Strategic Managerial Shift at Retail Stores to Boost Positivity Among Employees in Post-Pandemic Scenario

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Abstract

Retail is one of the most severely impacted sectors by the COVID-19 pandemic. The end of a pandemic is no relief for managers as the recovery phase is all the more challenging. In the 'new normal,' consumers' reluctance to visit stores adds to retail store managers' global challenges. Store managers had to rethink their business plans to innovate for sustenance. The article demonstrates a novel approach to discovering the strategic shift of the managers of the retail stores for apparel to boost positivity from the employees' subjective perspective in the post-pandemic era. Dynamic, ingenious, and morally stable leadership styles help to draw insights for exploring the mechanism with which the managers of the retail stores of apparel brands induce positive organizational behavior—the links of the constructs of a theoretical model frame into hypotheses. The sample is of 300 employees in apparel retail stores. Structural equation modeling empirically validated the approaches. The findings revealed that only an ingenious leadership style could induce positivity among the current employees in apparel retail stores. The study will give valuable insights into the applications of store managers to implement novel strategic decisions in their leadership styles.

Keywords: Post-pandemic era, dynamic leader, ingenious leader, morally stable leader, positive organizational behavior, structural equation modeling

Introduction

During the pandemic, three lessons acquired from COVID-19 are: satisfying consumer expectations, attending to employee needs promptly, and weathering an unplanned economic downturn. Three things are essential for surviving a financial crisis: technology, trust, and leaders (Ramakumar & Priyadarshini, 2021). Additionally, an organization's personnel are crucial to its success in resolving crises. Unexpected events don't have to affect an engaged worker's performance (Goel & Singh, 2019). For executives, effectively managing human resources in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment can be challenging. On the other hand, poor leadership can impede an organization's ability to flourish and ultimately result in its demise. Effective leadership can help businesses overcome all obstacles and maximize success (Satish et al., 2019). Research continues to focus on how managers in each

industry adapt to the uncertainties in their business operations' social, political, and economic scenarios (Grimmer, 2022). People in high positions changed their leadership styles to achieve organizational goals (Amrutrao, 2022). An effective plan to allocate the available resources will help the organizations to perform and sustain (Alsharif et al., 2021). The managers set new priorities, adjusted their initial business plans, and redirected the existing resources (Azevedo et al., 2022). As part of recovery leadership, managers must familiarize their employees with the newly adapted strategies (Wedell-Wedellsoborg, 2020).

The recovery phase is possible with the cooperation of the employees toward the change in leadership style and approach (Fenwick et al., 2021). How the employees perceive their career goals and their managers' strategic shift will determine an organization's sustenance and resilience (Mun et al., 2022).

Since the pandemic's onset, scholars, practitioners, and policymakers constantly explore business operations to adapt to the lockdowns and social distancing, government stimulus, and other support measures (Grimmer, 2022). Anjum et al. (2022) identified that human resource management (HRM) in organizations had to maintain, engage and boost the morale of their workers. HRM has to give them the flexibility to maintain a work-life balance. Pantano et al. (2020) explained the challenges of retailers from the managers' and consumers' perspectives and found solutions to address them. They suggested rethinking agile retailing, identifying a new role for retailers towards society, encouraging digital communication, and keeping the interests of the consumers as the core of their business. Soomro et al. (2022) explored that control of emotions, a sense of responsibility, and positive thoughts are hard to combat in manufacturing. For small and medium enterprises (SMEs), dealing with innovation, a sense of responsibility, cognitive processes, involvement and differentiation, and positive thoughts can be challenging. For large firms, it is hard to combat work-life balance and decision-making. Ricou et al. (2021) examined if the confidence level is strong among politicians, journalists, and professionals from science and other mystical dimensions. The results found that medical, science, and education professionals had high confidence levels.

In contrast, politicians and journalists needed higher confidence levels. They further concluded that professionals from different fields must collaborate and boost each other's confidence.

Alsharif et al. (2021) found that the leadership style could not decrease the insecurity of employees. Porkodi (2022) found that a supportive and cooperative workforce could provide healthy working conditions. Porkodi (2022) further recommend the implementation of various leadership tactics for the post-covid recovery of organizations from the issues instigated by the pandemic. Khaled et al. (2020) highlighted the need for managers with high initiative who can define clear goals and give reasonable deadlines to their employees. They need to show flexibility in the execution of strategies and developing comprehensive action plans.

