

IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION AND SOFT TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON WORK PERFORMANCE: MEDIATED BY AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT IN SMEs

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Abstract

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are considered the backbone of economic growth, industrial development, innovation, and employment generation worldwide. However, increasing globalization, technological transformation, and market uncertainty have compelled SMEs to adopt strategic orientations and employee-centered management practices to remain competitive and sustainable. In this context, entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and soft Total Quality Management (TQM) practices have emerged as important determinants of organizational effectiveness and employee performance. Despite growing scholarly attention, limited empirical studies have simultaneously examined the combined effects of EO and soft TQM practices on work performance through affective commitment within SMEs. The present study investigates the impact of entrepreneurial orientation and soft TQM practices on work performance, with affective commitment acting as a mediating variable among SMEs in the textile sector. The study is grounded in Human Capital Theory, which suggests that organizational investments in employees through entrepreneurial orientation and soft quality management practices enhance employees' knowledge, skills, commitment, and ultimately their work performance. A quantitative research approach was adopted using a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from managerial employees working in textile SMEs through structured questionnaires. A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed, and 607 valid responses were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that entrepreneurial orientation significantly and positively influences work performance and affective commitment. Similarly, soft TQM practices demonstrate a strong positive effect on both affective commitment and employee work performance. The mediation analysis further confirms that affective commitment partially mediates the relationships between entrepreneurial orientation, soft TQM practices, and work performance. The results suggest that organizations emphasizing innovation, proactive strategic behavior, employee participation, supportive leadership,

teamwork, and continuous improvement create emotionally committed employees who exhibit superior performance outcomes.

The study contributes theoretically by integrating entrepreneurial orientation, soft TQM practices, affective commitment, and work performance into a unified framework within the SME context. Practically, the findings provide strategic insights for SME managers and policymakers regarding the importance of entrepreneurial culture and employee-centered quality management practices in improving employee productivity and organizational sustainability.

1. Introduction

The SMEs (small and medium enterprises) have a very important part to modern economies and their contribution to economic development is recognized. These social and economic roles led to consideration of SME sector as a strategic interest for economy (Amoah et al., 2022). In order to achieve the G20's 2% growth agenda till 2018 will only be feasible as governments' dedication to empower by private sector led growth and entrepreneurship. Economic policies that back up the competitiveness of economies for support to more healthy, sustainable, and inclusive growth. These kinds of policies are important for firms of all sizes in particular for the many SMEs which are performing in global economies. In taking part to global value chains, they have the essential goal for encouraging world trade and investment and also improving their productivity level and potential to innovate as well. SMEs account for 95% of businesses globally also contribute more than half of total employment, whereas around 200 million firms widespread lack from the financing they need to invest, develop with generate emerging jobs (Algan 2019; Iram et al., 2026). Around 90% of the world's jobs are generated by the private sector and some 50% by SMEs.

According to the World Trade Organization (WTO,) SMEs represent over 90 per cent of the business population, 60-70% of employment and 55% of GDP in developed economies. As SMEs contribute strongly to achieve crucial goals to an economy they represent main motivation of economic development and backbone of socio-economical development. Traditional SMEs have weaknesses and strengths of their leaders and their capacities of human resources, usually established on founder's courage and talent. Leaders of these

enterprises risk their assets and capital (Alieva et al., 2023).

There are two types of SMEs: the small traditional enterprise that make goods inherited from past generations and the modern enterprise uses high technology, search of new markets to maximize their efficiency. In developed countries 20% of new SMEs last no more than a year, 20% last only two years and 50% last not more than five years. As a result only 10% of SMEs have a chance to survive more than five years. The success of an economy depends on number and dynamic of SMEs and success on the market. SMEs serve as a source of entrepreneur skills, innovation and employment also they stimulate competition for prices, product design and efficiency. If there are no SMEs, big enterprises become monopoly. SMEs also help big enterprises such as supplying raw materials and parts and distributing products made by them. A study from US showed SMEs makes four times higher profit for a dollar invested than big companies (Chienwattanasook & Jermisittiparsert, 2019; Naveed et al., 2022).

