

## **GREEN ORIENTATION AND ITS MEDIATING EFFECT: A STUDY OF LEADING MANUFACTURER OF KNIT FABRICS IN SRI LANKA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the textile industry, the push towards sustainability has become a necessity driven by environmental concerns and market demands for eco-friendly practices. The study investigates the impact of leadership and organizational culture as independent variables, with employee engagement as the dependent variable, while green orientation serves as the mediating variable. Conducted within XYZ Company, a leading knit fabrics manufacturer in Sri Lanka. The research addresses the problem of limited understanding regarding how green orientation influences these dynamics, especially in organizations striving for sustainability. The main objective of the study is to identify the mediating effect of green orientation, specifically assessing how leadership and organizational culture influence it, and how green orientation, in turn, affects employee engagement. A sample size of 100 employees was selected using a simple random sampling technique. This approach ensured a representative sample of the population. Data were collected through structured questionnaires to capture respondents' attitudes and behaviors, focusing on leadership, organizational culture, green orientation, and employee engagement. The conceptual framework guided the research by outlining these relationships and providing a theoretical basis for data analysis. Quantitative analysis with Smart PLS 4.0 tested hypotheses and evaluated green orientation's mediating effects. The findings revealed that green orientation significantly mediates the relationships between leadership and employee engagement, as well as organizational culture and employee engagement. It integrates sustainability into existing frameworks, revealing that green practices significantly influence employee outcomes beyond traditional leadership and cultural factors. Practically, the research highlights the need for organizations to embed green orientation into their leadership and culture. By aligning sustainability with organizational strategies, companies can enhance employee engagement and performance, offering the dual benefit of advancing environmental goals while improving workforce motivation and productivity.

***Keywords: Employee Engagement, Green Orientation, Leadership, Mediating Effect, Organizational Culture***

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, as global awareness of environmental issues intensifies, sustainability has become an indispensable element of corporate strategy, shaping how organizations operate and succeed in an increasingly eco-conscious market. Companies are now recognizing that integrating environmental sustainability into their core practices is not only a moral imperative but also a key driver of long-term competitive advantage (Norton et al., 2015).

Employee engagement is a critical determinant of organizational success, directly influencing productivity, job satisfaction, and retention rates. Engaged employees are emotionally invested in their work, leading to higher performance levels and a stronger commitment to organizational goals. The research idea in this study is to understand how organizational culture and leadership influence employee engagement, particularly through the mediating role of green orientation. This investigation is crucial as engaged employees are more likely to embrace and promote sustainability initiatives, aligning their behaviors with the organization's environmental goals (Saks, 2019). The research is based on XYZ Company, which is a leading manufacturer of weft knit fabrics in Sri Lanka with over 2,000 employees and a yearly turnover of USD 72 million, which is committed to delivering triple-bottom-line value through a comprehensive ESG (environmental, social, and governance) framework. The organization believes economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability are essential for sustainable stakeholder value creation.

The mediating effect of green orientation suggests that green orientation may act as a mediator between independent variables; leadership and organizational culture and the dependent variable employee engagement. In other words, leaders who prioritize environmentally sustainable practices may be more likely to create a culture of sustainability within their organizations, which may lead to greater employee engagement with sustainability initiatives. With growing social awareness over environmental degradation, several firms are emerging with a green orientation that involves a dual objective of achieving economic success and engaging in green business practices (Ramirez, 2013; Aykol & Leonidou, 2015). In the face of mounting environmental challenges, companies are increasingly under pressure to adopt sustainable practices. Existing research has extensively examined the direct influence of leadership and organizational culture on employee engagement, a critical factor linked to improved productivity, job satisfaction, and reduced turnover. For instance, a Gallup poll (2022) found that highly engaged teams experience a 21% increase in profitability. Despite this, there is a notable gap in understanding how green orientation—a blend of environmental attitudes and behaviors—mediates this relationship. Recent studies indicate that 90% of Fortune 500 companies have adopted sustainability initiatives, yet only 35% have fully integrated green practices into their corporate culture, leading to inconsistent outcomes in employee engagement and organizational performance (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

Furthermore, a survey by the Global Green Business Council (2023) found that while 78% of employees are more engaged in companies with strong

environmental policies, the link between leadership-driven sustainability efforts and actual employee engagement remains unclear. Most existing literature has primarily focused on the direct impact of leadership and organizational culture on employee engagement, often neglecting the potential mediating role of green orientation and how a company's commitment to sustainability might influence these dynamics. This gap is particularly significant in the context of multinational organizations, where the integration of green practices can be both a challenge and an opportunity for driving engagement. The present study aims to address this gap by examining how green orientation mediates the relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and employee engagement, to provide actionable insights for companies striving to enhance both sustainability and employee involvement. According to the Global Sustainability Study 2023, over 85% of consumers have shifted their purchasing behavior towards more sustainable products, pushing companies to prioritize green practices. Despite this shift, a recent survey by Deloitte (2022) found that only 35% of organizations fully integrate sustainability into their operations, highlighting a significant disconnect between consumer expectations and corporate practices. This gap underscores the need for a deeper understanding of how green orientation influences organizational outcomes, particularly employee engagement.