The present study will address the research gaps in extant literature. Since the pandemic began, research has focused on positive organizational behavior in the resilience of workers for different industries in various contexts. Organizations prioritize hiring and retaining qualified workers in order to maximize their contribution and maintain competitiveness. It is important to consider how employees see human resource management (HRM) procedures. Arora and Pratibha (2021) investigated how workers in an IT company felt about the HRM procedures. The current literature identifies the unique challenges faced by HRM professionals (Anjum et al., 2022), how the challenges can impact the strength of workers (Soomro et al., 2022), and various intervention types to combat the obstacles (Pantano et al., 2020). Researchers explored the confidence levels of different professionals to deal with the challenges (Ricou et al., 2021) and the impact of the leadership style adopted by managers and owners towards employees to deal with the challenges (Alsharif et al., 2021).

The various leadership tactics can solve the issues instigated by the pandemic. There need to be more studies on the impact of organization-oriented leadership approaches on post-pandemic recovery. The existing literature needs to discuss the

influence of dynamic, ingenious, and morally stable leaders on positive organizational behavior from the employee's perspective in retail stores.

The study will contribute to the current literature on post-pandemic recovery. First, the study focuses on an emerging economy where the flight to online shopping was evident as the consumers could avail of discounted prices and offers. Second, prior research has determined that an empathetic and approachable manager in the current post-pandemic scenario will make the employees more cooperative and dedicated to their work. Therefore, the findings will help discover novel leadership approaches that can help managers find a solution for the employees to adapt and perform in unpredictable conditions. Third, the study will contribute to the literature on positive organizational behavior. The findings will focus on the employees' subjective perspectives and attitudes toward their managers as they work toward sustainability and resilience. Fourth, the study's results will provide important information about the strategic decisions that apparel business owners, policymakers, and retail managers can make. The findings will give them ideas to lead projects and initiatives in the 'new normal.' To the researchers' knowledge, no other study has explored the impact of dynamic, ingenious, and morally stable leaders on positive organizational behavior in retail stores for garments. The study is unique because it will determine the factors leading to the deficit of a particular leadership style.

The retail industry in emerging economies is trying to overcome the significant financial and economic shock. Existing businesses are finding ways to sustain themselves, and new companies are looking for opportunities. For leadership lessons from the pandemic, current research aims to explore the strategic shift of store brands from an employee's subjective perspective.

Drawing upon the broaden-and-build theory, Yan et al. (2023) determined the impact of positive leadership on employee engagement with the mediating role of the employees' state positive effect. The moderating effect of the individualism-collectivism orientation in the Chinese cultural context was analyzed using the broaden-and-build theory. Hierarchical linear modeling tested the hypotheses. In a similar line of research, the present study considers three types of leaders: dynamic, ingenious, and morally stable, who will influence positive organizational behavior. Structural equation modeling (SEM) statistically validated the theoretical framework. The survey participants were employees of apparel retail stores in the urban areas of the city of Kolkata.

The article begins with an introduction that will identify the research gaps and define the objective to address them. The second section of the study will highlight the theoretical framework and the hypotheses, followed by the method in section 3. The fourth section describes the results and discussion in section 4. Implications are in section 5, and the article concludes with the prospects for future research to overcome the limitations in section 6.

Theoretical background and hypotheses development

The broaden-and-build theory by Fredrickson (2004) supported the study. The theory explains the form and usefulness of a subset of positive emotions like joy, interest, contentment, and love. These positive emotions broaden an individual's momentary thought-action repertoire. Joy sparks the urge to play, interest sparks the urge to explore, and contentment sparks the desire to savor and integrate. Love sparks the recurring cycle of these urges within safe, close relationships. The positive emotions will broaden mindsets in contrast to narrowed attitudes sparked by negative emotions like attack or fleeing. Broadening perspectives will help discover novel and creative actions, ideas, and social bonds and eventually build an individual's physical, intellectual, social, and psychological

resources. The broaden-and-build theory will provide a structural framework to help explore the factors influencing the positive organizational behavior of retail stores of men's apparel in the post-pandemic era.

Recent research focuses on leadership traits that can improve the financial health of an organization after a crisis. Based on the broaden-and-build theory, the present study uses three leadership approaches to identify three leadership styles for the study. We used the traits defined by positive leadership, job crafting, and work as calling theories to identify three leadership styles: dynamic, ingenious, and morally stable leaders.

