

Transformational Leadership, Organizational Culture, and Employees' Commitment: Mediation Effects Chain in the Textile Industry

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ABSTRACT

Issues related to human resource management (HRM) and firm values, such as transformational leadership (TL), organizational culture (OC), motivation, job satisfaction (JS), and employee commitment, have been extensively studied within the business context to understand their impact on firms' efficiency. However, many questions remain regarding the nature of the relationships between these different constructs. This study examines employees' perceptions within the specific context of textile industry firms in Northern Portugal. This industry is particularly crucial to Portuguese economic performance, evidenced by indicators such as employment levels, exports, sales volume, and production. The main objectives of this study are (1) to analyze the perception of employees of northern Portuguese textile firms regarding the influence of TL, OC, motivation, and JS on employees' commitment and (2) to verify the possible mediating effects of JS and motivation in the relationships between TL and commitment, and between OC and commitment. This study was developed using a sample of 235 employees from seven firms in the Portuguese textile sector. A quantitative data analysis methodology was used from a structural equation model, using the IBM Amos software (version 26.0). Based on an innovative conceptual model, ten hypotheses were formulated and tested, drawing upon a prior literature review. It is shown that TL is a direct determinant of OC, motivation, JS, and employees' commitment. TL is also linked indirectly with employees' commitment through the mediating effects of OC, motivation, and/or JS. Additionally, it was concluded a direct and positive relationship between OC and motivation, and between motivation and commitment. On the contrary, direct relationships between OC and JS, and between JS and commitment have not been confirmed. It was also possible to verify a relationship between OC and employees' commitment, both directly and indirectly, through the mediating effect of motivation. JS was not shown to mediate this relationship. Our study differs and is innovative in several theoretical and managerial features, such as the conceptual model defined, the geographic context, and the industry context covered. Our results are relevant to HRM in the textile industry, highlighting the critical importance for managers to consider their leadership style carefully. Adopting a TL style, coupled with fostering a supportive OC, is essential.

This approach can significantly enhance employees' engagement and contribute to the overall success of the firms.

KEYWORDS

Transformational leadership; Organizational culture; Job satisfaction; Motivation; Employees' commitment

1. Introduction

To Qalati et al. (2022), the firm's potential effectiveness is derived from the employees when leadership plays its role efficiently and promotes voluntary work among employees. TL is put into practice when a leader can understand the employees' desires. It allows them to feel inspired, leading to the creation of a working system that will last across time in the firm, such as OC (Rahman & Hadi, 2019). OC contributes to a better understanding of the firm's strategic mission and, in turn, a better interpretation of the short-term objectives to be achieved (Farrell & Oczkowski, 2002). According to Marinak and Gambrell (2008), motivation is a psychological process that allows employees to adopt a behavior that guides them toward the firm's objectives. Additionally, it is essential to a firm that the employees feel satisfied in their workplace, allowing them to influence behavior, attitudes and individual performance (Qing et al., 2020). We propose that the employees' commitment is demonstrated by their connection to the firm, identifying themselves with its purpose (Utami, 2021).

This study emphasizes the importance of HRM in Portugal, especially in the areas of leadership and OC, applied to the textile industry, which requires increased focus from managers. We offer valuable guidance for top managers, assisting them in creating better workplaces for employees. Consequently, this study aims to enhance the quality of HRM and leadership in Portugal or countries with similar economic models. To better understand how to maintain or even increase the standards of quality and competitiveness of the firms, it is therefore important to understand what kind of HRM practices are implemented and how they influence the employees' commitment.

Based on our literature review, it is clear that TL, OC, motivation, JS, and employees' commitment are correlated and, therefore, in some way interconnected. However, prior research does not include any study that simultaneously encompasses the treatment of all of these constructs mentioned, nor any direct or indirect relationships that may arise (through mediation) from them. So, there is a lack of studies that examined these research questions, in a Portuguese or a similar context. We thus have a blind spot that can be explored to allow a better understanding of the HRM at this level, in the specific Portuguese textile industry context. This is the first study to analyze the indirect relationships between TL and employees' commitment, and between OC and employees' commitment, through the mediating effects of motivation and/or JS. To address the existing gaps, the main purpose of this study is to develop a new hypothetical and conceptual model, identifying a set of determinants of the employees' commitment, applied to the textile industry context.

We focus on these concepts according a set of research issues, including (1) the mediating effects of OC, motivation, and JS in the relationship between TL and employees' commitment, (2) the mediating effects of motivation and JS in the relationship between OC and employees' commitment, (3) the effect of TL on OC, and (4) the effect of both motivation and JS on employees' commitment.

The global textile industry is a manufacturing sector that's currently worth nearly three trillion US dollars and includes the production, refinement, and sale of both synthetic and natural fibers used in thousands of industries. It's estimated anywhere between 20 million and 60 million people are employed in the textile industry worldwide (Li, 2023). Employment in the garment industry is particularly important in developing economies such as India, Pakistan, and Vietnam. The sector accounts for approximately two percent of global gross domestic product (GDP). It accounts for an even greater portion of GDP for the world's leading producers and exporters of textiles and garments.

