, and economic aspects, significantly predicts the commitment to an organization because its employees absorb the meaning of sustainability and feel meaning in their tasks.

In labor-intensive industries like textiles, sustainable leadership can have strong effects, as in such industries workers are often exposed to repetitive work and pressure. When leaders at such points in time in the organization demonstrate qualities like justice, integrity, and participation in decision-making, it leads to a positive organizational climate, which in turn fosters employees' identification with the organization (Ahsan & Khawaja, 2024). In the same direction, it has also been underscored that employees' feelings of belongingness and loyalties can be enhanced through leaders' behavior directed at sustainability, recognition, and development (Averina, et al., 2023). These theoretical and empirical insights suggest that sustainable leadership creates supportive, ethical, and future-oriented work environments that shape organizational commitment positively. Therefore, in the context of China's textile industry, leaders who integrate sustainability principles into their management practices are likely to enhance employees' psychological attachment, loyalty, and identification for pro-organizational behavior or attitude, thus providing a justification for the proposed hypothesis.

H_2: Sustainable leadership has a positive effect on organizational commitment among employees in China's textile industry.

H_{2a}: Sustainable participative leadership positively affects organizational commitment among employees in China's textile industry.

H_{2b}: Sustainable autocratic leadership positively affects organizational commitment among employees in China's textile industry.

H_{2c}: Sustainable laissez-faire leadership positively affects organizational commitment among employees in China's textile industry.

Organizational commitment emerges as an important predictor of workers' performance since organizational commitment entails the psychological bond, dedication, and willingness of workers to frame their actions according to organizational objectives (Meyer & Allen, 2020). Employees who are highly committed to an organization are able to devote their extra efforts, persevere with difficult work, and ensure the highest standards in their work. This dimension has immense significance in labor-intensive industries, especially the textile industry, where the motivation of workers plays a crucial role in determining the performance of the organization. Evidence has shown that a positive relationship between organizational commitment and employee performance does exist. This is because, as Wang et al. (2022) demonstrated, those employees who experience higher levels of affective organizational commitment tend to have enhanced job performance, as characterized by increased productivity, creativity, and level of adherence to quality standards. On a similar note, Averina, Irawanto, & Kurniawati (2023) conceptualized that organizing for enhanced commitment plays a pivotal part within a process that translates employee motive and loyalty into superior levels of performance, especially within a context that espouses ideals of sustainability and prolonged organizational objectives.

In the manufacturing or textile setting, research has illustrated that organizational commitment improves the relationship between worker motivation and performance. In this regard, Ahsan & Khawaja (2024) illustrated that if employees are committed to sustainability, the organization shall experience more efficiency in terms of performance. Additionally, Salustiano Dos Reis (2023) noted that even though employees are committed to an organization, they shall have the motivation to own the organizational task, adjust to the organizational changes, or engage in sustainability programs. Therefore, in the textile industry of China, organizational commitment plays an essential role in enhancing the performance of employees. By being psychologically connected to the organization, employees shall be able to provide the organization with the motivation to excel in its operational objectives, such as sustainability.

H_3: Organizational commitment has a positive effect on employee performance in China's textile industry.

Organizational commitment has been widely recognized as a critical psychological mechanism through which leadership influences employee performance. Beyond guidance and resources, leaders adopting sustainable practices create work

conditions characterized by ethics, fairness, and support that raise the level of employees' emotional attachment, identification, and loyalty to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 2020). That is how sustainable leadership may influence employee performance indirectly by enhancing the strength of commitment among employees to motivate them towards greater effort, higher quality of tasks, or discretionary behaviors for organizational benefits.

Empirical work has extensively supported the mediating role of organizational commitment. In this respect, Averina, Irawanto, and Kurniawati (2023) concluded that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on employees' performance, and this role is in turn facilitated by the mediating role of organizational commitment. Again, Raza, Imran, Raza, Usman, and Malik (2025) proved that sustainable leadership positively impacts organizational commitment, and later, organizational commitment has remained effective in positively influencing the engagement and performance levels of employees in achieving sustainable goals. This indicates that employees with leaders portraying strong ethical and decision-making standards, in addition to leaders' focus and interest in sustainable activities, can have the potential to inculcate organizational values into their work behavior and performance, ultimately performing in the best-possible manner in the organization. Sustainable transformational leaders motivate the employees to achieve common sustainability objectives and stimulate their intellect. This results in the employees emotionally identifying with and adhering to the values of the organization, consequently improving their performance results (Li and Yang, 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Sustainable transactional leadership is linked to orienting employees to rewards and functioning within the set sustainability criteria. This helps to increase the employees' sense of commitment to the organization and, consequently, improves their performance at work (Bass and Riggio, 2020; Chen et al., 2021).

