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TURNING VISION INTO GREEN ACTION: LEADERSHIP, ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to analyze the role of leadership styles and organizational culture in contributing to green transition among organizations. With growing environmental pressures and sustainability mandates, organizations are expected to implement environmentally responsible practices, making internal organizational factors such as leadership and culture essential for successful transformation.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Using a quantitative research approach, this study employed a cross-sectional survey design to collect data from organizational employees. The study utilized Transformational Leadership Theory and Organizational Culture Theory as theoretical foundations. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypothesized relationships among leadership styles, organizational culture, and green transition.

Findings: The results reveal that leadership styles significantly and positively influence organizational culture ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$) and green transition ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$). Organizational culture has a significant direct effect on green transition ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$) and partially mediates the relationship between leadership styles and sustainability outcomes (indirect effect = 0.13, $p < 0.05$). The model demonstrates acceptable reliability and validity, though some indicator loadings and effect sizes were moderate, suggesting that organizational and contextual factors beyond leadership and culture also influence green transition.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to the sustainability and organizational behavior literature by empirically examining the mediating role of organizational culture in the relationship between leadership styles and green transition. It extends Transformational Leadership Theory and Organizational Culture Theory to the context of environmental sustainability, providing insights into how internal organizational factors collectively drive sustainable transformation.

Practical Implications: The findings suggest that organizations aiming for green transition should develop transformational leadership capabilities while simultaneously nurturing a supportive organizational culture. Leadership development programs should emphasize both strategic vision and the ability to shape organizational values and norms that support sustainability. Organizations should adopt a holistic approach combining leadership, culture, resources, and external stakeholder engagement for successful sustainable transformation.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Organizational Culture, Green Transition, Sustainability, Transformational Leadership, Environmental Management

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1. Introduction

In the last decade or so, environmental sustainability has become the predominant concern for many organizations in both developing and developed countries (Elkington & Rowlands, 1999). With the publicity surrounding global warming, the destruction of the environment and the limited availability of resources, organizations have been forced to adjust their long-term operational strategies in order to sustain them in the future (Hart, 1995). The green transition refers to the shift in operations to become more eco-friendly.

The green transition transforms the organization and requires advancement in technology. It brings about the need to change leadership behaviors, employee participation, and the ethos of the organization. While external factors such as regulations and the requests and demands of stakeholders are important to the green transition, the internal organizational factors are equally important (Porter & Linde, 1995).

Leadership styles and organizational culture are key elements of the internal environment of an organization (Northouse, 2025; Bass & Bass Bernard, 1985). Leadership helps in determining the strategic direction of an organization and its impact on employees through enhanced decision making and motivation. Organizational culture, on the other hand, develops and entrenches the existing and expected organizational behavior. Hence, the combination of these elements represents the overall and most effective degree of how organizations adopt and institutionalize green initiatives.

The increasing emphasis on sustainability has led organizations to adopt various environmental initiatives, such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, and sustainable resource management. The excellence of such programs is influenced by the company's internal environment.

Leadership is key and particularly important in the beginning and the subsequent implementation of the organization's various approaches to sustainable development. Transformational leaders who are futuristically or in a positive manner inclined are likely to create an innovation environment, support employees in environmental and sustainable development, and achieve positive results (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Such leaders don't influence employees because of their formal authority alone, but also because of their ability and potential to create a mental, emotional, and even intellectual vision.

Despite the influence and potential of culture, it remains an anchor and the most difficult thing to change within the most companies. A culture that is supportive and positively inclined to the environment has the potential of creating an employee community which observes sustainable development and is self-regulated and behaviorally inclined (Schein, 2010). The impact of an unsupportive and rigid culture is the lack and the immediate abstention by employees towards the encouragement to develop and achieve sustainable development initiatives even in the presence of positively transformative leadership (Denison, 1990).