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation: Human Capital Theory

The present study is grounded in in **Human Capital Theory** (HCT) developed by Gary S. Becker (1964). This theory suggests that organizational investments in employees through entrepreneurial orientation and soft quality management practices enhance employees' knowledge, skills, commitment, and ultimately their work performance."

In the context of the current study, entrepreneurial orientation and soft TQM practices represent organizational factors that influence employees' emotional attachment toward their organizations. Employees working in innovative, participative, and supportive environments are more likely to develop affective commitment, which subsequently enhances work performance. The theory also provides a strong conceptual foundation for examining the mediating role of affective commitment between organizational practices and employee outcomes.

2.2 Entrepreneurial Orientation and Work Performance

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is a way of systematically structuring the strategies, managerial philosophies and organizational behaviors of the firm around the principles of entrepreneurship, including innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking. EO fosters an attitude that leads to opportunity recognition, creative problem-solving, and strategic experimentation (Fu et al., 2024). This orientation helps companies to shift from traditional ways of doing business to more future-

oriented approaches that focus on market responsiveness and ongoing improvement. This means that entrepreneurial orientation is integrated into decision-making processes, leading to the implementation of initiatives that generate value and enhance competitive positioning (Sciarelli et al., 2020).

Furthermore, focusing entrepreneurship on performance improvement will help companies to cope with dynamic and uncertain business environments. Entrepreneurial orientation encourages the effective deployment of resources in innovative projects, encourages proactive market entry and creates a culture of calculated risk taking for long-term benefit. The empirical literature indicates that highly entrepreneurial firms tend to exhibit better performance, such as higher productivity, profitability, and growth. As such, EO is not just a strategic stance but also a key means by which companies can convert entrepreneurial intentions into tangible organizational outcomes (Sciarelli et al., 2020; Zahra et al., 2006).

Hypothesis 1

Entrepreneurial orientation positively influences work performance in SMEs.

2.3 Soft TQM Practices and Work Performance

Total quality management system is a unceasing method of scrutiny the practices and verdict out the problem that needs to be eradicated or concentrated. This system is ongoing and it works to restructure the processes of the business in such a way that all of the business' normal operation is not disturbed by hasty errors or changes. The concept of rendering to the notion, TQM is an approach with which unabridged of the organization can be sustained and the main purpose of this slant is to improve the quality of every single item of the business. It is imperative for an organization to follow the regulations of an industry in which it is working. Essential the organizational policies which can meet the norms of industry conventions can be supported by TQM to meet the conventions. TQM can be pragmatic to every single unit of a firm and in the altered branches of an organization (Hussain et al., 2022).

The literature on Total Quality Management (TQM) highlights that soft TQM practices, which are related to human and behavioral aspects of quality management, are important in pretty work performance. These practices are said to foster a work environment that is enabling, where employees feel valued, engaged and motivated to do their work well. Soft TQM focuses on continuous improvement and people-centred management, which motivates employees to follow quality standards, minimize errors, and enhance the efficiency of their tasks, thus positively impacting their individual and collective work performance (Casteleiro & Mendes, 2022).

Hypothesis 2

Soft TQM practices positively influence work performance in SMEs.

2.4 Entrepreneurial Orientation and Affective Commitment

Entrepreneurship has been seen as an organizational anomaly and explained mainly in terms of entrepreneurial orientation. This improvement predominantly surveyed the empirical course. Plentiful perceptions of entrepreneurial orientation have amplified the prevailing nonfiction. The most projecting opinions are based on studies of (Liew & Loo, 2024). The key difference in both schools of thought typifies entrepreneurial orientation assembled on a set of proportions; for instance, “risk-taking, proactiveness, innovativeness, autonomy and competitive aggressiveness”. (Wach et al., 2023) posited that risk-taking, innovativeness and proactiveness are important covariant traits that must exist for entrepreneurial orientation to exist and expanded these covariant factors to include autonomy and competitive aggressiveness and correlated these factors with the relative dependences of the firms. Moreover, Zhao et al., (2021).proposed three nascent ideas of entrepreneurial orientation which are “entrepreneurial top management style, new entry ingenuities and affective commintement” to address these overlapping aspects of entrepreneurial orientation.