Participative leadership involves getting the staff to take part in decision-making and problem-solving activities, thereby creating ownership of the goals in the organization. Through the integration of sustainability and participative leadership, there is increased commitment to performance and motivation to perform better in the organization (Hussain et al., 2022). Despite autocratic leadership being perceived to be highly centralized in terms of decision-making, if integrated with ethics and sustainability compliance, there would be an increased emphasis on commitment to the organization's ethics, rules, and performance parameters (Zhang et al., 2023). The staff would feel obliged to perform towards achieving the sustainability goals of the organization, thereby improving their performance.

Sustainable laissez-faire leadership allows employees the autonomy and self-management opportunity in a way that sustainable expectations are also met. When employees experience internal motivation and share the organization's values, their commitment gets strengthened, which in turn leads to successful performance (Patel & Sharma, 2021). The success of the above leadership style also depends on the employees' internal management and ethical congruence with the organizational goals. Taken together, the findings above highlight that organizational commitment acts as a significant mediator in the association between sustainable leadership styles and the performance of employees. Through the creation of employees' emotional association, loyalty, and identification towards organizational sustainable objectives, the sustainable leadership style makes sure that employees' performance outcome arises from their internal motivation and association.

H_4: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between sustainable leadership styles and employee performance.

H_{4a}: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between sustainable participative leadership style and employee performance.

H_{4b}: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between sustainable autocratic leadership style and employee performance.

H_{4c}: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between sustainable laissez- faire leadership style and employee performance.

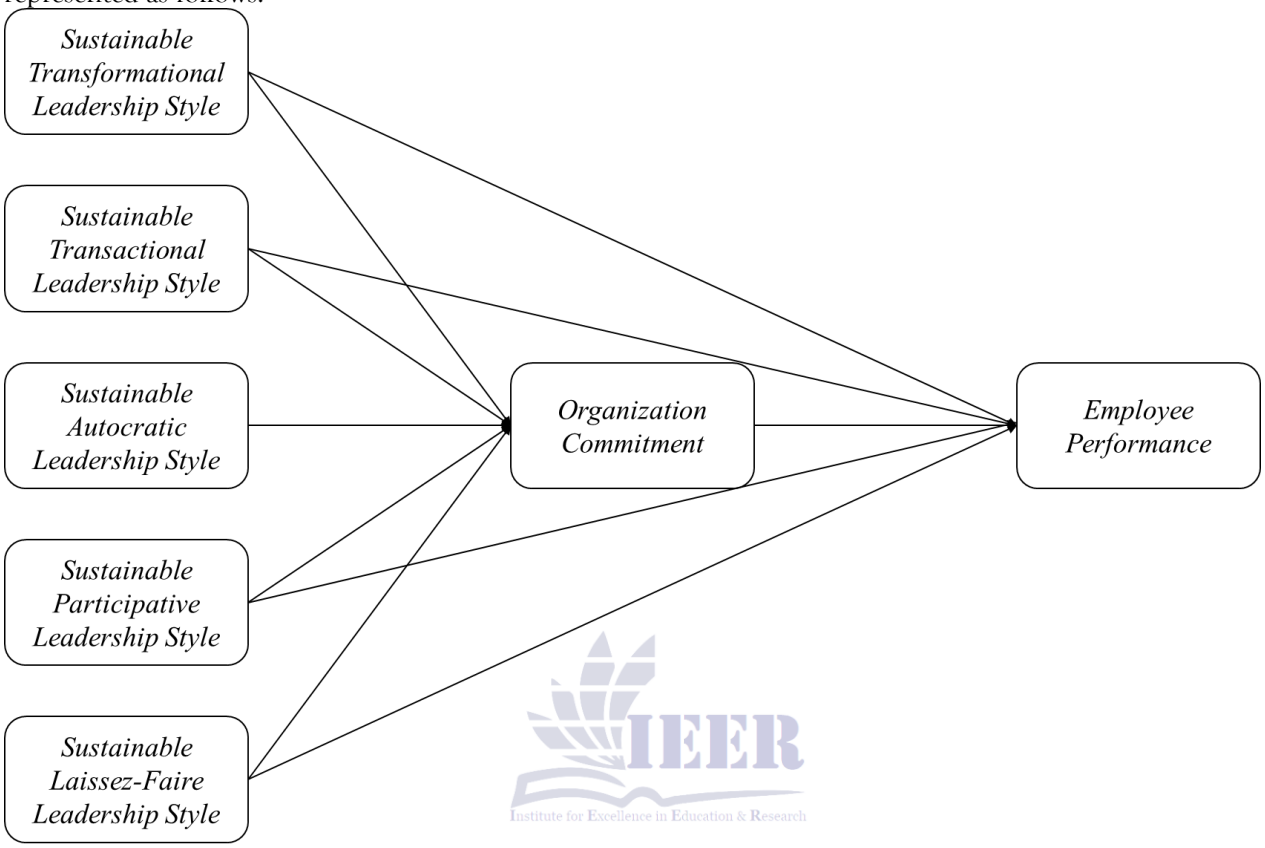
These assumptions have roots in existing empirical works that have emphasized connections between leadership style, organizational commitment, and performance (or their nearest alternatives, such as retention, job performance, work engagement,