Positive leadership is the strength and ability to demonstrate excellent behavior, a confident and optimistic nature, and the ability to motivate employees' ethics (Malinga et al., 2019). Organizations have gradually shifted towards positive leadership to provide a positive work environment for employees by building teamwork and trust (Malinga et al., 2019). The positive leadership reliability value from a previous Yan et al. (2023) study was 0.89. Based on the traits of a leader defined by the positive leadership theory, we determined that the leader is dynamic.

Job crafting is a type of proactive work behavior that can help employees to enhance their performance within their preferences, skills, and requirements (Tims et al., 2022). The job demands-resources model was used as a theoretical framework and empirically validated with SEM to find that employees can increase engagement and performance in their work through job crafting (Tims et al., 2015). The job crafting's reliability value from a previous Duffy et al. (2019) study was 0.82. Based on the traits of a leader defined by job crafting, we determined that the leader is ingenious.

Work as a calling considers the meaning and purpose of an employee to the job, help others achieve a common goal, and feel committed to the work, both externally and internally (Duffy et al., 2018). The employees' motivation to pursue calling at work had a reliability value of 0.92 from a previous study by Duffy et al. (2019). Based on the traits of a leader defined by work as calling; we determined that the leader is morally stable.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework. Figure 1 shows that dynamic, ingenious, and morally stable leaders influence positive organizational behavior.

Dynamic leader

Managers must be empathetic (Vercueil & Nicolaides, 2021). For this purpose, they must show flexibility and respect employees' ideas and opinions while supervising their engagement with the given job (Schwantes, 2020). After the lockdown, interpersonal leadership and the ability of the managers to set clear goals for themselves and the employees will help engage the employees in their job (Aslam et al., 2022). Managers must lead with the ability to make sense of a situation and improve the utilization of the available technology (Dirani et al., 2020). Proper communication with the subordinates will help them to gain support during challenging times (Einwiller et al., 2021). We can determine the effectiveness of leadership with the ability to give meaningful responsibilities, learn from past experiences, and acknowledge the fear and anxiety of their employees (Koehn, 2020).

A dynamic leader (DL) can engage their employees by being empathetic and flexible, setting clear goals, improving the available technology, and developing proper communication to understand their fears and anxieties. A prior study by Tucker and Lam (2014) determined that a dynamic leadership style that is collaborative and inclusive is better than the traditional style, which involves hierarchy, control, and a command approach

toward their employees. Therefore, in this context, the current study will determine a dynamic leader's impact on positive organizational behavior in the post-pandemic era.

H1: A dynamic leader has a significant positive influence on inducing positivity among employees in stores in the post-pandemic era

Ingenious leader

In the current scenario, the manager's responsibility is to increase job satisfaction and keep the employees engaged (Dong & Zhong, 2022). Leaders must have an incredible sense of initiative in unfavorable situations to utilize each opportunity (Dabic et al., 2021). Employee retention depends on recognizing their efforts, the work environment, and the perceptions of the managers' leadership style. An ingenious leader (IL) can keep employees engaged and satisfied, especially during challenging times. Therefore, in this context, the current study will determine the impact of ingenious leaders on positive organizational behavior during the post-pandemic era, which is nothing less than challenging for retail stores.

H2: Ingenious leader has a significant positive influence on inducing positivity among employees in stores in the post-pandemic era

Morally stable leader

There is a scope for research for knowledge about the mechanisms of ethical leadership (Zhang et al., 2018). Leadership is not simply the ability of the leader to lead but the dynamic relationship between the leader and the employees (Gini, 1997). Ethical or moralized leadership is an unparalleled force that can unite individuals for a compelling purpose (Fehr et al., 2015). Managers must be emotionally stable to take care of the well-being of the employees and have fruitful conversations with

them, which can lead to innovation and profit (Dirani et al., 2020). A study by Fadhil et al. (2021) ascertained that moral intelligence could strengthen strategic organizational leadership. The researchers showed a significant effect on the dimensions of the leader's moral intelligence in enhancing the elements of strategic leadership for organizations. Therefore, in this context, the current study will determine the impact of morally stable leaders (MSL) on positive organizational behavior in the post-pandemic era.