Empirical findings show that Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) has a significant impact on

employees' affective commitment, as it creates work environments that positively influence emotional attachment to the organization. Recent research looks beyond the strategic consequences of EO, such as innovation or firm performance, and examines how EO can communicate to employees that their contribution, initiative and adaptability are valued, through aspects of EO, like innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking. This perceived autonomy and creative problem-solving encourages an intellect of "have its place" and identification with organizational goals, which are central aspects of affective commitment. For instance, in entrepreneurial and SME settings, studies have indicated that employees' emotional engagement and loyalty are higher when EO is integrated in the culture and everyday activities of the organization, since EO diminishes the bureaucratic restrictions and enhances participation in significant work processes. This discovery shows that the positive impact of EO on affective commitment is mediated by employees' perception of empowerment, trust and congruence of values with organizational purpose (Aggarwal & Singh, 2022; Zhao et al., 2021).

Hypothesis 3

Entrepreneurial orientation positively influences affective commitment.

2.5 Soft TQM Practices and Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is the emotional attachment of an employee towards the organization he/she is working for (Ernest & Vincent, 2025). When employees texture strong affective commitment, they will be more loyal, engaged and will work harder to realize organizational goals. This kind of commitment is frequently a direct result of organizational management applies. The organization's affective commitment will be sophisticated when it provides a work environment where employees feel they belong and feel supported in their welfare.

Soft Total Quality Management (TQM) practices focus on the human and behavioral aspects of TQM, such as leadership commitment, employee

involvement, training and development, empowerment, team work, and effective communication. Soft TQM is not about tools and techniques, but about creating a positive organizational culture based on trust, involvement and ongoing learning. Previous research indicates that an increase in emotional attachment to the organization is related to a perception of fairness and support by the organization as a result of the soft TQM practices being implemented. Affective commitment is increased by leadership that fosters shared values, open communication, and employee involvement in decision making, which leads to a sense of belonging and respect. In quality driven companies, workers are not only the ones who execute the procedures, but they are also a part of the improvement efforts, thus enhancing their psychological ownership and emotional commitment to the company's objectives

Hypothesis 4

Soft TQM practices positively influence affective commitment.

2.6 Affective Commitment and Work Performance

Affective commitment is an emotional attachment of an employee with the organization in the form of frame of mind of love in the organization Quintos, (2023) mentions that the feelings of love in the organization made them willing to stay and build social relations and value the relationship with the organization because they had been a part of the organization. Affective commitment is the emotional bond that an employee has with the organization. Higher affective commitment employees are likely to volunteer to work extra beyond given responsibilities. According to Tremblay, (Almohtaseb et al., 2024) organizational commitment is a belief and acceptance of organizational goals and values, strong achievement and desire to maintain organizational membership. Affective commitment refers to the emotional, attachment, identification and involvement in the organization, affective commitment refers to the feeling of have its place and sagacity of indifference to the organization. Organizational commitment can foster because individuals possess emotional

ties to the organization, such as moral support and acceptance of the values embedded in the organization, and resolve to allocate to the organization (Almohtaseb et al., 2024). Organizational commitment is multi-dimensional, so extricates the form of organizational commitment divided into three components, namely (Tomar et al., 2019).

Hypothesis 5

Affective commitment positively influences work performance.

2.7 Mediating Role of Affective Commitment between EO and WP

Affective commitment had a direct positive impact on work performance. It also positively enhanced by soft TQM and entrepreneurial orientation which further enhanced the work performance (Al-Dhaafri & Alosani, 2020). Although the direct effects of EO on performance is well established, the mediating effects of affective commitment in this relationship have received less attention. Affective commitment is the emotional bond that employees have with their organization and it affects their engagement and productivity. G. A. Ali et al., (2020) highlight that affective commitment can positively influence employees' receptiveness to entrepreneurial initiatives since committed employees tend to be more willing to work towards the organization's objectives. Studies have shown that companies that have a good EO can help to build affective commitment by providing a space for innovation and autonomy. Organizations can leverage this mediation to create strategies that not only improve EO but also boost employee commitment, resulting in better work performance, as Sulhaini et al., (2023) describe.

Hypothesis 6

Affective commitment mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and work performance.