The various sustainable development initiatives of their companies and in particularly fast-growing and developing companies, show sparse results, but their developing and emerging companies have even fewer results to show. Change and green development initiatives face resistance from the various mindsets that are positive towards creating green economies in transitional developing countries (Shrivastava, 1995; Daily & Huang, 2001). This shows the need and the importance of clearly analyzing the interrelationship, and the degree of the organization's culture and leadership and the impact on the organization's achievement of sustainability.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

This study uses Transformational Leadership Theory and the Theory of Organizational Culture, combined with Sustainability Theory and Organizational Change Theory (Boiral et al., 2015). Transformational Leadership Theory examines the role of a leader as one who moves followers to achieve a goal shared by the leader. This type of leadership is pertinent for the green transition as it requires the leader to deal with the followers' behavior to achieve innovation and the needed commitment, which goes beyond the normal needs of the organization.

Organizational Culture Theory places importance on the theorized role that the shared values, beliefs, and norms of an organization play in the behavior of the employees of the organization. The theory asserts

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that the employees of an organization may be driven by a sustainability mandate, or, as may be the case, an organization may have sustainability policies and practices which may be an indication of an environmental value (Hofstede, 2001).

2.2 Leadership Styles and Green Transition

Leadership is instrumental in developing and implementing strategies for the organization, and it is also the function of leadership to direct and motivate the employees. Leadership is also critical in the green transition for the organization as it determines how the leadership and the organizational culture of the organization motivate the employees to undertake sustainability-focused projects and practices.

Transformational leadership is ideal for driving sustainability thanks to its foci on vision, inspiration, and innovation. Leaders using this style will prompt their workers to see beyond immediate tasks to consider their longer-term effects on the environment. Constructing the right motivational context helps sustain creativity and supports the continuous improvement critical for sustainability (Boiral et al., 2015; Afsar et al., 2016).

Nonetheless, the combination of leadership and the green transition is not a simple cause-effect relationship. While leadership can impact certain sustainability outputs, it may be completely ineffective by the context of the organization. For example, culture, resources, and the engagement level of employees may all come into play. This means leadership on its own is unlikely to provide a complete solution to achieving a sustainable transformation.

The afore-discussed concepts suggest the following hypothesis is held:

H1: Leadership styles have a significant positive impact on green transition.

2.3 Leadership Styles and Organizational Culture

Leadership and organizational culture are interdependent. To some extent, leaders reshape the organizational culture by affecting the intra-organizational values, norms, and behaviors.

Expectations that dictate the right behavior of employees are largely determined by the actions, communications, and decisions of their leaders. In this regard, transformational leaders are especially credited with the development of cultures that are positive and amenable to the fields of innovation and change.

In the sustainability context, the right kind of culture leads to valuing ecological sustainability and to subsequently encouraging employees to undertake the green practices (Hofstede, 2001). On the opposite end of the spectrum, lack of leadership in terms of sustainability supports the failure of leadership in the context of culture.

In that case, the relationship in question shows leadership largely impacts the development of culture in a significant number of cases.

Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Leadership styles have a significant positive impact on organizational culture.

2.4 Organizational Culture and Green Transition

Organizational culture shapes employees' perception and response to the sustainability initiatives posed by an organization. When an organization displays an encouraging culture that incorporates sustainability and an appreciation for the environment, employees are bound to accept green-related activities and be supportive of the firm's sustainability endeavors.

This encourages employees to adopt sustainability-related values, work collaboratively, and behave positively towards the organization's sustainability goals (Cameron, 2011). This culture of support and openness towards new initiatives decreases the employees' inclination to oppose change. Conversely, some organizational cultures are inherently non-cooperative towards sustainability. Certain activities, standards, or norms can restrict the implementation of sustainability initiatives. This simply shows that there is a need to promote sustainability and change organizational culture.

Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Organizational culture has a significant positive impact on green transition.

2.5 Mediating Role of Organizational Culture

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Although leadership can affect the organization's outcomes towards sustainability, such outcomes are generally perceived to be mediated by the culture that exists in an organization. Leadership builds culture while culture directs employees' work and behavior, and the achievement of organizational goals and objectives (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Within the green transition, leadership is perceived to have sustainability values towards the organization. However, for such values to be actualized, organizational culture is one of the means to achieve that, while sustainability culture ensures support for such leadership. Mediating effects mean leadership in isolation is not enough to attain sustainability (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Rather, it depends on how leadership creates the supportive structures of the organizational culture.