knowledge management, or job satisfaction). The integration of multiple leadership styles within the sustainable leadership framework will enable a nuanced comparison that is currently absent in existing work.

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Conceptual Framework

Based on the above theoretical and empirical discussion, the conceptual framework for this study can be represented as follows:



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Thus, the model posits that different sustainable leadership styles influence employee performance both directly (path from leadership style to performance) and indirectly (via organizational commitment). Depending on data and results, moderation or control variables (demographic factors, organizational culture, job type, employee characteristics, sustainability orientation of firm) might be added but the core theoretical model centers on leadership → commitment → performance.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the present study is informed by Saunders' research onion framework, which helps a researcher to systematically design his or her research by considering its philosophical stance, approach, strategy, choices, time horizon, and finally the techniques of data collection and analysis. The Research Onion aids a systematic and logical justification of the methods adopted in pursuit of the effective linking of research questions and objectives to the analytical procedures.

2.1. Research Philosophy

The philosophy under which this study was conducted is positivism, which lends prominence to measurement by objective techniques and the testing of hypotheses based on existing theories (Creswell, 2014). Positivism was considered very relevant to the conduct of this research because it seeks to investigate some causative links between sustainable leadership styles, commitment, and performance within the textile industry in China. It deals with things that are observable by measurement, which makes it generalizable.

2.2. Research Approach

A deductive approach thus tests the hypotheses derived from theory against empirical data. From the literature, it is hypothesized that there exist relationships among sustainable leadership styles, organizational commitment, and employee performance. The deductive approach is consistent with the positivist philosophy and enables a structured means of testing hypotheses using quantitative data.

2.3. Research Strategy

The research employs a survey approach, which is well suited to data gathering from a massive sample in the textile sector. Employee attitudes towards leaders' behaviors, organizational commitment, and self-rated performance can be accurately obtained using the survey method. The research will make use of a structured research instrument, which would ensure that data was collected in a reliable manner.

2.4. Research Choices

This study follows a mono-method quantitative design, in which data is gathered through a survey instrument alone. The quantitative approach is suitable since the study seeks to test relationships of variables and investigate the mediating role of organizational commitment with statistical methods.

2.5. Time Horizon

A cross-sectional approach has been used, whereby the data was obtained at a single moment in time from the textile sector employees in China. Despite thefact that the measurements could be obtained over a series of years for a longitudinal study, the current approach can be sufficient for the test of hypotheses, as well as for the evaluation of the mediation impact of the organizational commitment.

2.6. Population and Sampling

The research target population will be the employees hired by the textile industry operating in the Chinese economy. These people will be suited given that the textile industry in China is comprised of more than 14 million employees and operates over 40,000 different companies (Wang et al. 2022). A reasonable number of 400 to 500 employees will be selected to be suited for structural equation modeling and is sufficient due to the fact that the population is adequate to the Chinese economy and is sufficient statistically due to good statistical power to enable the research to hypothesize properly (Hair et al. 2022). By using this technique, the elements chosen will be adequate and possess sufficient experience and exposure to the related leadership practice.

2.7. Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire would be used, which would consist of different categories, such as demographic details, sustainable leadership style (transformational, transactional, participative, autocratic, and laissez-faire), organizational commitment, as well as the performance of the employees. These would be designed on the basis of earlier research studies (Bass & Avolio, 2000; Meyer & Allen, 1997), on the five-point likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree, with 1 being disagree and 5 being agree).

2.8. Data Analysis

The obtained data will be subsequently analyzed by means of SmartPLS, a program for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. PLS-SEM is applicable in this study for the following reasons: It allows for the simultaneous assessment of measurement models and structural models, which implies the capability to test the validity and reliability of constructs, as well as hypotheses. It is robust for small to medium sample sizes and does not assume normality in data distribution. As noted by Hair et al. (2022), it enables testing complex models that include multiple mediating variables, such as organizational commitment in the current study. The subsequent analysis will be based on a two-step approach: Measurement Model Assessment – the evaluation of reliability by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, the convergent validity through AVE, and the discriminant validity via Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio. Structural Model Assessment – testing the hypothesized relationships using path coefficients, the significance of these coefficients tested through bootstrapping, R^2 values, and the meditation effects of organizational commitment.