The textile industry in China is the largest in the world in overall production, exports and retail, with an output of 58 million tons a year in the fiber categories alone, accounting for more than 50 percent of the world's total. Textile and garment industries export US\$316 billion (Statista, 2024). China is the world's largest exporter of textiles, with annual export revenues of US\$150 billion at last count and an annual share of GDP at 7.1 percent. Its success is based on a solid foundation and ongoing innovation, developing new technologies and green strategies, understanding global and local industry trends, extensive R&D investment, consumer-oriented personalization, and flexible production (Statista, 2022).

Therefore, this study was developed in Portugal, where the general business sector consists essentially of SMEs (INE, 2024), with a pronounced family tradition. The textile industry has significant weight in the Portuguese industrial structure, highlighting the important role it plays in terms of employment. According to the Portuguese Textile and Clothes Association (ATP, 2021), the textile industry has a crucial role in the Portuguese economy in several indicators, such as total exports, employment in the manufacturing industry, sales volume in the manufacturing industry, and production. It employs 122,075 people in a total of 6,372 firms, according to the statistical information of the Bank of Portugal (BoP, 2021). It encompasses several activities, from the production and transformation of fibers to the commercialization of the final product. It is divided into two sectors: the textile manufacturing sector and the clothing industry, both of which have an important role in the Portuguese economy and for families. We found that many Portuguese textile firms come from family groups strengthening their brands in the markets in recent decades.

The study includes the participation of seven firms in the clothing industry located in the northern region of Portugal. Several highly renowned international groups in the field of textiles use these firms to produce their collections. Throughout the Portuguese territory there are thousands of similar organizations, with excellent responsiveness and reliability. However, the firms of the textile industry in Portugal are mainly concentrated in the North region, therefore the representativeness of the study is assured. This is an industry in which quality is widely recognized this being one of the reasons for its strong international demand. We highlight the employees as a crucial element of these firms, which rely heavily on human resources to enable success. It is not possible that firms in this industry can achieve their goals without paying attention to their employees, ensuring they are properly committed to the firm.

The article is divided into seven sections. The section following this introduction highlights the theoretical background and the third section develops the hypotheses to test. The fourth section introduces the data collection methodology, the sample characterization, and the validation process of the measurement. The fifth section provides the results obtained. The sixth section presents the discussion, limitations, and suggestions for future research. Finally, the seventh section has the conclusions.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Transformational leadership

According to Bass et al. (1987), TL can be defined as a charismatic mechanism in which the manager treats the subordinate in a personalized way and stimulates him intellectually to be able to produce the best in individual terms in pursuit of a team objective. It is expected that the TL implemented from a top management level tends to be reflected through the lower levels.

A transformational leader enhances the meaning of the tasks, demonstrates confidence in employees' abilities, and creates opportunities to affect their performance (Avolio et al., 2004). Sarros et al. (2008) conclude that TL can promote a climate of innovation within an organization, provided through a mediation of a competitive and performance-oriented OC.

Transformational leaders are those who positively project future scenarios for the organization, aiming to improve the self-confidence of employees through a delegation process, helping them to reach their potential. They assist employees in identifying their collaborative needs (Peterson et al.,

2009). Resick et al. (2009) argue that a transformational leader who has the necessary characteristics to influence his followers truly is seen as crucial to organizational success, as he can sufficiently empower employees and convey to them an appropriate notion of their capacities, as well as the capabilities of the organization itself.

Top et al. (2015) argue that a TL style presupposes a change in the employees' perception, as well as the organization itself, allowing the definition and achievement of new objectives.

According to Masa'deh et al. (2016), using the transformational style can be seen as a process of personal development, which allows for achieving results and objectives with repercussions on organizational progress. TL is related to emotions, values, and ethical standards that focus on long-term goals, which allow the transformational leader to invest in the mutual growth of the relationship between leader and follower and afford a greater capacity to take risks and provide new dynamics to the firm (Streimikiene et al., 2021).

Prior research suggests that TL is not only linked with employees' attitudes but is also vital for the organizational development (Afsouran et al., 2022).

2.2 Organizational culture

Bass and Avolio (1985) observe that OC provides a tool that allows measuring the internal culture of a firm and is a consequence of the implementation of leadership practices. Osibanjo and Adeniji (2013) define OC can be defined as a conceptualization of beliefs and values, shared within the organization that, shape the employee's behavioral patterns.

According to Ravasi and Schultz (2006), OC is fundamental to understanding the evolution of organizational identities when facing changes in the organizational climate. Firms that intend to increase their performance must pay attention to the current OC, since it is an essential indicator able to guide the firm toward success (Naranjo-Valencia et al., 2016).

Ikhsan et al. (2017) argue that OC develops itself due to an ascending hierarchical approach whereby it takes root more easily amongst the employees and, advances from there to the top of the organization. Schneider et al. (2017) refer to OC and climate as a representative metaphor for the complex social systems that are organizations.

According to Silva et al. (2018), OC works as a behavioral guide for the organization's members, focusing on aspects such as the personal appreciation of the individuals and their well-being, autonomy, and flexibility.