### **1.1 Research objectives**

Through the research objectives, this study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a deeper understanding of the role of green orientation within organizations emphasizing relationships between leadership, organizational culture, green orientation, and employee engagement.

#### *General Objective*

1. To identify the mediating effect of green orientation in a conceptual framework

#### *Specific Objectives*

1. To identify the impact of leadership on green orientation.
2. To identify the impact of organizational culture on green orientation
3. To identify the mediating effect of green orientation on the relationship between leadership and employee engagement.
4. To identify the mediating effect of green orientation on the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement.
5. To identify the impact of green orientation on employee engagement.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Businesses recognize the critical importance of ensuring the ongoing availability of natural resources for their survival. This realization has prompted a shift in

company initiatives towards more eco-conscious and financial risks. Embracing activities such as ecological preservation, resource conservation, and recycling, collectively known as "greening," businesses aim to contribute to a clean, moral, and safe environment for all. Collaborative efforts involving individuals, businesses, and governments worldwide are essential for achieving this goal (Choudhary, 2019).

Orientation has been described by researchers in the past as a fundamental mindset or underlying philosophy that affects how businesses carry out their internal and external operations (Adams et al., 2016; Hofstede, 1994). In other words, orientation refers to how businesses perceive and react to their surroundings. It refers to an organization's culture and desire to accomplish specific goals. By aligning the proper strategic orientation with the organizational culture, businesses can benefit from increased productivity, which can boost their performance and provide them with a competitive advantage (Belias et al., 2014). The researchers defined green orientation as a blend of green attitudes and behaviors. A person needs to have a high level of green mindset in addition to a high level of green behavior. Since attitudes influence behavior and behavior is predicted by attitudes, attitudes, and behavior are interconnected. To attain ecologically friendly aspirations, a person must change their basic attitudes and behaviors (Iddagoda et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2019)

To have a strong connection with attitudes and behaviors, the workplace environment must be productive and influential enough to encourage the attitudes because changing human behavior takes time (Hasan et al., 2022). Multiple studies have found that adopting a green orientation has a positive impact on an organization's ability to perform well (Zhou, 2016; Pushpakumara et al., 2019). Moreover, scholars have discovered that a strategic focus on green orientation has a positive impact on improving organizational performance (Kwon et al., 2009). According to their studies, strategic green orientation is a business organization's "long-term commitment to generating environmentally sound products and services through the execution of environmental goals and initiatives in the past, present, and future."

In general, organizational culture is commonly understood as the everyday practices and procedures that occur within an organization. Organizational culture encompasses shared values and behaviors within a company, fostering collaboration and innovation (Hofstede, 2001). A specific aspect, organizational green culture, involves environmentally conscious practices and is linked to organizational transformation (Rao & Holt, 2005). Managers' commitment influences the adoption of green culture (Klassen & Vachon, 2003; Wang, 2019). Green innovation, acting as a mediator, connects organizational green culture to improved green performance, reducing waste and pollution (Michaelis et al., 2018). A well-designed green culture enhances corporate image, reputation, and

engagement with environmentalism, creating new markets (Fergusson & Langford, 2006). Well-designed organizational green culture can actively promote green innovation, leading to reduced production waste, environmental pollution, and an overall strengthened corporate green image and reputation. This, in turn, can enhance a firm's green engagement, leveraging the growing popularity of environmentalism.