2.9. Ethical Considerations

Strict adherence to the code of ethics will also be maintained, and informed consent will be established, with the anonymity of the respondents maintained, and the response would remain voluntary, and respondents would also retain the right to withdraw at any point. The data would also only have academic use, with no personal identification information gathered at all. Following the Onion model for research proposed by Saunders, this study adopts the quantitative, deductive, cross-sectional design proposed by the model to examine the sustainable leadership style impact on employee performance with mediating variable organizational commitment. SmartPLS analysis also ensures the rigorous analysis of the data with the purposive sampling design enabling the selection of the respondents according to the required experience related to the textile industry in China.

3. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

3.1. Measurement Model

3.1.1. Outer Loading

The measurement model results indicate satisfactory indicator reliability since all the observed items reflect outer loadings greater than the threshold value of 0.70. For instance, the loadings on Employee Performance range from 0.742 to 0.858, reflecting that all six indicators elicited adequate representation of performance-related behaviors of employees. Organizational Commitment reflects very high outer loadings ranging between 0.899 to 0.911, which indicates good construct representation and strong convergence of its respective indicators. Similarly, Sustainable Autocratic Leadership Style is reliably measured, the loadings falling between 0.800 to 0.954, implying that the items selected for measurement reflect good representation of autocratic leadership practices in a sustainable perspective. The indicators reflecting Sustainable Laissez-Faire Leadership Style also show very high loadings ranging from 0.906 to 0.917, reflecting strong indicator reliability. Similarly, the Sustainable Participative Leadership Style shows strong outer loadings ranging from 0.856 to 0.891, thus indicating that participative leading behavior oriented toward sustainability would be perceived consistently by subordinates. Summing up, the findings confirm that all constructs meet recommended thresholds for indicator reliability, and no item deletion was needed. Hence, the measurement model is reliable and suitable for further structural model analysis in the context of China's textile industry.

	EP	OC	SALS	SLLS	SPLS
EP1	0.844				
EP2	0.858				
EP3	0.833				
EP4	0.742				
EP5	0.789				
EP6	0.850				
OC1		0.906			
OC2		0.899			
OC3		0.911			
OC4		0.907			
OC5		0.904			
OC6		0.909			
SALS1			0.920		
SALS2			0.800		
SALS3			0.954		
SLLS1				0.917	
SLLS2				0.906	

SLLS3				0.907	
SPLS1					0.886
SPLS2					0.856
SPLS3					0.891

3.1.2. Content Reliability and Validity

The outcome of content reliability and convergent validity shows that all constructs of the measurement model satisfy the required criteria. The alpha values of Cronbach vary between 0.853 and 0.956, which is above the minimum requirement of 0.70, hence supporting high internal consistency reliability of Employee Performance, Organizational Commitment, as well as all constructs of sustainable leadership styles. Additionally, the composite reliability of each construct (ρa & ρc) has values above the cut-off point of 0.70, hence supporting the reliability of the measurement model. It is worth acknowledging that Organizational Commitment and Sustainable Laissez-Faire Leadership Style have higher composite reliability, with very high consistency of indicators. With regard to convergent validity, the AVE of all constructs is above the cut-off point of 0.50, varying between 0.673 & 0.828, hence each construct explaining more than half of their indicators' total variation. Overall, these findings confirm that the measurement model possesses satisfactory content reliability and strong convergent validity, rendering it suitable for subsequent structural model and hypothesis testing in the context of China's textile industry.

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EP	0.902	0.907	0.925	0.673
OC	0.956	0.957	0.965	0.821
SALS	0.908	0.766	0.922	0.799
SLLS	0.897	0.904	0.935	0.828
SPLS	0.853	0.871	0.910	0.770

3.1.3. Discriminant Validity

3.1.3.1. HTMT

The discriminant validity of the measurement model was checked through Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The guidelines state that the threshold level of HTMT should be less than 0.85 (and even less than 0.90). This is apparent in the results as the values of HTMT among the variables are much less than the recommended level. The highest HTMT ratio has been measured between Organizational Commitment and Sustainable Laissez-Faire Leadership Style (HTMT=0.804), which is at a safe level as the variables tend to be closely related. However, they differ at the empirical level. The values of the HTMT ratio between Employee Performance and other variables range between 0.087 and 0.647. This shows a notable distinction between the variables of employee performance and the sustainable styles of leadership as well as the level of organizational commitment. For the sustainable styles of leadership (SALS, SLLS, and SPLS), the respective HTMT values range between 0.212 and 0.456. This suggests that although the styles of a sustainable orientation encompass different variables of the styles of sustainable leadership, they tend to be different variables. Overall, the HTMT results confirm that discriminant validity is well established for all constructs, indicating that the measurement model is free from multicollinearity concerns and suitable for structural model analysis in the context of China's textile industry.