H3: Morally stable leader has a significant positive influence on inducing positivity among employees in stores in the post-pandemic era

Positive Organizational Behaviour

Positive organizational behavior (POB) focuses on building the employees' strength to enhance their psychological capital and performance (Pattnaik & Jena, 2021). The pandemic has deeply affected the work environment in organizations as the fear of uncertainty and anxiety prevails among employees, and poor leadership can lead to employee retaliation (Kakarika et al., 2022). Theoretical research by Somani (2021) has suggested incorporating behavior changes to increase employee engagement. Delibasic et al. (2021) explored the observed trends in employee behavior and work performance that are causing a change in organizational behavior in the context of the motivation, ability, role perceptions, and situational factors (MARS) model. Enhancing positivity by managers will help increase the employees' commitment to their job. Examining organizational behavior is necessary as it considers the behavior of the employees and their relationship with the organization. The positive organizational behavior reliability value from a previous study by Ogwueleka and Ikediashi (2021) was 0.92.

Figure 1 presents a theoretical framework based on the dynamic, ingenious, and morally stable

leadership approaches to explore the mechanism with which the managers of the retail stores of apparel brands induce positive organizational behavior, with possible scope for future studies.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework to determine the impact of dynamic, ingenious, and morally stable leadership approaches on positive organizational behavior in the post-pandemic era.
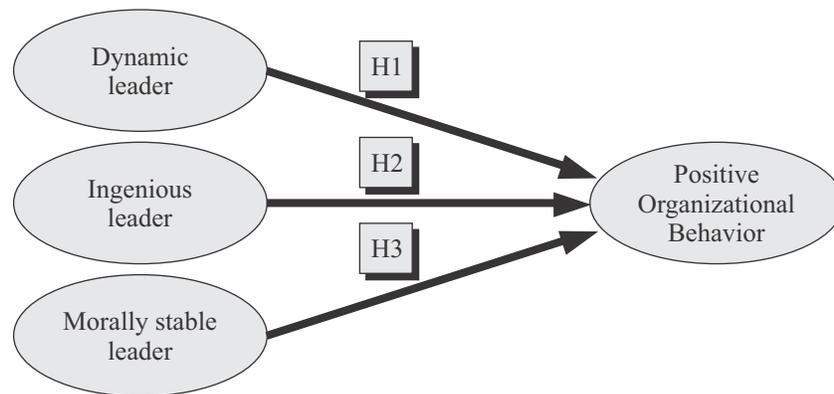
Source: The Authors

Methods

Participants

The survey considered the urban areas of a metro city in India, Kolkata, which is also the capital city of West Bengal. Kolkata helped to get varied information from many apparel stores for various brands. Eighty percent of the textile production happens in 10 cities, with Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, and Kolkata being four of them (Khurana, 2022). The employees, who were voluntarily ready to participate, had the knowledge and experience of working in retail stores before the pandemic to highlight the strategic shift of their manager's leadership style in the post-pandemic.

Instrument development

The measuring scales are adapted based on extant literature in Table A1 (Appendix). The research on the current crisis has a lot of scope and potential for exploration, and the findings can apply as a survey instrument in future research. The questionnaire had three segments; the first covered the questions on demographics, the second covered approach-based inquiries, and the third covered positive organization behavior-related inquiries. We developed the measurement of the variables by employing a five-point Likert-type scale. We chose nineteen items based on an in-depth study, designed a structured questionnaire, and distributed it to 20 participants for the pilot study. Their feedback helped develop the survey's final questionnaire (Hertzog, 2008). SPSS 29 and AMOS 29 software analyzed the data.

Data Collection

A two-stage non-probability or quota sampling technique determined the sample of 300 within two months. The sample comprised 158 male and 142 female participants. The median age of the participants was 167, between 20-30 years, primarily qualified as graduates, and the majority of 278 participants earned ≤ US$ 500. We had chosen the participants very judiciously to avoid bias. Initially, we collected the data from 321 participants, out of which we had to reject 21 questionnaires due to incompletion. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the sample.

Table 1. The demographic profile of participants

Age-wise Participants				Gender-wise participants		Education			Monthly income	
20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Male	Female	Undergraduate	Graduate	Postgraduate	≤US$ 500	US$ 501 – US$ 1000
167	42	78	13	158	142	23	258	19	278	22

Common method bias

Campbell and Fiske (1959) coined common method bias or CMB. A part of the study's variance that outlined the existence of a multi-trait multi-method matrix was for the methods adapted for the study (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). It can lead to two significant problems. First, it can cause biases in the reliability and validity of the measure (Le et al., 2009). Second, using the same method causes biases in estimates of a relationship between two or more constructs (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Whether the CMB inflates or deflates the relationship can affect the hypotheses testing, leading to type I and II errors, and also form wrong opinions for the amount of variance of a criterion of the predictor variable (Podsakoff et al., 2011). It can increase or decrease the discriminant validity of the measurement scales. CMB remains a concern in survey research (Spector et al., 2019).