Mediating Role of Affective Commitment between Soft TQM and WP

Soft TQM practices include the human aspects of TQM like top management commitment, employee involvement, training, leadership, customer focus and open communication. Such

practices are especially important in SMEs where informal organizational structure and limited resources play a key role in the implementation of quality initiatives and human factors are important. Therefore, SMEs, unlike large organizations, depend on the motivation and commitment of their employees and soft TQM practices can be a useful method to improve their performance (Arunachalam & Palanichamy, 2017; Vihari et al., 2022).

Work performance in SMEs can be considered from both individual and organizational perspectives and can be measured by various aspects including productivity, efficiency, innovation, and customer satisfaction (Rumanti et al., 2023). The use of soft TQM practices has been related to better performance by developing a quality culture, communication and employee morale. But, employee psychological and emotional commitment is a key factor in the success of TQM (Abrokwah-Larbi, 2024).

Hypothesis 7

Affective commitment mediates the relationship between soft TQM practices and work performance.

3. Research Methodology

Table 3. 1 Item Distribution and Required Sample Size

Construct	No. of Items	Required Respondents (1:10)
Entrepreneurial Orientation	14	90
Soft Total Quality Management	33	150
Affective Commitment	8	90
Work Performance	10	90
Total	65	650

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

Structured questionnaires adapted from previously validated scales were used to collect data: Utilizing existing scales ensures the reliability and validity of the measurements, as these tools have already been tested in previous research. Employing such instruments also allows for meaningful comparisons with prior studies and strengthens the empirical rigor of the research.

3.1 Research Design

The research design is like a map that directs the researcher to carry out research systematically so that the conclusions obtained are valid, realistic, and reliable. It helps researchers choose appropriate and viable methods, thereby improving the efficiency, rigor and impact of the study. In 2020 Wales et al., said that research design “gives an explanation about the roadmap of research activity from all aspects” so that every step of the research is in line with the research objectives. Research design offers a framework for the researchers to guide them in the process of researching complex phenomena, structuring the research, and keeping the research coherent.

3.2 Population and Sample Size

The target population comprised managerial employees working in textile SMEs. Top-level managers, middle-level managers, supervisors, and departmental heads were selected because of their direct involvement in organizational decision-making and quality management practices. Convenience sampling was employed to collect data from accessible respondents. A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed, and 607 valid responses were retained for analysis.

A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree was employed.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS SEM software. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to examine reliability, validity, direct effects, and mediating relationships.

PLS-SEM was selected because it is appropriate for complex predictive models involving latent variables and mediation analysis (Hair et al., 2019).

4. Results and Discussion

The findings revealed that entrepreneurial orientation positively and significantly influenced work performance. SMEs promoting innovation, proactiveness, and risk-taking behavior experienced higher employee productivity and operational efficiency.

Similarly, soft TQM practices demonstrated a strong positive relationship with work performance. Employee participation, teamwork, leadership support, and continuous improvement enhanced employee engagement and productivity. The study further found that entrepreneurial orientation and soft TQM positively influenced affective commitment. Employees working in supportive and innovative organizational environments reported stronger emotional attachment toward their organizations.

The mediation analysis confirmed that affective commitment partially mediated the relationships between entrepreneurial orientation, soft TQM practices, and work performance. These findings suggest that organizational practices influence work performance through employees' emotional and psychological attachment.

The results strongly support Human Capital Theory, emphasizing that positive organizational experiences shape employees' emotions and work-related behaviors.

Research methodology:

Research methodology refers to the systematic procedures, strategies, and techniques employed to investigate a research problem scientifically and systematically. It provides a framework that guides researchers in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to achieve the objectives of the study. A well-defined methodology enhances the reliability, validity, and credibility of research findings by ensuring that the study follows a logical and structured process.