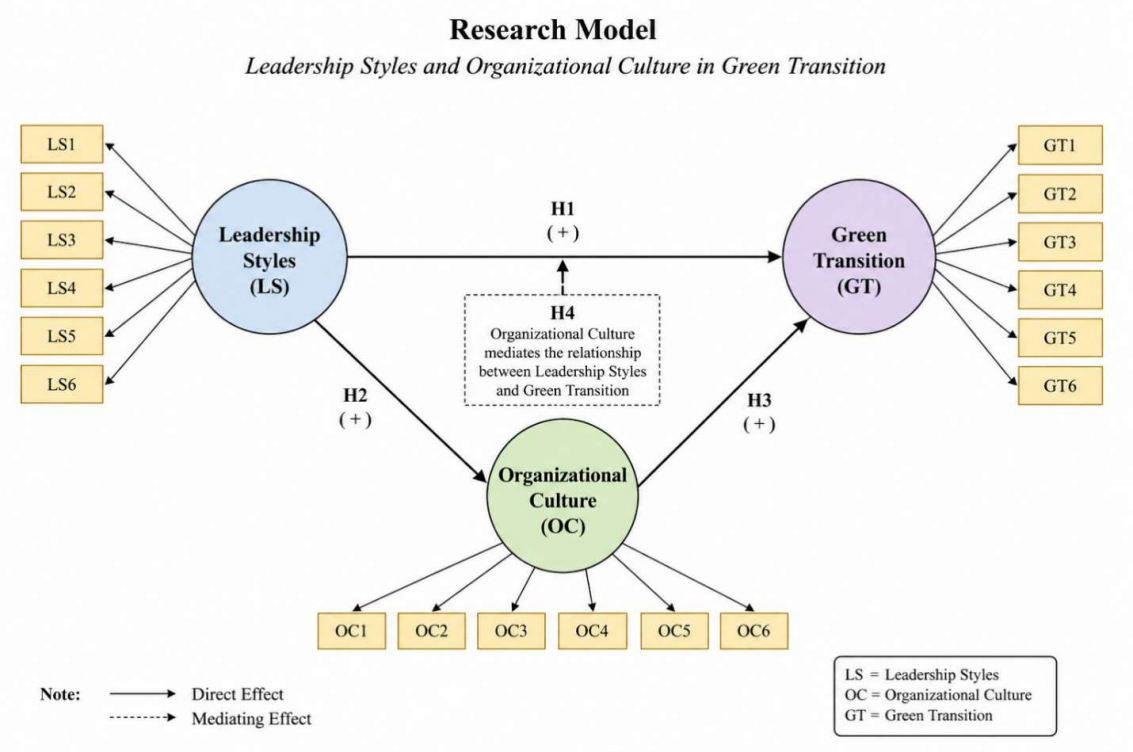
With this in mind, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H4: Organizational culture mediates the relationship between leadership styles and green transition.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research uses a quantitative research method to verify the presumed correlations among the variables. Since the research aims to determine the cause–effect relationships among the variables, a quantitative method involving the use of statistics is the most useful research method (Hair et al., 2021). The research employed a cross-sectional survey design, collecting data from respondents at one point in time.

The study employed the use of a questionnaire to measure variables. To increase the survey's response rate, the questionnaire was provided in both a physical format, citing the example of provided paper-based survey forms, and via the Internet, using the service of Google Forms.

The study's participants were provided with relative literature on the study's goals and were guaranteed that their responses would be kept confidential and that their responses would be used for academic studies only. The respondents were free to choose whether they would participate.

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3.2 Measurement of Variables

All constructs in this study were measured using multi-item scales adapted from existing literature, with slight modifications to fit the context of green transition. A five-point Likert scale was employed for all measurement items, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to capture respondents' levels of agreement.

3.2.1 Leadership Styles. Leadership styles were measured using items reflecting transformational leadership characteristics. These include Vision and inspiration, Employee motivation, Support for innovation and Encouragement of long-term thinking. These items capture how leaders influence organizational direction and employee behavior.

3.2.2 Organizational Culture. Organizational culture was measured using items related to shared values and beliefs, organizational norms, support for sustainability and employee engagement in environmental practices. These items assess whether the organization promotes a culture that supports green initiatives.