A single common factor strategy reduces the common method bias and the confusion on the seeming correlation between the constructs (Podsakoff et al., 2011). We considered nonresponse bias while calculating sample generalizability to the population (Armstrong & Overton, 1977). Nonresponse bias was assessed, with paired sample t-tests, on items of interest. It was established from the findings that there is a significant effect on construct measurement items. The present study identifies the common method bias using Harman's single-factor test. The result shows that in one-factor analysis, the percentage of the total variance is 16.7 percent, which is much lower than 50 percent, so it may conclude that there is no common method bias in the current data set.

Reliability and validity

Next, we analyzed the reliability and validity of the scale. Table 2 presents the findings of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy as 0.59 and Barlett's Test of Sphericity as 2214.51.

Table 2. Tabular representation of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.59
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	2214.51
Df	171
Sig.	<0.01

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

Standard deviation

Standard deviation (SD) is the dispersion or variation in normally distributed data. SD denotes the accuracy of the mean representation in the sample data (Lee et al., 2015). There is a requirement to describe the characteristics of the sample used in the study, as the results will apply to only similar people. SD will depict the effects of the average person's distance from the mean (Andrade,

2020). If SD is more, a wide scatter in the values is observed from the mean value and vice-versa (Andrade, 2020).

Confidence Intervals

Confidence interval (CI) is the range of values to know how well the sample statistics can estimate the population value from the population sample. The two ends of a CI are known as limits or bounds. If CI is two-sided, it denotes the population parameter below and above with lower and upper bound, respectively. A one-sided CI means upper or lower bound (Hazra, 2017). CI measures the sampling error, and the narrower the range of values, the more certainly the best estimates of the

study population that affect the actual size of the sample are determined. A unique relationship exists between the 95 percent confidence interval and a two-sided five percent significance level. The advantage of the 95 percent confidence interval over the p-value is that it provides information about the effect's size, direction, and uncertainty. When the 95 percent confidence interval does not include 0 for absolute measures of association (e.g., mean differences) or 1 for relative measures of association (e.g., odds ratios), then the association is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) (Patino & Ferreira, 2015). Table 4 depicts the results for SD and CI. The SD for DL, IL, MSL, and POB is 0.72, 0.74, 0.77, and 0.79.

Table 4. Tabular representation of the descriptive statistics that determine the standard deviation and confidence intervals.

Descriptive			Statistic
DL	Mean		4.20
	95 % Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.12
		Upper Bound	4.28
	Standard Deviation		0.72
IL	Mean		3.77
	95 % Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.69
		Upper Bound	3.85
	Standard Deviation		0.74
MSL	Mean		3.70
	95 % Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.61
		Upper Bound	3.79
	Standard Deviation		0.77
POB	Mean		4.14
	95 % Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.05
		Upper Bound	4.22
	Standard Deviation		0.79

Testing measurement validity: convergent and discriminant validity

We determined the dependability of the constructs with Cronbach's alpha (Appendix 1). Kline and

Little (2016) suggested that the threshold value for Cronbach's alpha should be 0.70 and above. Cronbach's alpha for all the constructs in the study exceeded the threshold value of 0.70. The study examined the convergent and discriminant validity

of the constructs with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Convergent validity

As suggested by Hair et al. (2010), SFL or λ, composite reliability (CR), and the average variance extracted (AVE) checked the convergent validity. Appendix 2 presents the findings for testing the measurement model.

As Nunnally (1978) suggested, the measures must have high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha of more than 0.70 for all latent variables is statistically accepted. A total of 5 articles were removed for no contribution to a simple factor structure and needed to meet the minimum criterion. Articles removed are DL1, DL4, IL1, IL5, and POB4. After the reduction, the total number of items was 14. Cronbach's alpha for dynamic leader was 0.64, ingenious leader 0.75, morally stable leader 0.74, and positive organizational behavior 0.68.

Hair et al. (2010) suggested that the standardized factor loadings (SFL) must be more than 0.5. Hence, this study eliminated factor loading equal to or less than 0.50 for improved results.

CR determines the internal consistency of the items. Hair et al. (2010) and Peng and Lai (2010) suggested that the latent constructs tested for CR

must be within the accepted value of > 0.70. The results showed that the CR for all the items to be greater than 0.70, as statistically taken. The CR of a dynamic leader was 0.73, the ingenious leader was 0.91, the morally stable leader was 0.85, and positive organizational behavior was 0.73.