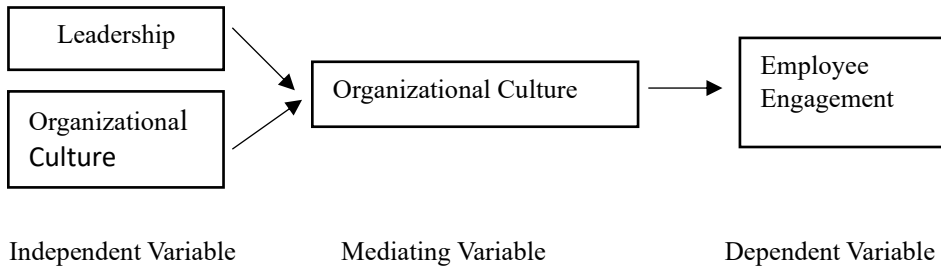
A leader is defined as a person with a clear vision who leads the organization to success through their abilities and dedication (Sougui et al., 2015). The qualities possessed by an individual make them a leader, regardless of their position, according to Iddagoda et al. (2021). Leadership is the process through which a leader inspires their followers to accomplish both the organizational goals and their ambitions. Agarwal (2020) suggests that leadership is a crucial element that motivates workers to provide their full effort to accomplish goals. The relationship between employee engagement and leadership has been recognized by several researchers (Hewitt, 2015; Papalexandris & Galanaki, 2009; Seijts & Crim, 2006; Xu & Cooper Thomas, 2011). Transformational leadership, in particular, has been associated with improved organizational performance and employee engagement.

Employee engagement is a crucial factor for organizational success as it directly impacts various aspects of the organization's performance and well-being. It involves fostering a work environment where employees are motivated, committed, and enthusiastic about their work. Engaged employees go beyond meeting basic job requirements and actively contribute their discretionary effort, time, and energy toward achieving organizational goals. According to Towers Perrin (2003), as stated by Iddagoda et al., (2017) employee engagement refers to the willingness and ability of employees to contribute to the success of the company. Engaged employees are aware of the business context and demonstrate a high level of dedication, passion, and commitment towards their work. Engaged employees are fully committed and motivated, leading to higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and retention (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Salanova et al., 2005). They are also more likely to contribute discretionary effort, drive innovation, and exhibit higher levels of productivity and performance (Albrecht et al., 2015; Christian et al., 2011). In addition to the positive impact on individual outcomes, employee engagement also influences organizational culture. Engaged employees foster a positive work environment, promoting teamwork, collaboration, and a shared sense of purpose. They actively participate in organizational activities and exhibit positive behaviors, contributing to a cohesive and supportive work environment.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework outlines the relationships between leadership, organizational culture, green orientation, and employee engagement, providing a theoretical basis for the study and guiding the research design and data analysis.



**Figure 1: The conceptual framework of the study**

*Source: Authors Constructed*

#### 3.2 Research design

The research design aimed at hypothesis testing, specifically exploring relationships between variables. The focus was on understanding how changes in one variable related to another without direct manipulation. The unit of analysis was individual, with data collected and analyzed at the individual level. The study setting was non-contrived, and conducted in a natural context for increased ecological validity. The time horizon was cross-sectional, capturing a snapshot of variables at a specific point in time.

**Table 1: Research Design of the Study**

Research Design	Description
1. The purpose of the study	Hypothesis testing
2. The extent of researcher interference with the study.	Minimum interference
3. Type of investigation	Correlational
4. Unit of analysis	Individual
5. Study setting	Non-contrived
6. The time horizon of the study	Cross-sectional

Source: Sekaran, (2003)

The suitable research design is descriptive because of researcher goes through identifying the factors which cause to affect employee engagement. By using

descriptive analysis research compares demographic factors with motivational factors and their indicators. It adopts a quantitative research approach. As cited in (Iddagoda et al., 2022), A cost-effective and time-efficient survey method was chosen to collect large numbers of responses from the targeted population (Leeuw, 2008).

### **3.2 Research Strategy**

The research strategy for the current study was a survey strategy allowing for the collection of a sizable amount of quantitative data from a diverse population. Surveys involve administering structured questionnaires to a representative sample to capture respondents' attitudes and opinions on specific constructs.

### **3.3 Sources of Data**

The researcher relied on a primary data source for collecting data. This approach allows for the collection of firsthand information, ensuring that the data gathered is relevant and specific to the research objectives.

### **3.4 Data Collection Method**

In this study, the researcher conducted the survey and used a questionnaire to collect the primary data. As a tool of data collection method, the researcher developed a questionnaire by referring to the literature adopted (Iddagoda et al., 2021). The developed questionnaire was in two parts. The first part consisted of demographic information, such as age, gender, designation, and department. The second part was the indicators used to measure the variables (Leadership, Organizational Culture, Employee Engagement, and Green Orientation) of the study. The researcher used a five-point Likert scale for the measurement, where 5 denotes strongly agree, 4 denotes agree, 3 denotes neither agree nor disagree, 2 denotes disagree and 1 denotes strongly disagree for all three variables and the mediating factor.

### **3.5 Data analysis and presentation**

In this study, the researcher utilized the soft wares such as Microsoft Excel and Smart PLS 4.0 for data analysis. General questionnaire information was presented using graphical representations like graphs, charts, and tables, effectively summarizing descriptive statistics, patterns, and trends in a clear and concise format.