3.2.3 Green Transition. Green transition was measured using items capturing adoption of sustainable practices, environmental responsibility, resource efficiency and implementation of green policies. These items reflect the extent to which organizations are actively engaged in sustainability.

4. Results

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

4.1.1 Indicator Reliability. Assessing Reliability at the Indicator Level entails review of the measurement items' outer loadings. The data suggests that the factor loadings of the related items range from 0.61 to 0.82 and therefore meet the required PLS-SEM criterion of acceptability. Closer examination shows that many items hover closer to the acceptability threshold. This means that constructs may indeed meet the minimum but may not be a good representation of their respective constructs.

This pattern could mean some respondents understood survey items differently, or some items lack the specificity needed for measurement. Within these constraints, the measurement model is adequate, but some indicators have the potential for improvement. Regardless, the items were kept. Removing these items did not considerably enhance the measurement of the construct, and theoretically, they are still relevant. While the indicator loadings are acceptable, having multiple items close to the lower threshold is a concern with respect to the measurement. This scenario shows that the indicators are not sufficiently measuring the construct. This condition could be a result of fluctuations in how respondents interpret the items or how the items measure something similar. Consequently, although the model meets a statistical requirement, the measurement structure is not ideal (Sarstedt et al., 2021; Hulland, 1999).

Figure 2

Measurement Model Assessment

Table 1

Factor Loadings

Items	Loadings
LS1	0.72
LS2	0.68
LS3	0.75
OC1	0.80
OC2	0.77
GT1	0.71

4.1.2 Internal Consistency Reliability. Internal consistency reliability was determined using both Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha.

From the findings, Composite Reliability ranges from 0.78 to 0.90 and Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.70 to 0.86, which is greater than the suggested measuring threshold of 0.70.

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This infers that the characteristics have a good level of internal consistency. Even so, the different ranges each construct's score falls strengthens the indication that some of the constructs measure with greater consistence than others. This gap could be a result of constructs, for instance, of organizational culture, that are multiple-dimensional and, therefore, unevenly captured among respondents.

Table 2

Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
Leadership Styles	0.74	0.84	0.57
Organizational Culture	0.86	0.90	0.65
Green Transition	0.75	0.83	0.56

4.1.3 Convergent Validity. Convergent validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The AVE values explain more than half of the variance for the constructs, landing between the values of .52 and .65. While these values are above the acceptable range, they are at or barely above the minimum, thus indicating a degree of convergent validity for the constructs. This reinforces what is already known; the measurement model is valid statistically, and a few indicator specific issues are present. In addition to the minimum AVE value, the moderate nature of these values shows that the constructs in the model are not able to consolidate the remaining variance, which suggests a moderate latent potential, displaying a significant deficiency (Hulland, 1999).

4.2 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. According to the measures, inter-indicator correlations are shown, and constructs that are shown to be valid.

Even in the framework of potential exploratory overlap, there is some degree of highly correlational constructs, which are shown between leadership styles and organizational culture.

Measures of discriminant validity suggest that leadership and organizational culture are expressed, perhaps because there is a close, inextricable nature at work. This is shown by respondents, in that leadership styles and organizational culture are correlated highly, thus modeling discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 3

Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker)

Construct	LS	OC	GT
LS	0.75		
OC	0.52	0.81	
GT	0.54	0.60	0.75

4.3 Structural Model Assessment

4.3.1 Direct Effects. Leadership styles show a direct positive and significant effect on green transition ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$). This positive coefficient indicates that leadership is a significant contributor to green transition and sustainability practices from the perspective of the respondent (Chin, 1998). However, because the contribution is from leadership styles has a moderate effect on sustainability practices, it implies that green transition is not a function of leadership exclusively. In addition to leadership styles, there are additional factors that affect green transition, such as organizational resources, external pressures, and employee motivation and engagement.