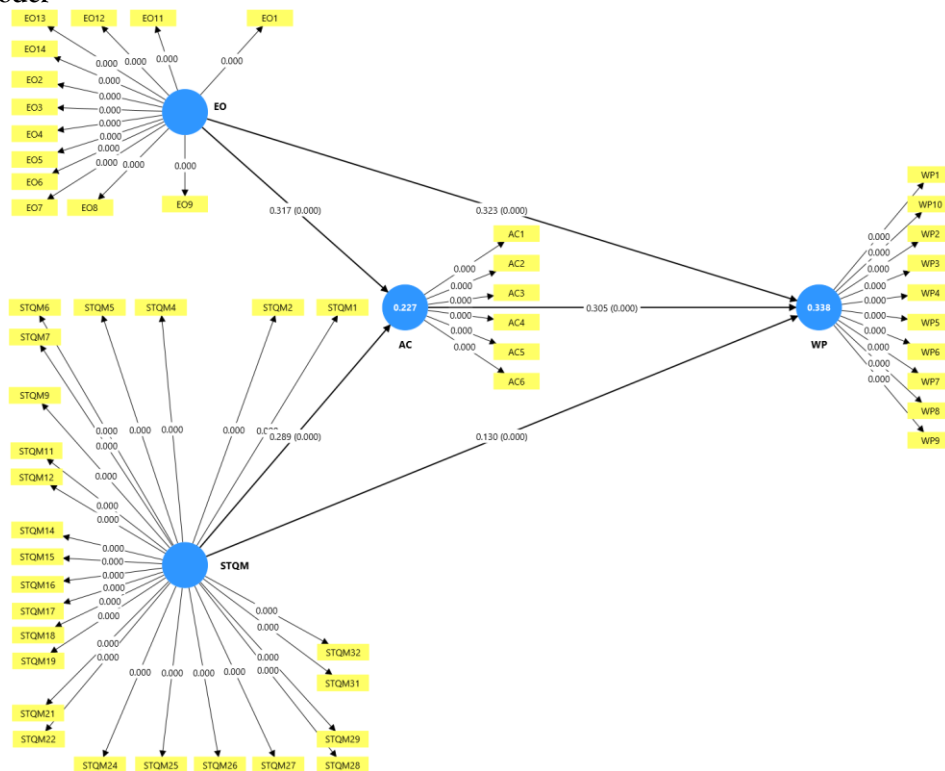
In 2022, Hashim et al.; highlighted that the research design in the methodological process is very important because "after the variables are identified in a problem situation and the theoretical framework is developed, the next step is to design the research so that the required data can be collected and analyzed to obtain a solution. This emphasizes the importance of methodology not only in data collection but also in planning to ensure that the data collected is relevant to the research questions. It connects the gap between theory and evidence and enables researchers to make meaningful conclusions based on their investigations.

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Research design as defined by (Thakur & Kumar, 2022) is "the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a way such that it is relevant to the research purpose and economic in procedure." This definition highlights the importance of a well-designed research design that is both methodologically sound and feasible, allowing for a purposeful and cost-effective study. There are three general types of research designs: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, which are used for different research objectives and questions. Significantly, there is no best design, but rather the best design for a particular research problem depends on how well it allows for meaningful insights.

Research Model



3.3 Philosophical Approach

The philosophical underpinning of scientific inquiry is known as a "paradigm" and it gives guidance, a framework and direction to researchers in investigating a phenomenon. Paradigms do not only define the way of knowledge but also affect the way that the researchers interpret reality and validate their findings. The positivist paradigm is one of the most used paradigms particularly in the natural and social sciences. According to Ogu, 2024, positivists believe that social reality is observable (epistemology) and that it is objective (ontology) and therefore that similar results can be achieved to those in the natural sciences and that these results can be generalized. In this philosophy, the role of the researcher is minimal and is said to be value free (axiology) so that the results obtained are as unbiased and reliable as possible.

Under this approach, the researcher remained independent from the respondents and maintained minimal interference during the data collection process to ensure unbiased findings.

3.4 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the main element or entity under study and analysis in research. It is "the degree of detail of the data gathered in the subsequent data analysis stage" (Kumar, 2018). The unit of analysis is an important element in research design because it dictates how data is collected, organized, and interpreted. The choice of an appropriate unit is to make sure that the findings reflect the phenomenon under investigation and are consistent with the research objectives.

The unit of analysis in the present study was individual managerial employees working in SMEs within the textile sector. Specifically, the respondents included top-level managers, middle-level managers, supervisors, and departmental heads. These respondents were selected because they possess relevant knowledge, experience, and involvement in organizational decision-making processes related to quality management practices, and employee performance.

Selecting managerial employees as the unit of analysis ensured that the collected data accurately reflected organizational practices and employee perceptions relevant to the study variables.