Hair et al. (2010) suggested that the AVE must be more than 0.50 to be statistically accepted. The AVE for dynamic leader was 0.51, ingenious leader 0.78, morally stable leader 0.55, and positive organizational behavior 0.51.

Therefore, all the items considered for further study are close to the required reliability. SFL, CR, and AVE show convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010).

Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity is the degree to which the indicators of the various lateral constructs differ (Bagozzi, 1994). Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested that the inter-construct correlation square root (SIC) must be lower than the AVE values to be statistically accepted. The square root of AVE values, or discriminant values (DV) of the items, refers to the inter-item correlation between the two latent variables. The values shown in Table 3 confirm discriminant validity among the latent variables. The findings indicate that the latent variables are not statistically overlapping with no multicollinearity.

**Table 3. Tabular presentation of the discriminant validity among the latent variables**

	Dynamic leader	Ingenious leader	Morally stable leader
Dynamic leader	0.71		
Ingenious leader	0.09	0.88	
Morally stable leader	0.08	0.11	0.74

Development of the measurement model

We developed the SEM model with AMOS 29. As

discussed above, the internal reliability verified the measurement model, and Figure 2 presents the refined SEM.

Figure 2. SEM to determine the impact of dynamic leaders, ingenious leaders, and morally stable leaders on positive organizational behavior.
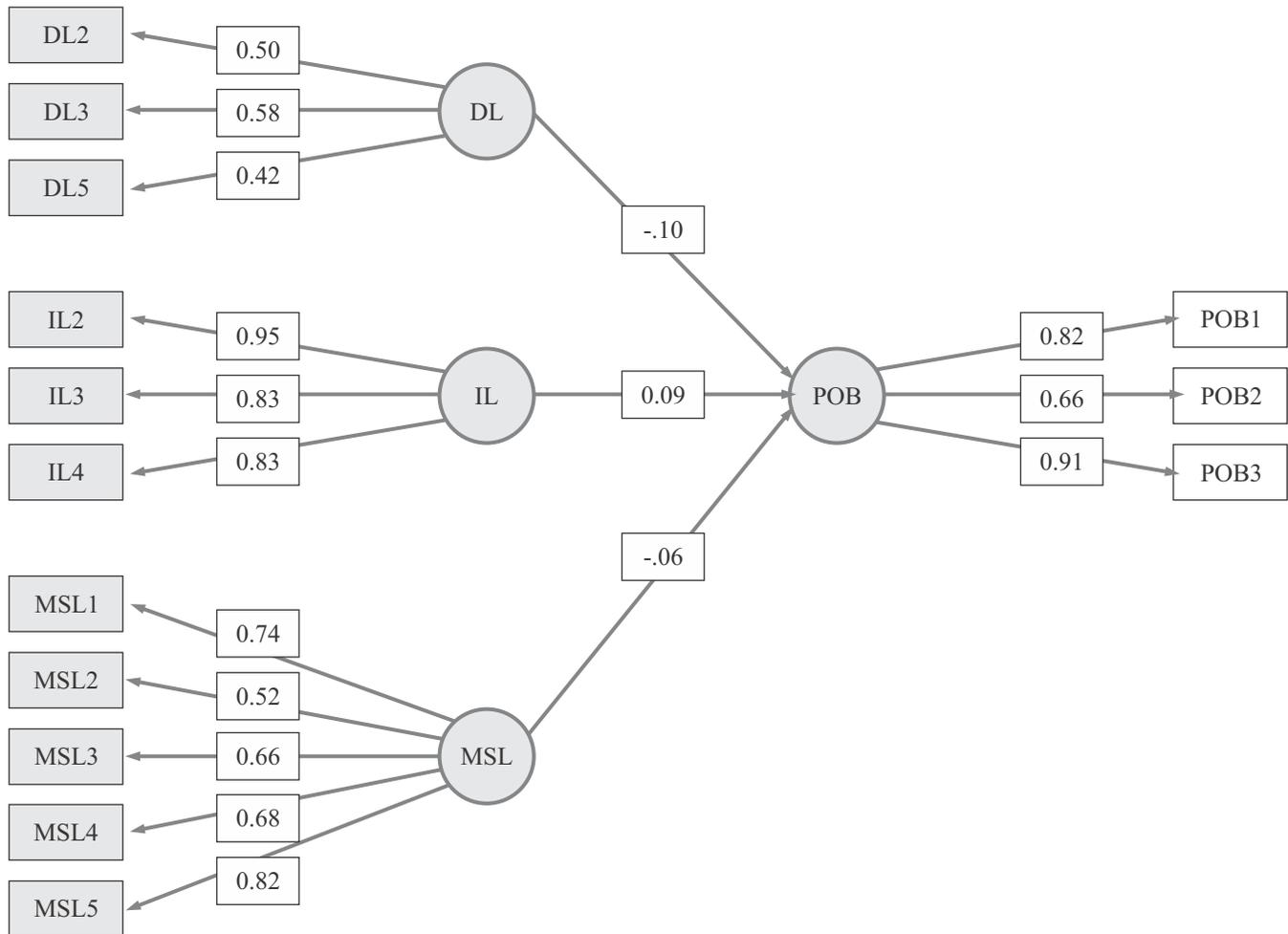
4.4 Results of the structural model