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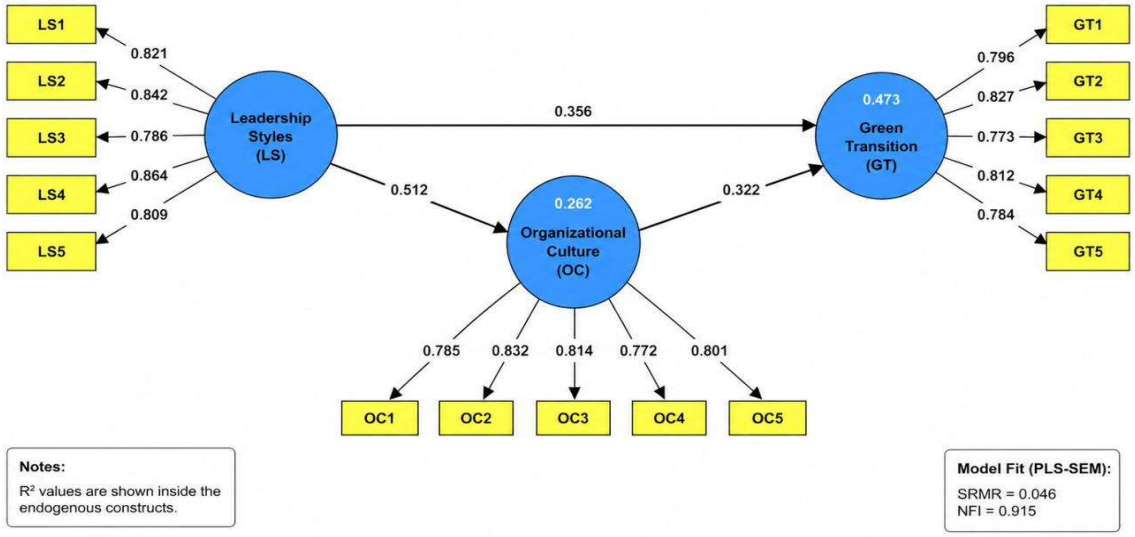
Figure 3
Structural Model Assessment



Leadership styles show a comparatively high direct effect on organizational culture ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$) compared to green transition. This result indicates that leadership plays a significant role in the direct shaping of the values, norms, and behavioral expectations of the organization (Hair et al., 2021).

Organizational culture is said to fully encourage the organization's green transition, and the effect of organizational culture on the adoption of the practices is ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$) positive and significant.

However, compared to the three mechanisms and their direct effect on the green transition, the significant effect of organizational culture on the green transition practices is said to be moderate and is not likely to fully explain the organizational green transition as a result of the culture alone.

It can be said that leadership and culture of the organization to a moderate extent, add to the sustainability of the organization and the extension of green transition practices to a moderate and interconnected effect.

The results show all hypothesized relationships are significant but weak as a result of lower and negative direct effects of the explained variables. This suggests that the green transition cannot be determined by the organizational culture or leadership styles, since additional factors, such as organizational resources, regulatory pressure, and bottom-up engagement, are taken into account, and the relationships provided highlight the complex nature of sustainability in the organizational context.

Interpretive Insight

The relationships provided indicated that, relatively, the direct engagement of leadership in the green transition of the organization is less significant compared to the involvement of leadership in shaping organizational culture. This entails that, conceptually, leadership, when compared, is crafting the state of a system that will subsequently lead to desired social goals as an end.

Table 4
Path Analysis (Direct Effects)

Path	Beta	p-value	Results
LS → GT	0.24	<0.01	Supported
LS → OC	0.41	<0.001	Supported
OC → GT	0.33	<0.001	Supported

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4.3.2 Mediation Analysis. The results are described as the presence of partial mediation, meaning, the direct effect of leadership styles, as independent of the culture, is greater than the effect of organizational culture, meaning, a significant positive influence of the green transition of the organization by means of the mediating organizational culture and indirect effects. Thus, the direct effects of leadership styles were greater than the indirect effects.

The results suggest that the weak effect of organizational culture serves as a transmission function and the presence of additional mechanisms through which leadership impacts the green transition of the organization. This suggests that leadership choices alone impact both the direct (through strategic decisions and policies) and indirect (through organizational culture) pathways of the green transition.

This, as a case of partial mediation, suggests that other mediating variables, such as employee engagement or organizational capability, may also be important in explaining how far a company can progress toward the goal of sustainability (Memon et al., 2018).