OC can also be defined as a partnership between people who are consciously linked to achieve certain organizational goals (Kalfa, 2018). Streimikiene et al. (2021) describe OC as a dynamic phenomenon recognized by its members, expressing itself through symbols, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, and philosophy, contributing to a system of fundamental values for the organization. Previous studies confirmed the importance of OC in achieving the goals of an organization and the possibility of providing a competitive advantage (Klasmeier & Rowold, 2020; Mohammed & Al-Abrow, 2022).

2.3 Motivation

According to Pancasila et al. (2020), motivation is a process related to the need for personal satisfaction that, when framed with the personal needs of each employee, develops into a greater desire in the individual to give his/her maximum to help in the organizational objectives' achievement.

To Sohail et al. (2014), motivation encourages employees to act in a way that is oriented toward the specific tasks that are their responsibility, contributing to increased commitment as they feel supported and relevant. Greater motivation boosts the quality of the work employees perform (Laras et al., 2021).

The employees' motivation is vital for the organization to achieve its objectives, and at its root are the manager's values, behaviors, and leadership style. The existence of a positive synergy between manager and employee is important as it contributes to motivational levels that are clearly higher (Zareen et al., 2015).

2.4 Job satisfaction

JS refers to the perception that an employee has of feeling happy or unhappy, according to their performance, expectations, desires, and thoughts (Nurjanah et al., 2020). This encompasses affective and cognitive satisfaction. The affective component includes the level of feeling, positive or negative, regarding a job, while the cognitive component includes the employee's thoughts and beliefs regarding the role he/she plays in the organization (Schleicher et al., 2004). It is a complex variable that encompasses several aspects that relate to the employee's own mentality (Ahmad, 2018).

JS reflects the employee's positive and negative attitudes toward the organization, influencing the possibility of resignation or job turnover, complaints about the work itself, or other personal issues (Kalfa, 2018). It can be achieved through intrinsic motivation factors such as recognition, responsibility, and autonomy (Garg et al., 2018).

2.5 Commitment

Commitment is defined by the connection between employees and their firm, translating into the voluntary capacity that employees have to make sacrifices for their organization (Kalfa, 2018). For Robbins (1998), organizational commitment is a state in which an employee identifies her/himself with a specific organization, its goals, and its desires and wishes to maintain that identity. This is a strong connection link between employees and their organization (Yukongdi & Shrestha, 2020).

According to Nurjanah et al. (2020), commitment is the relationship established between an employee and an organization along with its objectives. It is manifested in an attitude of loyalty toward the organization. When the employee does not feel the loyalty that comes from commitment, the risk of triggering internal conflicts increases (Imran et al., 2017).

3. Hypotheses to test

3.1 Transformational leadership and organizational culture

Sarros et al. (2008) show that a TL style can build an internal culture in the organization. According to Lasrado and Kassem (2020), TL is a necessary tool for the OC to achieve a level of excellence.

To Streimikiene et al. (2021), a transformational leader can create an OC more effectively, since his behavior is based on the transformation of expectations and the development of a collaborative group. Lasrado and Kassem (2020) state that TL has been suggested as an influence on OC in a number of settings, such as involvement, consistency and adaptability. Pradhan et al. (2017) stated that leadership culture influences the OC. For these reasons, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Transformational leadership positively influences organizational culture.

3.2 Organizational culture and motivation

Anitha (2014) argues that an organization that can promote a harmonious cultural environment cultivates greater motivation in the employee.

According to Anra and Yamin (2017), the more appropriate the OC, the greater the motivation felt by employees, and we can affirm that OC directly impacts motivation.

Sapta et al. (2021) state that OC has a positive impact on employee motivation. For several authors, a group sharing the same goals, beliefs, and values that can be measured through the OC has a positive impact on motivation (Rubel et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Organizational culture positively influences motivation.

3.3 Transformational leadership and motivation

Zareen et al. (2015) state that a more efficient leadership style creates a higher level of motivation in employees, who in turn develop a feeling of personal growth, making them more committed and involved with the firm and facilitating better performance.

According to Den Hartog and Belschak (2012), the motivation of the team is affected by the style

that the leader adopts, revealing himself a posteriori as capable of creating a positive impact on the employee-organization relationship in terms of commitment. Transformational leaders are concerned with the personal development and continuous training of their employees, resulting in greater motivation among them (Omar & Hussin, 2013).

For Endriulaitienė and Morkevičiūtė (2020), the more motivated a work group is, the greater the possibility of an increase in the intensity of task performance. That motivation is influenced by a TL style. Additionally, Chen and Cuervo (2022) state that this leadership style helps employees prepare to respond to higher expectations and accept more difficult challenges, so transformational leaders influence employees' self-motivation. Chi et al. (2023) and Nurjanah et al. (2020) also demonstrate that transformational leaders might serve as antecedents to employees' motivation. We thus propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Transformational leadership positively influences motivation.