3.5 Time Horizon

The time horizon of this study is cross sectional, which means that the data are collected at one point in time to investigate the effect of entrepreneurial orientation and soft total quality management (TQM) practices on work performance, affective commitment as a mediator in SMEs. The cross-sectional design is especially appropriate for the purpose of this study as it allows for the measurement of the attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of SME personnel at the time of the study without the need for long-term observation. It enables researchers to efficiently examine the relationships among variables and offers a snapshot of the organizational climate and practices at the time of the study.

The cross-sectional approach also facilitated the collection of data from a relatively large number of respondents within a limited period.

3.6 Study Setting

The study was conducted in SMEs operating in the textile sector. Data were collected in natural organizational environments without any experimental manipulation or intervention. According to Brennan et al. (2002), such settings are referred to as non-contrived settings because respondents provide information in their actual workplace environments.

Respondents were approached both physically and through online platforms to complete structured questionnaires. This dual approach enhanced accessibility and increased the response rate. Since the study was non-contrived in nature, respondents were able to express their genuine perceptions and experiences regarding entrepreneurial orientation and soft TQM practices, affective commitment, and work performance.

Maintaining a natural research setting enhanced the ecological validity and authenticity of the study findings.

3.7 Population of the Study

Population refers to the complete group of individuals or elements relevant to the research objectives (Bell & Bryman, 2007). The target population for the present study comprised top- and middle-level managers working in textile SMEs.

The textile sector was selected because it represents one of the most significant industries contributing to economic development and employment generation. Managers within textile SMEs were considered suitable respondents because they are directly involved in organizational operations, strategic decision-making, and quality management practices.

Due to limitations of time, cost, and accessibility, it was impractical to study the entire population. Therefore, a representative sample was selected from the target population.

3.8 Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling is a commonly used method in business and management research because of its convenience and efficiency (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2022). This sampling method is the one that allows the researcher to select the participants who are easily accessible by the researcher and thus can be collected data quickly and cost effectively. It is especially valuable in research situations in which the interest is in the study of behaviors, perceptions or attitudes within a specific population.

The use of convenience sampling enabled the researcher to collect relevant data within a limited timeframe while maintaining methodological consistency.

3.9 Sample Size

The sample size was determined based on the item-to-response ratio recommended for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). According to Hair et al. (2019), a minimum ratio of 1:10 is appropriate for obtaining reliable statistical estimates.

The current study included 65 measurement items distributed among four constructs:

Construct	Number of Items	Required Respondents
Entrepreneurial orientation	14	140
Soft TQM	33	330
Affective Commitment	8	80
Work Performance	10	100
Total	65	650

A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed among respondents in the textile SME sector to ensure adequate statistical power and generalizability of findings.

3.10 Research Ethics

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality of their responses, and voluntary nature of participation.

The study complied with the ethical guidelines of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the American Psychological Association (APA). Participants were assured that their identities and responses would remain anonymous and confidential.

Furthermore, respondents were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. These ethical procedures enhanced trust between the researcher and participants and contributed to obtaining authentic and unbiased responses.

3.11 Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected using structured self-administered questionnaires. According to Ringle et al. (2020), structured questionnaires are among the most effective tools for collecting large amounts of quantitative data efficiently.

The questionnaires were distributed through both physical visits and online platforms. Prior permission was obtained from organizational authorities before approaching respondents. Each questionnaire included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and assuring respondents regarding confidentiality and anonymity.

The questionnaires were administered in English because it is widely used as a professional and educational language within the corporate sector (Shahzad et al., 2020).

3.12 Instruments Used in the Study

Validated measurement scales from previous studies were adopted to measure all research variables.

3.12.1 Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurial orientation was measured using a 14-item scale developed BAR, Rio de Janeiro, v. 9, Special Issue, art. 4, pp. 60-77, May 2012. The scale assessed dimensions such as innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking behavior.

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

3.12.1 Soft Total Quality Management (TQM)

Soft TQM practices were measured using a scale is developed by Paula C. Morrowjournal of Organizational Behavior, VOL. 18, 363±376 (1997). The scale focused on employee involvement, leadership support, communication, and organizational culture.

The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Very Strongly Disagree to 5 = Very Strongly Agree.