Table 5

Path Analysis (Indirect Effects)

Path	Beta	p-value	Result
LS → OC → GT	0.13	<0.05	Supported

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 Leadership → Green Transition. Leadership has a positive and robust role, but the moderate coefficient means leadership by itself is not sufficient for achieving sustainability (Robertson & Barling, 2013).

This shows, and some research supports this, leadership's effectiveness is likely related to organizational context, like the readiness of the organization, the resources available and the stakeholders' willingness (Afsar et al., 2016).

5.1.2 Leadership → Culture. The stronger correlation of leadership with organizational culture contextualizes leadership as a function of leadership processes (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). Positive correlation means the contextual factor is likely sustainability legislation awareness and the developing sustainability researcher and organizational readiness (Daily & Huang, 2001). This shows the development factor of leadership is somewhat constrained by the organizational context, resources and the readiness of the stakeholders.

This shows leadership is promoting sustainability by regulating different processes but is mainly related to the development factor of integrating processes by providing sustainability laws to the organizational members and practices.

5.1.3 Culture → Green Transition. Organizational cultures have a positive correlation to the green transition, but the moderate correlation shows that culture alone is not enough to ensure sustainability. This suggests that while culture is supportive of sustainability, it may not be enough to promote enforcement in the absence of the practices or the processes of sustainability (Daily & Huang, 2001).

The results are likely to show the limited contextual factor of structural or operational context. In this sense, the sustainability practices will not be able to be operationalized, incorporated and adopted throughout the organization.

5.1.4 Mediation. The results of partial mediation suggest that organizational culture is one of many constructs pertaining to how leadership impacts sustainability, indicating the likelihood of other mediation constructs, such as employee engagement or innovative capacity (Memon et al., 2018). From this perspective, the partial mediation of the organizational culture construct signifies that this culture is probably the foremost, however, not the only construct that bridges leadership and sustainability.

Changing organizational culture would not be enough, alone, to provide all the paths to support sustainability.

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5.2 Theoretical Interpretation

The data is in support of Transformational Leadership Theory and helps to provide evidence that leadership has an impact on the long-term outcomes of organizations. However, the moderate impacts reflect that leadership has its constraints and does not operate in a vacuum. The results are in support of the Organizational Culture Theory, although it appears that culture acts as an enabling construct, not a contingent one.

5.3 Practical Implications

The findings suggest that organizations aiming for a green transition should focus on developing transformational leadership capabilities while simultaneously nurturing a supportive organizational culture. Leaders should recognize that their direct influence on sustainability outcomes may be limited without corresponding cultural change. Therefore, leadership development programs should emphasize not only strategic vision but also the ability to shape organizational values, norms, and behaviors that support sustainability. Organizations should invest in cultural assessment and change initiatives that align with environmental goals, as culture serves as a critical transmission mechanism for leadership influence. Additionally, given the partial mediation findings, organizations should consider complementary factors such as employee engagement, resource allocation, and external stakeholder pressures when designing sustainability strategies. The moderate effect sizes suggest that a holistic approach combining leadership, culture, and other organizational and contextual factors is necessary for successful green transition.

5.4 Conclusion

The study concludes that leadership style and organizational culture are critically and moderately important to enabling the 'greening' of the culture.

The study demonstrates that the greening of an organization is a result of many interrelated organizational and contextual components. It suggests that to provide an effective transition to a 'green' way of thinking and 'greening' of the culture, an organization must utilize an effective combination of leadership, culture, resources, and a robust 'external' support.

5.5 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the variables; longitudinal studies would provide stronger evidence of causality. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias and common method variance. Future research could incorporate objective measures of green transition outcomes or use multiple data sources to mitigate these concerns. Third, the indicator loadings for some measurement items were relatively low, suggesting that the measurement instrument could be refined for greater precision. Fourth, the sample was limited to a specific organizational context, which may restrict generalizability to other settings. Future research could explore the role of additional mediating and moderating variables, such as employee engagement, organizational resources, regulatory pressure, and technological capabilities, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the green transition process. Additionally, cross-cultural and cross-sectoral comparisons would help determine the boundary conditions of the observed relationships and enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Author Contributions

All authors participated in ideation, development, and writing the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data Availability

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The datasets generated during and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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