3.4 Organizational culture and job satisfaction

The relationship between OC and JS is established when the work group is valued according to cohesion, empowerment, and participation in decision-making, creating a cultural environment of greater JS (Gregory et al., 2009). According to Arifin (2014), JS is influenced by the organization's culture and employees' motivation.

OC tends to play an important role in employee satisfaction and commitment. Culture focuses on aspects such as personal appreciation of the individual, their well-being, autonomy, and flexibility, which lead to greater JS and collaborative commitment (Silva et al., 2018). Several studies have shown that more positive cultures that promote autonomy, participation in decision-making, continuous learning, and supportive connections with colleagues and top management increase employee satisfaction and reduce the likelihood that a team member will leave the firm (Koo et al., 2020). According to Nebojša et al. (2020), the relationship between OC and JS is significant. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Organizational culture positively influences job satisfaction.

3.5 Motivation and job satisfaction

According to Sohail et al. (2014) and Dorta-Afonso et al. (2021), motivation generates satisfaction at work, so the more motivated the employee is, the more satisfied he/she will feel. Motivation works as a trigger for increased JS (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020). Moll-Khosrawi et al. (2021) report a positive correlation between the intrinsic part of motivation and JS.

For Looor-Zambrano et al. (2022), internal motivation is the tendency of employees to perform their jobs better to achieve inner satisfaction, as a motivated employee is considered a key factor for the success of any firm. Several studies contend that motivation is a primary determinant of employees' JS (Norbu & Wetprasit, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). According to these approaches, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: Motivation positively influences job satisfaction.

3.6 Transformational leadership and job satisfaction

According to Omar and Hussin (2013), an organization must have a transformational leader capable of fostering an effective increase in teamwork capacity, to increase the JS and carry out the target tasks. Top et al. (2015) found a positive link between TL and employee's JS, arguing that the strength of this link contributes to building the employee's commitment to the organization.

The TL style has a strong influence on JS and employee commitment to the organization (Eliyana et al., 2019). Luu and Phan (2020) showed that TL has a positive effect on employee's satisfaction at work, as well as on their commitment. Also, TL influences employees' job satisfaction to inspire trust in organization employees (Liu & Wong, 2023). Based on the literature, we propose the following hypothesis:

H6: Transformational leadership positively influences job satisfaction.

3.7 Organizational culture and commitment

According to Kontoghiorghes (2016), the cultural model imposed on the organization will affect the motivation and commitment of employees. For Olafsen et al. (2020), OC is vital for changes in commitment. Marchalina et al. (2021) argue that the OC causes the need for greater commitment in the employee.

There are elements of the OC that make the employee more committed and that increase the employee's intention to stay in the organization (Sarpong et al., 2021). Pham (2022) showed that OC has a strong impact on employees' attitudes, behaviors, and commitment. Accordingly, we propose the verification of the following hypothesis:

H7: Organizational culture positively influences employees' commitment.

3.8 Transformational leadership and commitment

Avolio et al. (2004) state that a TL style provides high levels of commitment and collaborative identification with the firm. Transformational leaders expect to influence their followers truly. Hence, a leader capable of articulating a clear vision of what their own beliefs are tends to encourage others and consequently increase their commitment to the firm's goals (Resick et al., 2009).

Top et al. (2015) also state that a TL style allows leaders to trigger more robust emotional connections with their followers, encouraging commitment. Caniels et al. (2018) conclude that a TL style directly influences the improvement of the individual mentality of employees, which influences their commitment to work.

Employees' commitment and leadership styles have been linked in numerous studies, such as Nanjundeswaraswamy (2023) and Oyewobi (2022). According to Nurjanah et al. (2020), the level of commitment employees obtain from the organization is influenced by a TL style. In this way, we propose the following hypothesis:

H8: Transformational leadership positively influences employees' commitment.

3.9 Job satisfaction and commitment

JS is a direct predictor of commitment in the employee-firm relationship (Top et al., 2015). Kalfa (2018) states that JS is one of the factors that most contribute to the employees feeling committed to the firm.

According to Silva et al. (2018), JS can have a significant impact on commitment to the firm, given that both variables enhance the employee's affective ties with the firm. This makes it possible to state that OC has a positive effect on commitment when mediated by JS.

The level of commitment that employees reach in the firm is influenced by their perception of JS, so the higher the levels of JS, the greater the employees' commitment (Nurjanah et al., 2020; Park & Doo, 2020). Based on this theoretical approach, we propose the following hypothesis:

H9: Job satisfaction positively influences employees' commitment.

3.10 Motivation and commitment

Anitha (2014) reveals that motivation promotes a reinforcement of the individual's organizational commitment itself. An employee who understands that her/his leader adopts a TL style develops greater motivation, becomes more committed, and allows him/her to create a stronger connection with the firm (Azis et al., 2019). When there is greater motivation in the workgroup, there is also greater satisfaction, allowing the employee to reach higher levels of commitment to the firm (Marta et al., 2021). Several authors report positive and significant relationships between motivation and employees' commitment (Gheitani et al., 2019; Looor-Zambrano et al., 2022). We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

H10: Motivation positively influences employees' commitment.