Table 5 presents the fit indices of the refined research model. Absolute, incremental, and parsimony fit measures determined that the model fit well.

For absolute fit measures, Chi-square ($\chi2$) is 341.52, and the degrees of freedom (*df*) was 81. $\chi2/df = 4.22$ (accepted value is above 3). The goodness of fit index (GFI) is 0.88 and is close to the accepted value of above 0.90; the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) value was 0.10, and the accepted value was <0.10.

For incremental fit measures, the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) showed a value of 0.85, close to the accepted value above 0.80. The normed fit index (NFI), relative fit index (RFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and comparative fit index (CFI) were 0.81, 0.78, 0.85, and 0.84, respectively, and the accepted value of each is above 0.90.

For parsimony fit measures, the parsimony comparative of fit index (PCFI) was 0.75; the accepted value was above 0.50, and the parsimony normed fit index (PNFI) was 0.71; the obtained value was above 0.50.

The results of a large sample of 300 indicated that the model exhibited a good fit.

Table 5. Fit indices of the research model before and after refinement

| Fit Indices	Accepted Values	Model values
Absolute Fit Measures		
Chi-square ($\chi2$)		341.52
Degrees of freedom (df)		81
X2/df	>3	4.22
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	>0.90	0.88
Root mean square error of		
approximation (RMSEA)	<0.10	0.10
Incremental fit measures		
Adjusted goodness of fit Index (AGFI)	>0.80	0.85
Normed fit index (NFI)	>0.90	0.81
Comparative fit index (CFI)	>0.90	0.84
Incremental fit index (IFI)	>0.90	0.85
Relative fit index (RFI)	>0.90	0.78
Parsimony fit measures		
Parsimony comparative of fit		
index (PCFI)	>0.60	0.75
Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI)	>0.50	0.71

Interpretation of the structural model

Figure 3 presents the graphical representation of the data. For the hypothesis to be accepted, the p-value should be <0.05 at 95% CI (Kock, 2016). Statistical evidence in Table 6 determines that the impact of dynamic leaders on positive organizational behavior was negative and insignificant (b = -0.11, t = -1.30, p = 0.20). The results did not support H_1 (Dynamic leader significantly influences inducing positivity among retail stores in the post-pandemic era). The impact of ingenious leader on positive organizational behavior was positive and significant (b = 0.09, t = 1.42, p = 0.03), supporting H_2 (Ingenious leader has a significant positive influence on inducing positivity among employees in stores in the post-pandemic era). The impact of a morally stable leader on positive organizational behavior was negative and insignificant (b = -0.06, t = -0.91, p = 0.37), not supporting H_3 (Morally stable leader has a significant positive influence on inducing positivity among employees in stores in the post-pandemic era).

Table 6. Structural model assessment to determine the t-values and significance of hypotheses testing.

Hypothesis	Relationship between exogenous and endogenous	Standardized Estimates	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	POB<--- DL	-0.11	-1.30	0.20	Not accepted
H2	POB <--- IL	0.09	1.42	0.03	Accepted
H3	POB <--- MSL	-0.06	-0.91	0.37	Not accepted