	EP	OC	SALS	SLLS	SPLS
EP					
OC	0.605				

SALS	0.105	0.082			
SLLS	0.647	0.804	0.212		
SPLS	0.087	0.387	0.456	0.223	

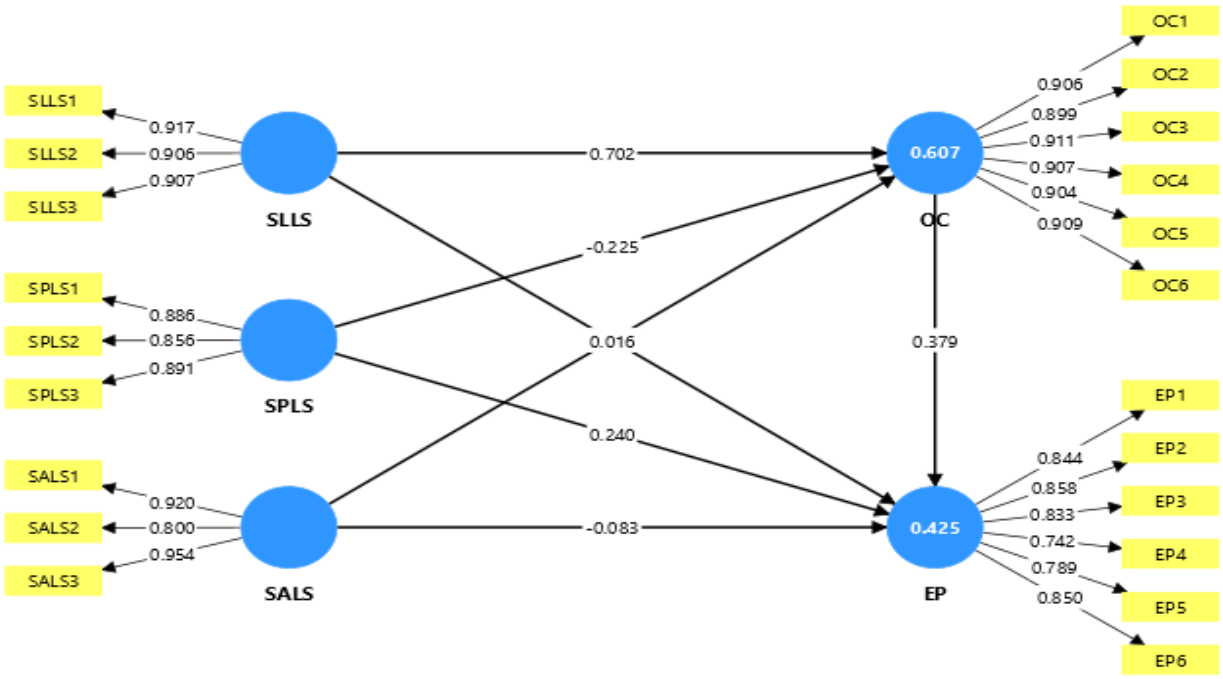
3.1.3.2. Fornell Larcker

The results of the Fornell & Larcker criterion show that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of all constructs (values along the diagonal) are higher than the correlation values between constructs (values along the off-diagonal). Particularly, it can be seen that the values along the diagonal are large for EP (0.821), OC (0.906), SALS (0.894), SLLS (0.910), and SPLS (0.878), which means the proportion of the respective constructs' steadiness extracted by these constructs is large. Moreover, it can be seen that all values along the off-diagonal are less than the values along the diagonal, establishing that all constructs are distinctly different. All these imply that the measurement model is sound, with all constructs, namely employee performance, organizational commitment, and sustainable leadership style variables, having sufficient discriminant validity to be subjected to structural modeling.