Based on the literature review reported above, the hypotheses to be tested were defined. In this way, the following conceptual model was developed (Figure 1), to investigate how TL and OC affect the employee's commitment directly or through the mediating effects of motivation and/or JS.

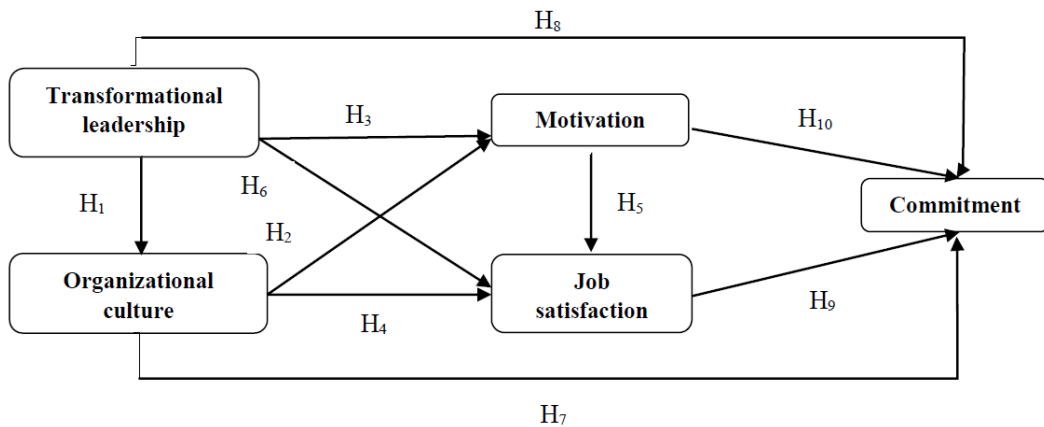


Figure 1 Conceptual model

4. Research method

In this section, we highlight the data collection methodology, the population and sample characterization, the scales used to measure the constructs, and the process of checking the reliability of the variables.

4.1 Population, sample, and data collection

The study population comprises employees of seven firms in the clothing industry in Penafiel (North of Portugal).

After developing the questionnaire as a tool for data collection, a pre-test was carried out to verify the degree of perceptibility of the formulated questions. The 14 pre-test respondents gave us positive feedback, so there was no need to reformulate any question. Firms were personally contacted and informed of the study's objectives. We used a stratified data sampling process by firms' dimensions and employees' gender in the textile industry in the North of Portugal, following the official data (BoP, 2021), which increased the sample representativeness.

A total sample of 235 responses was obtained, using two collecting methods: face-to-face in real-time and later collection of questionnaires for cases in which employees were not available to complete them personally.

Subsequently, the data were coded and converted into a file in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0, followed by a validation of the file in which the consistency of the information was tested. IBM Amos software, version 26.0, was used to estimate a structural equations model. Tables 1 and 2 show the sample characterization and the respondents' characteristics, respectively.

Table 1 Sample characterization of the firms ($n = 7$)

	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
11 – 20 years	1	14.3
+ 20 years	6	85.7
Number of employees		
1 – 49	1	14.3
50 – 249	4	57.1
+ 250 employees	2	28.6

Table 2 Sample characterization of the respondents ($n = 235$)

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	217	92.3
Male	18	7.7
Age		
18 - 30 years	26	11.1
31 - 40 years	59	25.1
41 - 50 years	79	33.6
51 years or more	71	30.2
Education level		
1st to 4th school year	5	2.1
5th to 6th school year	53	22.6
7th to 9th school year	111	47.2
Secondary education	62	26.4
Higher education	4	1.7
Income		
€600 – €800	197	83.8
€801 – €1,000	34	14.5
€1,001 or more	4	1.7

4.2 Measures

The scales used to measure the variables were adapted from the literature. For all the constructs, a Likert scale from 1 to 7 was used. Regarding TL, OC, commitment, and motivation, the Likert scale responses ranged from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree". For JS, the scale ranged from 1 = "totally dissatisfied" to 7 = "totally satisfied".

To measure OC, 16 items from the scale used by Cameron and Quinn (1999) were adapted. TL was measured by 22 items from Rubin et al.'s (2005) scale. To measure motivation, 12 items were adapted from the scale of Gagné et al. (2010). Commitment was measured using a 6-item scale from Meyer and Allen (1991), and JS was measured using a 5-item scale from Lund (2003).

4.3 Construct reliability and validity

Exploratory factor analysis allowed us to verify the validity and reliability of the measurement scales used for all the constructs. It was necessary to remove certain items from the scales due to their low factorial weight (less than 0.5), which would reduce the reliability of the construct under analysis. After this refinement process, it was found that OC and commitment kept all their items, thus keeping the original scales. Also, 19 items referring to TL scale, 11 items from the motivation scale, and 4 items from the JS scale were validated. All the variables were conceived as first-order constructs. The factor loadings represent the degree to which each item explains the latent variable. That is, the higher this value, the greater the item's ability to explain the variable.

After the estimation of the factorial weights Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated as a way to ensure the reliability and validity of the variables (table 3).