3.12.2 Affective Commitment

Affective commitment was measured using the scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). The instrument assessed employees' emotional attachment and sense of belonging toward their organizations.

Responses were collected using a five-point Likert scale.

3.12.3 Work Performance

Work performance was measured using the scale developed by Kuvaas and Anders in 2009. The scale evaluated employees' effectiveness in completing assigned duties and responsibilities. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure responses.

3.13 Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS software. Preliminary analyses, including descriptive statistics and data screening, were conducted using SPSS. Subsequently, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to assess both the measurement and structural models.

PLS-SEM was selected because it is suitable for complex models involving multiple latent constructs and does not require strict assumptions regarding data normality (Hair et al., 2019). According to Sarstedt et al. (2020), PLS-SEM is particularly appropriate for prediction-oriented studies and exploratory organizational research.

The analysis involved the following steps:

1. Data screening and missing value analysis
2. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha
3. Convergent validity assessment using AVE and Composite Reliability
4. Discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell and Larcker criterion
5. Structural model assessment and hypothesis testing

Bootstrapping procedures were employed to determine the significance of path coefficients and mediating effects.

3.14 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. All constructs exceeded the recommended threshold value of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Convergent validity was evaluated through factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All factor loadings exceeded 0.50, while AVE values were above the

recommended threshold of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell and Larcker criterion, which confirmed that all constructs were empirically distinct from one another.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical findings and discussion of the study examining the impact of soft Total Quality Management (TQM) practices on work performance through the mediating role of affective commitment among textile SMEs in Pakistan. The chapter aims to analyze the collected data systematically and interpret the findings in light of theoretical foundations and previous empirical studies. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS and SmartPLS software to evaluate the reliability and validity of the measurement model and to test the proposed hypotheses.

According to Hair et al. (2019), the analysis of quantitative data through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) enables researchers to simultaneously assess measurement quality and structural relationships among latent variables. Therefore, this chapter includes descriptive statistics, demographic analysis, measurement model evaluation, structural model assessment, hypothesis testing, mediation analysis, and discussion of findings. The interpretation of results provides insight into how soft TQM practices contribute toward enhancing employee work performance in SMEs.

4.2 Data Screening and Preliminary Analysis

Before conducting the main statistical analysis, the collected data were screened to ensure accuracy, completeness, and suitability for multivariate analysis. Data screening procedures included missing value analysis, outlier detection, assessment of normality, and multicollinearity testing.

4.2.1 Missing Values

The dataset was examined for missing responses using SPSS. The findings indicated that missing values constituted less than 5% of the total data, which is considered acceptable in quantitative

research (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Missing responses were handled using the mean substitution method to preserve sample adequacy and statistical power.

4.2.2 Outlier Analysis

Outliers were assessed using Mahalanobis distance and standardized residual values. A small number of extreme responses were identified and removed from the dataset to improve the accuracy and reliability of statistical estimates. According to Hair et al. (2019), removing influential outliers improves model fitness and reduces estimation bias in SEM analysis.

4.2.3 Normality Assessment

Normality was assessed through skewness and kurtosis values. The results indicated that all values fell within the acceptable range of ± 2 , confirming that the data were approximately normally distributed (George & Mallery, 2016).

Although Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) does not require strict normality assumptions, assessment of distribution remains important for ensuring data quality.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic analysis was conducted to describe the characteristics of respondents participating in the study. The demographic variables included gender, age, educational qualification, managerial position, and years of experience.

4.3.1 Gender

The results revealed that 64.2% of respondents were male, whereas 35.8% were female. The dominance of male respondents reflects the managerial composition of Pakistan's textile industry, where male participation in senior management positions remains comparatively higher.

Table 4. 1 Gender distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	390	64.2
Female	217	35.8
Total	607	100.0

4.3.2 Age

The majority of respondents (38.7%) belonged to the age group of 31-40 years, followed by respondents aged 41-50 years (26.3%). This

indicates that most participants possessed sufficient professional experience and organizational knowledge regarding soft TQM practices.

Table 4. 2 Age distribution

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-29	118	19.4
30-39	235	38.7
40-49	160	26.3
50-59	69	11.3
60+	25	4.11
Total	607	100.0

4.3.3 Educational Qualification

The findings showed that 45.3% of respondents held master's degrees, 34.1% possessed bachelor's degrees, and 9.1% had doctoral or professional

qualifications. The educational background of respondents supports the credibility and reliability of the collected responses.