	EP	**OC**	**SALS**	**SLLS**	**SPLS**
EP	0.821				
OC	0.564	0.906			
SALS	0.116	0.091	0.894		
SLLS	0.591	0.749	0.218	0.910	
SPLS	0.005	-0.355	0.349	-0.194	0.878

3.1.4. Graphical Representation of Measurement Model

The measurement model indicates very good reliability and validity for all the constructs. Indicator loadings for all items are above the threshold of 0.70, which suggests that each of the items measures its respective constructs reliably. Likewise, the AVE values for SLLS (0.910), SPLS (0.878), SALS (0.894), OC (0.906), and EP (0.821) confirm adequate convergent validity. Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion because the square roots of AVEs were greater than the correlation of a construct with other constructs, hence proving that each construct is unique. Path coefficients reveal that SLLS significantly enhances OC (0.702) that in turn positively influences EP (0.379), thus representing its mediating role. On the contrary, SPLS has a negative effect on OC (-0.225) and negligible direct effect on EP (0.016), while SALS has a minimal positive effect on OC (0.016) but has a modest positive effect on EP (0.240). Generally speaking, the model has verified the hypothesis that SLLS is the most impactful leadership style in enhancing organizational commitment and employee performance in China's textile industry.



3.1.5. R-Square

The R-squares represent the amount of variability in the dependent variables that is explained in your model by the independent variables. An R-square of 0.425 for Employee Performance (EP) means that 42.5% of EP is explained in terms of the represented styles of leadership and organizational commitment in the model, with the adjusted R-square of 0.400 only slightly less, reflecting model complexity. Similarly, for Organizational Commitment (OC), an R-square of 0.607 signifies that 60.7% of the variability in the variable is represented by the styles of leadership in the model, in which case the adjusted R-square of 0.594 is only slightly lower, reflecting model complexity. The model appears to have moderate explanatory ability for EP but strong explanatory ability for the variable of OC in the Chinese textile industry.

	R-square	R-square adjusted
EP	0.425	0.400
OC	0.607	0.594

3.2. Structural Equation Model

3.2.1. Path Coefficients

The result of the path coefficients shows that the effect of organizational commitment is positively and significantly related to employee performance (β=0.380, p=0.010), and sustainable laissez-faire leadership increases employee performance (β=0.370, p=0.007) and organizational commitment (β=0.702, p=0.000) significantly. Sustainable participative leadership has a positive effect on employee performance (β=0.242, p=0.016), but the result shows a significant negative effect for the same factor on organizational commitment (β= -0.224, p=0.003). Sustainable autocratic leadership has neither a significant effect on employee performance (β= -0.083, p=0.495) nor organizational commitment (β=0.015, p=0.857). The findings suggested that laissez-faire and participative leadership styles are more effective in terms of increasing employee performance, and the laissez-faire style is also effective in increasing the factor of organizational commitment, and the style of autocratic leadership is less effective in this study.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
OC -> EP	0.380	0.369	0.148	2.575	0.010
SALS -> EP	-0.083	-0.095	0.121	0.683	0.495
SALS -> OC	0.015	0.005	0.085	0.180	0.857
SLLS -> EP	0.370	0.383	0.137	2.698	0.007
SLLS -> OC	0.702	0.704	0.063	11.223	0.000
SPLS -> EP	0.242	0.244	0.100	2.421	0.016
SPLS -> OC	-0.224	-0.222	0.077	2.927	0.003

3.2.2. Total Indirect Effect

Overall, indirect effect results reveal how each of the leadership styles influences employee performance through the mediator, organizational commitment. SALS → EP (0.006, p = 0.868) means that sustainable autocratic leadership has a negligible and insignificant indirect effect on employee performance, which does not operate through organizational commitment. SLLS → EP (0.267, p = 0.010) shows that sustainable laissez-faire leadership has a significant positive indirect effect on employee performance through organizational commitment, which means that part of its impact on performance is mediated through increased commitment. SPLS → EP (-0.085, p = 0.053) presents the marginally insignificant negative indirect effect of sustainable participative leadership on employee performance, which informs that participative leadership reduces performance through organizational commitment, but this effect is not statistically robust. Overall, organizational commitment significantly mediates the effect of laissez-faire leadership on employee performance, while the mediating effects of autocratic and participative styles are negligible or weak.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
SALS -> EP	0.006	0.003	0.035	0.166	0.868
SLLS -> EP	0.267	0.258	0.103	2.590	0.010
SPLS -> EP	-0.085	-0.081	0.044	1.932	0.053