Table 3 Reliability and validity of the constructs

Variable	Items	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Organizational culture	16	0.959	0.959	0.598
Commitment	6	0.952	0.951	0.764
Motivation	11	0.963	0.963	0.702
Transformational leadership	19	0.981	0.981	0.733
Job satisfaction	4	0.855	0.840	0.570

We found a very good consistency of the measurement scales of OC, commitment, motivation, and TL, with a Cronbach's Alpha higher than 0.9. Additionally, we found good consistency in the measurement of JS, showing a Cronbach's Alpha higher than 0.8 (Hair et al., 2010). The scales used also provided satisfactory levels of composite reliability and average variance extracted per factor, according to the assumptions of Fornell and Larcker (1981). Composite reliability was between 0.84 and 0.981, while the average variance extracted was between 0.57 and 0.764. This shows internal consistency amongst the various indicators of each variable, verifying that they are effectively measuring the same construct and explaining their respective latent variables.

5. Results

To test the reliability of the constructs, a structural equation model was estimated using the maximum likelihood method. To estimate the model, IBM AMOS v.26.0 software was used, and the output is shown in Figure 2.

We conclude that the structural model has a good adjustment to the variance and covariance structure of the items analyzed ($\chi^2 = 2884.905$; $\chi^2/df = 2.020$; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.908; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.901; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.068; IC at 90%: [0.064-0.72]). Table 4 presents the estimated coefficients of the structural equation model.

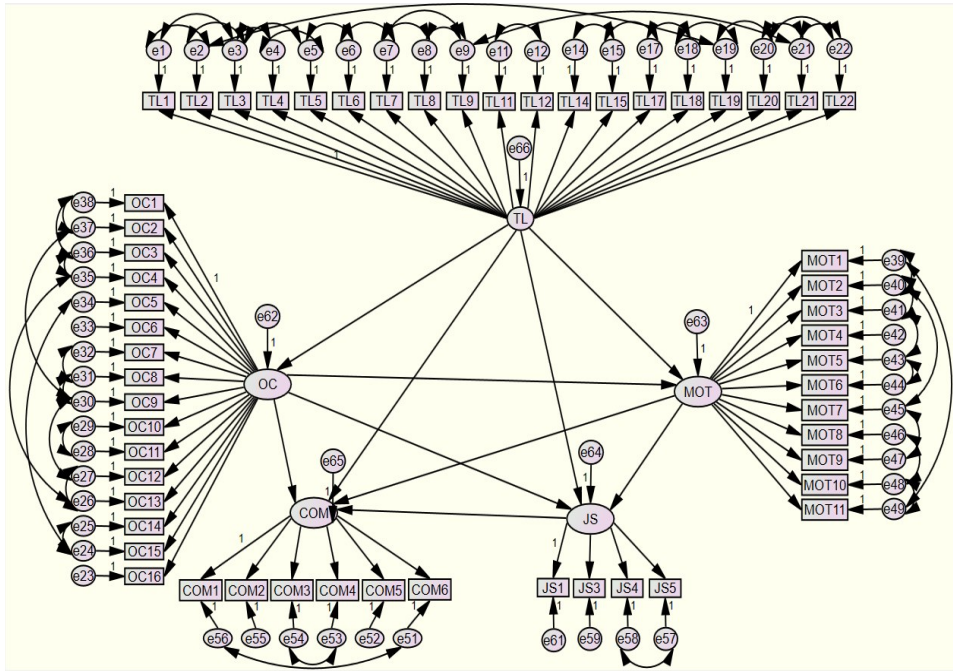


Figure 2 Measurement model

Table 4 Coefficient estimates of the structural model (direct effects)

Constructs	Organizational culture	Motivation	Job satisfaction	Commitment
Transformational leadership	0.788*** (0.784;0.69)	0.484*** (0.514;0.83)	0.653*** (0.432;0.061)	-0.157 (-0.172; 0.131)
Organizational culture	-	0.376*** (0.402;0.82)	0.073 (0.049;0.048)	0.278*** (0.305;0.068)
Motivation	-	-	0.270*** (0.168;0.046)	0.768*** (0.802;0.083)
Job satisfaction	-	-	-	0.061 (0.101;0.256)

Note(s): ***p < 0.001 In parentheses: (non-standardized coefficient; standard error)

According to the estimated coefficients, the results obtained for each of the relationships tested are presented below:

- H1 states that TL has a positive effect on OC. This effect is confirmed ($\beta=0.788$; $p<0.001$), supporting H1;
- OC also has a positive effect on motivation ($\beta=0.376$; $p<0.001$), thus, H2 is confirmed;
- H3 posits that TL has a positive effect on motivation ($\beta=0.484$; $p<0.001$); thus, this hypothesis is confirmed;
- The direct relationship between OC and JS is not statistically significant ($\beta=0.073$; $p>0.05$), and H4 is not confirmed;
- Motivation positively influences JS ($\beta=0.270$; $p<0.001$); thus, H5 is confirmed;
- TL positively influences JS ($\beta=0.653$; $p<0.001$), so H6 is confirmed;
- The same conclusion can be drawn from the relationship between OC and commitment ($\beta=0.278$; $p<0.001$), confirming H7;
- The direct relationships between TL and commitment ($\beta=-0.157$; $p>0.05$) and between JS and commitment ($\beta=0.061$; $p>0.05$) are not statistically significant, and therefore H8 and H9 are not confirmed;
- Finally, the direct relationship between motivation and commitment is confirmed ($\beta=0.768$; $p<0.001$), and thus H10 is confirmed.