### **3.6 Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis in this study was individual level. The researcher was able to collect data from each employee, treating each employee's response as an individual data source. By focusing on the individual level, the study aims to capture the unique perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors of employees within the

organization. This allows for a detailed examination of individual-level variables and their relationships.

### **3.7 Population**

The population of this research study comprises all managerial-level employees in the XYZ Company. Specifically, it includes the 234 managerial-level employees within the company.

### **3.8 Sample size and sample technique**

The researchers followed the guideline set by Roscoe (1975) as cited in Sekaran (2003), which suggests that the sample size should be larger than 30 and less than 500. In line with this recommendation, the study utilized a sample size of 100 individuals. The researchers employed a simple random sampling technique to select the participants for the study. By using simple random sampling, the researchers aimed to ensure that each managerial-level employee in the XYZ Company had an equal opportunity to be selected, increasing the representativeness of the sample.

## **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The results and analysis section provides a comprehensive overview of the findings obtained from the data collected and the statistical analysis conducted. This section presents the outcomes of the study and interprets the data to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses.

### **4.1 Demographic Factors Analysis**

The demographic factors analysis in this study focused on gathering information about respondents' age group, gender, educational qualifications, job level, and number of experienced years in the XYZ Company, Sri Lanka (Sekaran,2003). The researcher presents the information of the respondents which was collected from Section "A" of the questionnaire.

### **4.2 Descriptive statistics**

Descriptive statistics provide insights into the central tendency, dispersion, and skewness of the variables. The participants generally reported high scores for leadership, organizational culture, employee engagement, and green orientation. However, the negative skewness values suggest that there may be a few participants with lower scores. Results are shown in Table 2.



**Table 02: Descriptive statistics between independent and dependent variables**

Variable	Mini	Max	Mea	Std.	Skewness	
	mu	imu	n	Deviation		
	stic	stic	stic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Leadership (L)	1.00	5.00	4.290	.498	-3.128	.241
Organizational Culture (OC)	1.00	5.00	4.248	.507	-2.772	.241
Employee Engagement (EE)	1.00	5.00	4.171	.541	-2.243	.241
Green Orientation (GO)	1.00	5.00	4.258	.519	-2.678	.241

Source: Authors Constructed

### 4.3 Reliability and Validity Analysis

This study achieved its objectives by employing partial least squares modeling through SMART PLS 4.0 software. The analysis showed a direct link between leadership, culture, and employee engagement, with green orientation mediating these relationships.

**Table 3: Reliability and Validity Metrics for Constructs**

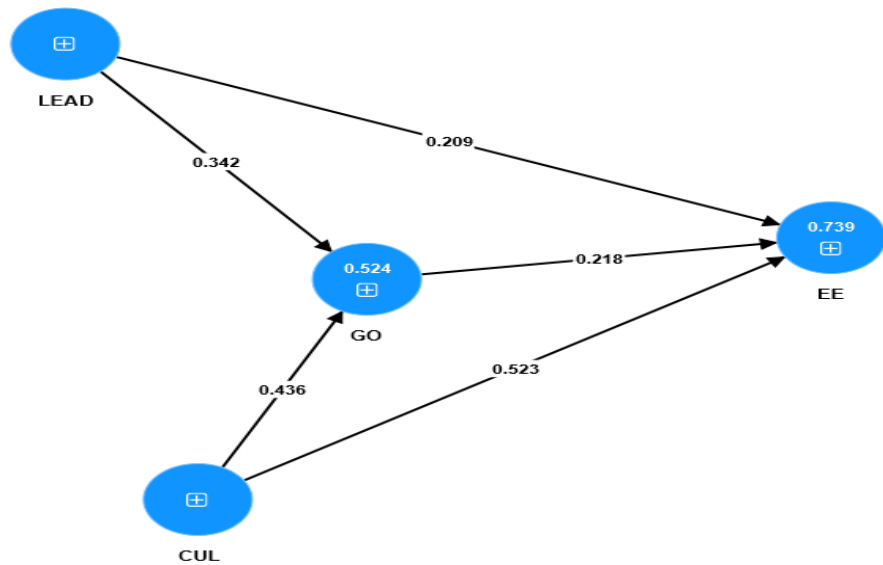
	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
CUL	0.838	0.846	0.881	0.553
EE	0.882	0.886	0.905	0.517
GO	0.876	0.879	0.901	0.503
LEAD	0.900	0.903	0.917	0.527