3.2.3. Total Specified Effect

The tested indirect effects portray the role of organisational commitment (OC) as the mediator between each leadership style and employee performance (EP). The equation, SALS → OC → EP (0.006, p = 0.868), illustrates the presence of an extremely small and insignificant indirect effect of sustainable autocratic leadership style on employee performance via organisational commitment. The result shows that there is a negligible contribution of the autocratic leadership style, as the effect is less significant and the p-value is slightly above 0.05. The result, SLLS → OC → EP (0.267, p = 0.010), shows that there is a significant and positive indirect effect of the sustainable laissez-faire leadership style on employee performance via the organisational commitment variable. Hence, the effect of the laissez-faire leadership style is substantial, as indicated by the significant p-value of less than 0.05. The result, SPLS → OC → EP (-0.085, p = 0.053), illustrates the negative indirect effect of the sustainable participative leadership style on employee

performance via the variable of organisational commitment. The p-value, which is slightly above 0.05, shows the marginally insignificant result, meaning the effect is weak and has a low chance of validity. Overall, only laissez-faire leadership exhibits a significant mediated effect on employee performance through organizational commitment.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
SALS -> OC -> EP	0.006	0.003	0.035	0.166	0.868
SLLS -> OC -> EP	0.267	0.258	0.103	2.590	0.010
SPLS -> OC -> EP	-0.085	-0.081	0.044	1.932	0.053

3.2.4. Total Effect

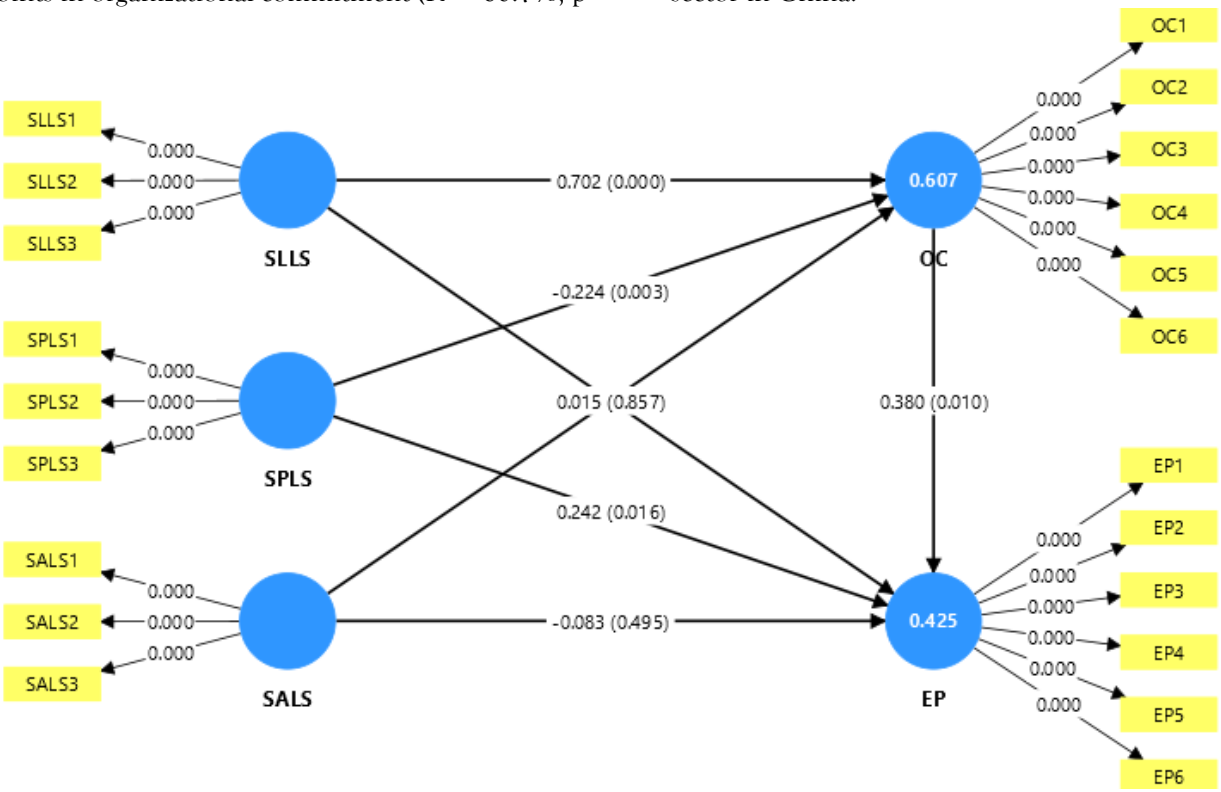
The total effect for the results represents the net direct and indirect effects of the different leadership styles and organizational commitment on employee performance. OC → EP (0.380, p = 0.010) represents that the total significant positive effect of organizational commitment is on employee performance. SALS → EP (-0.077, p = 0.563) represents that the total negative and insignificant effect of sustainable autocratic leadership is on employee performance, which means that autocratic leadership is ineffectual in the long run. SALS → OC (0.015, p = 0.857) represents that autocratic leadership has little effects on organizational commitment. SLLS → EP (0.637, p = 0.000) and SLLS → OC (0.702, p = 0.000) both describe that sustainable laissez-faire leadership has strong total effects on employee performance and organizational commitment, meaning that it is effective. SPLS → EP (0.156, p = 0.154) depicts a positive but insignificant total impact of sustainable participative leadership practices on performance, and SPLS → OC (-0.224, p = 0.003) signifies a negative significant impact of sustainable participative leadership practices on organizational commitment. Overall, laissez-faire emerges as the most potent style of enhancing both the performance and commitment of employees. Organizational commitment has a positive impact on performance. Additionally, autocratic styles of management are ineffective.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
OC -> EP	0.380	0.369	0.148	2.575	0.010
SALS -> EP	-0.077	-0.092	0.133	0.578	0.563
SALS -> OC	0.015	0.005	0.085	0.180	0.857
SLLS -> EP	0.637	0.641	0.073	8.735	0.000
SLLS -> OC	0.702	0.704	0.063	11.223	0.000
SPLS -> EP	0.156	0.163	0.110	1.426	0.154
SPLS -> OC	-0.224	-0.222	0.077	2.927	0.003