In addition to the estimation of direct effects, through which it was not possible to confirm the relationships between OC and JS (H4), between TL and commitment (H8), and between JS and commitment (H9), we can confirm that some of these relationships may occur, indirectly. In this case, the relationship between OC and JS is indirectly verified through the mediating effect of motivation. TL will also need the mediating effect of motivation and/or OC to effect commitment indirectly. About the relationship between JS and commitment, no mediating effect was estimated or found.

As a complement to the direct effects reported in Table 4, indirect relationships between the constructs were also estimated. Table 5 reports the estimated coefficients of the indirect effects. TL has an indirect positive impact on motivation ($\beta=0.297$; $p<0.001$), JS ($\beta=0.269$; $p<0.001$), and commitment ($\beta=0.884$; $p<0.001$). OC has an indirect positive impact on JS ($\beta=0.102$; $p<0.001$) and commitment ($\beta=0.304$; $p<0.001$). Finally, no indirect effect between motivation and commitment was confirmed ($\beta=0.016$; $p>0.05$).

Table 5 Coefficient estimates of the structural model (indirect effects)

	Motivation	Job satisfaction	Commitment
Transformational leadership	0.297*** (0.315)	0.269*** (0.187)	0.884*** (0.966)
Organizational culture		0.102*** (0.068)	0.304*** (0.334)
Motivation			0.016 (0.017)

Note(s): *** $p < 0.001$ In parentheses: (non-standardized coefficient)

Table 6 summarizes the results of the indirect paths tested.

Table 6 Results of the indirect paths tested

Path	Result
Transformational leadership → Organizational culture → Commitment	Confirmed
Transformational leadership → Job satisfaction → Commitment	Not Confirmed
Transformational leadership → Motivation → Commitment	Confirmed
Transformational leadership → Organizational culture → Motivation	Confirmed
Transformational leadership → Organizational culture → Job satisfaction	Not Confirmed

Table 6 Results of the indirect paths tested (Continued)

Path	Result
Transformational leadership → Motivation → Job satisfaction	Confirmed
Organizational culture → Motivation → Commitment	Confirmed
Organizational culture → Job satisfaction → Commitment	Not Confirmed
Organizational culture → Motivation → Job satisfaction	Confirmed
Motivation → Job satisfaction → Commitment	Not Confirmed

6. Discussion

The great economic dynamism and instability of the last years has been spreading to the labor markets worldwide, affecting all the firms and, consequently, their employees' lives. These changes have increased the competition level between firms, highlighting the decisiveness of a set of strategic and human resource management elements of the firms. This issue becomes even more important in the context of a weak economy such as that of Portugal. We found that many Portuguese firms' employees have lost several benefits during the last years, such as loss of purchasing power and working conditions, among others. Firms must better understand their employees' perceptions of key indicators that might influence their work productivity and their contribution to the firm's performance. An effective leadership approach and a clear identification of the employees with the OC are fundamental to having highly motivated, satisfied, and committed employees.

In this study, we address the strategic and human resources management in Portuguese firms of the textile industry, particularly in the leadership and OC issues, and identify key elements that need greater attention from managers, in line with Lasrado and Kassem (2020). We believe that our findings could provide a clearer orientation for top managers of the Portuguese textile industry, helping to create better places for employees to work in.

This study provides several theoretical and managerial implications, which we discuss next.

6.1 Theoretical implications

The main purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of TL and OC on employees' commitment and the roles of motivation and JS in these relationships. All these constructs have been widely investigated in the literature. However, our study differs and is innovative in several features, such as the conceptual model defined, the geographic context, and the industry context covered.

The internal organizational environment is crucial to creating and developing opportunities to strengthen the firm structure. Thus, we contribute to the literature and HRM practice, starting through a leadership and/or an OC paradigm, as described by Streimikiene et al. (2021).

We found that no empirical studies have been conducted on how the constructs in our tested conceptual model affect each other or how they promote employees' commitment. We thus contribute to the literature by addressing the effect of TL on OC, motivation, JS, and commitment. We defined a new theoretical paradigm and mediation chain of the constructs, increasing the knowledge about the influence of TL as a key element to develop an OC and, consequently, greater motivation, JS, and commitment.

Our results show that TL promotes, directly, the development of OC, motivation and JS. This is in line with the findings of Pratiwi et al. (2023), who conclude that TL can make changes and implement OC processes that are followed by employees according to the vision of the organization, especially in creativity, innovation, and improving performance. Based on a previous study conducted by Gui et al. (2019), from 281 multinational organization employees in China, TL motivates employees to prioritize the firm's objectives over their interests, resulting in a continuous innovation cycle.