Table 4. 3 Education Qualification

Education	Frequency	Percent
Diploma or other	70	11.5
Bachelor's degree	207	34.1
Master's degree	275	45.3
Doctoral degree	55	9.1
Total	607	100.0

4.3.4 Managerial Experience

Most respondents had between 6 and 15 years of managerial experience, indicating substantial

exposure to organizational operations, quality management systems, and strategic decision-making processes.

Table 4. 4 Position in the organization

Position	Frequency	Percent
Non managerial	242	39.9
Middle management	228	37.6
Senior management	85	14
Executive board or C suite	52	8.5
Total	607	100.0

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to examine the central tendency and variability of the study variables. The mean values for entrepreneurial orientation and soft TQM, affective commitment, and work performance ranged between 3.74 and 4.09, indicating positive perceptions regarding organizational practices within SMEs.

The standard deviation values ranged from 0.57 to 0.83, suggesting moderate variability among respondents' opinions. According to Pallant (2020), moderate standard deviation values indicate consistency and suitability of data for advanced statistical procedures.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Entrepreneurial Orientation	3.88	0.64
Soft TQM	4.09	0.57
Affective Commitment	3.74	0.83
Work Performance	3.97	0.61

The findings demonstrate that respondents generally perceived their organizations as practicing quality-oriented management approaches that positively influence employee commitment and performance.

4.5 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs. According to Henseler et al. (2009), the measurement model assessment ensures that the

indicators adequately represent the underlying latent variables.

The analysis included:

- Indicator reliability
- Internal consistency reliability
- Convergent validity
- Discriminant validity

4.5.1 Indicator Reliability

Indicator reliability was assessed through factor loadings. Hair et al. (2019) recommended that

factor loadings should exceed 0.50 for acceptable reliability.

The findings revealed that all indicator loadings ranged between 0.71 and 0.89, exceeding the

minimum threshold value. Therefore, all indicators were retained for further analysis.

4.5.2 Internal Consistency Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values were used to evaluate internal consistency.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Entrepreneurial Orientation	0.90	0.92
Soft TQM	0.94	0.95
Affective Commitment	0.88	0.91
Work Performance	0.91	0.93

5. Theoretical Implications

The study contributes significantly to organizational behavior, entrepreneurship, and quality management literature by integrating entrepreneurial orientation, soft TQM practices, affective commitment, and work performance into a single framework.

The findings extend Affective Events Theory by demonstrating how entrepreneurial and quality management practices shape employees' emotional attachment and behavioral outcomes within SMEs.

6. Practical Implications

The practical implications for management and HR practices. Organizations that actively cultivate affective commitment through supportive leadership, recognition programs, career development opportunities, and participative decision-making are more likely to build a highly engaged and productive workforce. By prioritizing affective commitment, organizations can reduce turnover, enhance motivation, and create a sustainable competitive advantage, particularly in dynamic and knowledge-driven environments where employee performance is critical.

It suggests that SMEs seeking sustainable competitive advantage should simultaneously develop entrepreneurial capabilities, strengthen quality management practices, and cultivate employee commitment. These organizational investments are likely to produce long-term improvements in employee productivity,

organizational effectiveness, and business sustainability.

8. Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research Directions

The present study examined the impact of entrepreneurial orientation and soft TQM practices on work performance with the mediating role of affective commitment in SMEs. The findings confirmed that entrepreneurial orientation and soft TQM practices significantly improve employee work performance and emotional commitment.

The study concludes that organizations emphasizing innovation, leadership support, teamwork, employee involvement, and continuous improvement are more likely to develop emotionally committed employees who demonstrate superior work performance.

The study adopted a cross-sectional design, limiting causal interpretation over time. Future studies may employ longitudinal research designs to examine long-term relationships. The study focused on textile SMEs; therefore, future research may examine other industrial sectors and geographic regions. Future studies may also investigate additional mediating or moderating variables such as organizational culture, leadership style, or psychological empowerment.

The findings provide valuable theoretical and practical insights for researchers, managers, and policymakers seeking to improve SME competitiveness and organizational sustainability.

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