3.2.5. Graphical Representation of Structural Equation Model

The results from the SEM show that sustainable laissez-faire leadership (SLLS) has a significant positive effect, promoting organizational commitment (β = 0.702, p = 0.000) and employee performance (β = 0.370, p = 0.007), with organizational commitment also having a positive effect on performance (β = 0.380, p = 0.010). Sustainable participative leadership (SPLS) has a positive direct effect (β = 0.242, p = 0.016) but a negative impact (β = -0.224, p = 0.003) on organizational commitment, and sustainable autocratic leadership (SALS) has small, non-

significant effects (β = 0.015, p = 0.857) for organizational commitment and (β = -0.083, p = 0.495) for employee performance. The model accounted for a significant percentage of the data points in organizational commitment (R^2 = 60.7%, p = 0.000) and employee performance (R^2 = 42.5%, p = 0.000), emphasizing the significance of laissez-faire leadership and organizational commitment in promoting employee performance in the textile sector in China.



4. Conclusion and Recommendation

These findings demonstrate that sustainable leadership has a significantly positive influence on employee performance within China's textile industry, mainly through the organizational commitment mediation mechanism. Amongst all kinds of leadership styles, sustainable laissez-faire leadership turned out to be the most effective: it strongly enhanced organizational commitment and employee performance, while sustainable autocratic leadership did not have any considerable impact on either of these outcomes. On the other hand, sustainable participative leadership showed partial influence, as it positively influenced performance directly but negatively influenced commitment, thus suggesting that employee participation could lead to fewer attachment ties with the organization if not well-matched. The results highlight that the development of organizational commitment via ethical, supportive, and sustainability-oriented leadership behavior is essential to enhance the performance of employees, especially in labor-intensive and competitive industries. These findings provide critical guidance to textile firms in China and similar economies, such as India, Bangladesh, Srilanka, Pakistan, by underlining the fact that the adoption of sustainable leadership practices, particularly those that empower and trust employees, can yield productivity and long-term organizational sustainability. Based on the research findings, the following are the recommendations for the industry and labor-intensive sectors. Organizations should encourage leadership styles that give employees autonomy while setting forth clear expectations on issues of sustainability. The leadership style has been proved to enhance organizational commitment and employee performance effectively.

As leadership influences performance only through organizational commitment, recognition programs, career development opportunities, and ethical work

practices that coincide with sustainability goals are all initiatives that firms could implement to make employees feel more attached and loyal. Even though performance can be enhanced through participative leadership, the fact that it diminishes commitment suggests that the level of participation by employees needs to be orchestrated and directed toward organizational goals. Possible adverse effects may be reduced through clear communication of roles, clarification, and guidance. Autocratic leadership, because it has almost no significant effect on performance and commitment, organizations should reduce using this type of leadership in a sustainability-driven context and focus more on being highly supportive and empowering. Training programs for managers will focus on sustainable leadership practices, notably ethical decisions, environmental considerations, and long-term employee well-being, which would drive both performance and commitment. Organizations should integrate leadership, HR policies, and sustainability practices into a supportive work environment where employees will feel valued, empowered, and aligned towards organizational goals for improved productivity and long-term sustainability of the organizations. These are recommendations to direct managers within the textile industry on how to use leadership influence to impact employees' performance and organizational commitment for sustainable business outcomes.

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