Another contribution of our study to the literature is in reinforcing the evidence of a positive and direct influence of OC on employees' motivation and commitment and an indirect effect of OC on JS through the mediating role of motivation. These results differ from the Chinese context because there is

evident friction as businesses transition from traditional values to modern and globalized business practices (Xiaoyi et al., 2023).

In sum, the innovative conceptual model defined and the mediation chain approach followed in this study allowed us to increase our knowledge about the role that TL and OC have in mobilizing employees' dedication and creating conditions to improve firms' productivity and performance.

6.2 Managerial implications

Several important managerial and practical implications can be derived from this research.

Firstly, we confirmed that TL and OC could provide better motivation, JS, and commitment in the textile industry in the North of Portugal. Despite the existence of other studies focusing on these issues, we present an innovative perspective, providing a better understanding of the relationships and identifying some mediating effects. Analyzing the structural relationships between the constructs, we conclude that TL influences the OC, motivation, and JS directly. We also found an indirect impact on commitment mediated by motivation and OC, a novel contribution of our research. In this study, employees highlight the importance of leaders providing better conditions to achieve the best results, showing employers trust and expect much from employees.

Secondly, OC shows a positive and direct influence on motivation and commitment. However, only through the mediating effect of motivation is it possible that OC has an impact on JS, indirectly. Regarding OC, we highlight the importance that the firm attaches to achieving goals and being better than the competitors, their level of results orientation, and how the firm attaches great importance to stability, efficiency, and control.

Thirdly, motivation has a positive influence on JS and commitment. These results reinforce the belief that motivation factors play a key role in employees' perceptions of their job and firm, such as the fact that they genuinely like what they do professionally, not wanting to fail at something so important in their life, and because it allows them to achieve their life goals.

Fourthly, contrary to what we expected, we did not find a significant direct relationship between JS and commitment. So, we found that JS was not confirmed as a mediator variable in any of the relationships tested. This result may be justified by the specific constraints of this study, such as the industry in question and the limited number of firms in the sample. Additionally, we notice some particular characteristics of the employees of the Portuguese textile industry, such as a large majority of females with low education levels and low incomes (Leitão et al., 2022). So, in line with our results, JS appears just as a dependent variable of TL and motivation.

Fifthly, these results contribute to a better understanding on the part of firms of the need to improve their employees' motivation factors and to promote an adequate transformational perspective of leadership and an effective OC to increase their workers' JS and, consequently, to be more committed. We concluded that, from the textile industry employees' point of view, JS is based on the assigned roles, the leader's behavior, the existence of promotion opportunities, and the salary. At the same time, a higher level of employees' commitment means that they will be interested and concerned about the firm's future, sustain their feelings of self-worth, and be willing to work hard to contribute to a better firm performance.

Finally, we remind the reader while the constructs of our conceptual model have been widely examined in literature in several contexts, few studies have introduced these issues into scenarios, such as specific industries, economies, and geographical contexts (e.g., western Europe, Asia). In line with our results, Chen et al. (2017) found that workers attach the greatest importance to conditions related to the development of the firm, fair and equitable treatment, and safety in the workplace. Although the Chinese government has taken steps to raise wages by increasing the minimum wage and implementing new labor contract laws, workers remain dissatisfied. They conclude that monetary reward is not the only way to make workers feel valued, and it is possible to provide a more attractive working environment so that workers feel valued and motivated, despite relatively low wages.

6.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study has some limitations. This is not longitudinal research because the data were collected in a single moment in time, and it was not possible to verify possible changes, positive or negative, in the employees' perception over time. Data collected support a convenience sample, and even though we took care of the sample representativeness, there may be some bias. Also, despite having previously ensured all confidentiality of the process, many completed questionnaires omitted individual characterization data for fear of association with the person, thus preventing us from characterizing the sample more robustly and comprehensively.

Additionally, we notice that we cannot generalize our results or findings directly to other contexts. We think that is one of our important contributions as well because our fieldwork took place under specific circumstances (e. g., type of industry, vulnerable economic context, and sociodemographic characteristics linked to the employees of the Portuguese textile industry). In line with this, adapting our research in a cross-cultural context needs further verification. So, we propose that the application of this research model can be extended in the future to other industries, analyzing the firms individually or comparing results between defined groups. We suggest applying the model to different geographical contexts, for example, in China, the largest in the world in overall production, exports, and retail. It is also suggested that other variables can be identified and supported by the literature that may have a mediating or moderating effect on the relationships tested. At this level, we suggest introducing variables such as corporate sustainability, green knowledge sharing, and green innovation.

7. Conclusion

We highlight that our results show the need and concern that the managers must have with their leadership style, specifically with the assumption of a transformational style, along with creating a favorable organizational culture to improve the employees' involvement and achieve the desired success for their firms. We found in this study that leading with a transformational style and empowering and providing autonomy to the employees can result in collective success, leading to the development of an organizational culture. This includes a set of beliefs and values that generate greater motivation, greater job satisfaction, and, consequently, a greater commitment of employees to the firm.

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Disclosure statement

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