Source: Authors Constructed

**Table 4: Discriminant Validity Analysis of Constructs**

	CUL	EE	GO
EE	0.946		
GO	0.789	0.799	
LEAD	0.832	0.816	0.731

Source: Authors Constructed



**Figure 2: Structural Model**

*Source: SMART PLS Output*

#### 4.4 Structural Modal

The structural model analysis in figure 2 demonstrates significant relationships among the key constructs. Organizational Culture (CUL) exhibits a strong positive impact on both Employee Engagement (EE) and Green Orientation (GO), with path coefficients of 0.523 and 0.436, respectively, indicating that a supportive organizational culture is crucial for fostering employee involvement and promoting environmentally conscious behavior. Leadership (LEAD) also shows significant positive effects, influencing both Employee Engagement (EE) with a path coefficient of 0.209 and Green Orientation (GO) with a coefficient of 0.342. These findings underscore the importance of effective leadership in shaping employee attitudes and driving sustainability initiatives within the organization. Additionally, while Green Orientation (GO) positively impacts Employee Engagement (EE), this effect is comparatively weaker (path coefficient of 0.218), suggesting that while sustainability practices contribute to employee engagement, they are less influential than the broader organizational culture and leadership practices.

**Table 5: Direct Effects in the Structural Model Analysis**

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
CUL -> EE	0.523	0.515	0.102	5.129	0.000
CUL -> GO	0.436	0.427	0.114	3.809	0.000
GO -> EE	0.218	0.223	0.100	2.170	0.030
LEAD -> EE	0.209	0.208	0.091	2.281	0.023
LEAD -> GO	0.342	0.329	0.121	2.817	0.005

Source: SMART PLS Output

The mediation analysis reveals that Green Orientation may serve as a mediator in the relationships between Leadership and Employee Engagement and Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement. Specifically, the indirect effect of Leadership on Employee Engagement through Green Orientation is 0.075 ( $p = 0.093$ ), and for Organizational Culture, the indirect impact is 0.095 ( $p = 0.080$ ). Although both effects are positive, they do not reach statistical significance at the 0.05 level, suggesting that while Green Orientation might mediate these relationships, the evidence is not strong enough to confirm a definitive mediation effect.

**Table 6: Indirect Effects in the Structural Model Analysis**

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
LEAD -> GO -> EE	0.075	0.074	0.044	1.679	0.093
CUL -> GO -> EE	0.095	0.096	0.054	1.753	0.080

Source: SMART PLS Output

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the mediating effect of green orientation on the relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and employee engagement within XYZ Company, a fabric manufacturer in Sri Lanka dedicated to environmental sustainability. The research addresses a significant gap in the literature by examining how green orientation influences the well-established relationships between leadership, organizational culture, and employee engagement.

The core research problem focused on understanding the mediating role of green orientation within this dynamic. While the positive effects of leadership and organizational culture on employee engagement are well-documented, the specific impact of green orientation remains underexplored. The objectives were to assess this mediating role, analyze the interrelationships among leadership, organizational culture, green orientation, and employee engagement, and

contribute new insights to the existing literature on sustainability in organizational settings.

The study makes significant theoretical contributions by integrating green orientation into leadership and organizational culture theories. It underscores the importance of sustainability in enhancing employee engagement and highlights how green practices can shape organizational culture. The practical implications are equally important: organizations seeking to boost employee engagement should prioritize environmentally responsible leadership, establish clear sustainability goals, and embed green values into their organizational culture. These actions can foster a more engaged, productive, and environmentally conscious workforce.

The mediation analysis revealed that green orientation significantly mediates the relationship between both leadership and employee engagement and organizational culture and employee engagement. This suggests that promoting green orientation within an organization can amplify the positive effects of leadership and culture on employee engagement, leading to higher employee satisfaction and productivity.

This study contributes to the broader literature by illuminating the mediating role of green orientation in organizational dynamics. It expands our understanding of sustainability's role in fostering employee engagement and emphasizes the need for integrating environmental responsibility into leadership practices and organizational culture.

While the study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its specific organizational context and cross-sectional design, which may limit the generalizability and causal interpretation of the findings. Social desirability bias may also have influenced responses. Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs, exploring different organizational contexts, and using mixed-method approaches. Additionally, investigating the influence of external factors, such as regulatory pressures, on green orientation and employee engagement could provide further valuable insights.

The broader implications of this research stress the necessity for organizations across various industries to recognize the value of sustainability and environmental responsibility. By aligning leadership, culture, and practices with sustainability principles, organizations can not only enhance employee engagement but also contribute to a more sustainable and socially responsible world.

In summary, this study significantly contributes to understanding the mediating role of green orientation in the relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and employee engagement. It highlights a path toward a greener and more engaged organizational future, emphasizing the critical role of sustainability in shaping positive employee outcomes.

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