Figure 3. Graphical representation of the testing of the hypotheses of the conceptual framework
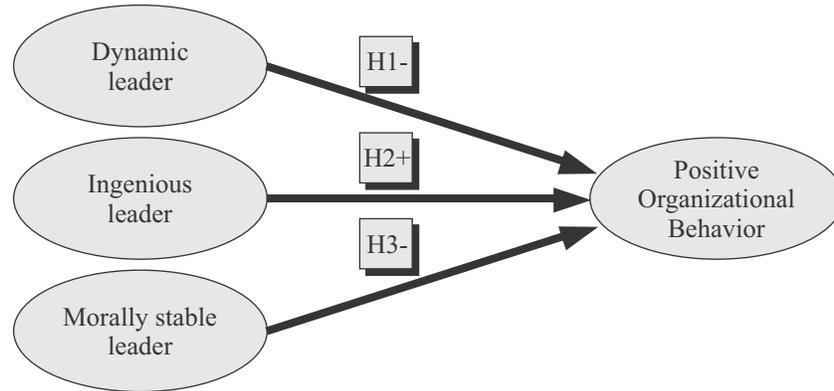
Graphical representation of the testing of the hypotheses of the conceptual framework reveals that in the post-pandemic era, ingenious leader positively impacts positive organizational behavior. In contrast, dynamic leaders and morally stable leaders harm apparel stores.

Implications

Theoretical implications

The impact of the different leadership approaches is an exciting topic for research in various business domains as it will vary (Tims et al., 2022). The study provides a scholarly understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to two of the three approaches considered, dynamic leadership and morally stable leader, negatively impacting positive organizational behavior. Undoubtedly the pandemic has emotionally exhausted the workforce at different levels of management. Therefore, the managers fighting their anxieties and fears cannot boost employee positivity. The results of the current study add to the theoretical literature in the area of research on employees' perspective of their manager's efforts to boost positivity in their stores in the post-pandemic era in an emerging economy. Although many studies have focused on positive organizational behavior, there is a scope to explore the mechanism of a strategic shift to boost employee positivity in retail stores of men's clothing brands in the post-

pandemic era. This research used positive leadership, job crafting, and work as a calling to build a model to understand the strategic decisions taken by the manager toward resilience and sustainability from the employee's perspective. The current study is the result of calling for future research or intervention on the influence of job crafting on employees in various contexts by Svicher and Di Fabio (2021). With positive leadership, job crafting, and work as a calling constantly emphasized to inject positivity among employees in an organization in the post-pandemic scenario, it is not surprising that it has gained the attention of researchers. Nevertheless, there lies a gap between theoretical and practical knowledge for implementing the approaches in an organization's daily practices. Also, the outcome must be more evident if the methods are appropriately implemented (Meiryani et al., 2022; Roczniewska et al., 2023).

Managerial implications

The findings did not accept H_1 and H_3. Therefore, positive leadership and work as a calling are not inducing positive organizational behavior among employees in apparel stores in the post-pandemic era. COVID-19 has severely impacted the employees' behavior and the organization's climate (Kakarika et al., 2022). The findings align with a prior study on the impact of leadership in different contexts that all leadership styles cannot boost

employee positivity. Meiryani et al. (2022) determined that transformational leadership did not significantly affect the performance of employees during the pandemic. Similarly, Alsharif et al. (2021) found that entrepreneurial leadership could not decrease employee insecurity.

For resilience and sustenance, to gain back customers in the offline market, apparel companies must emphasize implementing positive leadership and work as a calling approach for modifying the leadership styles of managers of retail stores to be more effective. It will play a significant role in increasing employee satisfaction and commitment to the organization. The current study observed that the managers do put efforts into improving the visibility of the garments and ensuring a smooth customer experience in the stores after the pandemic. However, there is a scope for an emotional connection between the managers and employees in retail stores for apparel. Anxiety and fear continue to linger among vulnerable employees after the crisis. There is a need for better managers after the pandemic has affected the performance of the retail industry (Khaled et al., 2020). An argument highlights the need for clarity in confusion about the impact of positive leadership in organizations' constantly changing work culture (Malinga et al., 2019).

Positive leadership, considered in the study, is crucial in escalating challenges, but there is a scope for research in different contexts (Malinga et al., 2019). Organizations must encourage training programs on leadership to help managers develop good communication and an emotional connection with the employees (Yan et al., 2023). They must make efforts to train their managers to practice empathy. The organization must also provide a chance for communication between employees and managers in, for example, informal meetings (Kakarika et al., 2022). Empathy is essential for maintaining healthy professional relations in the post-pandemic era (Anjum et al., 2022).

Similarly, communication is also an effective way to solve many misunderstood problems. Even before the pandemic, Indian employees of retail stores were unhappy with job insecurity and low salary (Halasagi & Jamuni, 2018). The trade-off between organizational goals and employees' well-being is a balance organization must attain in the post-pandemic scenario (Babapour Chafi et al., 2022). The findings accept H_2, meaning job crafting boosts positivity among employees in retail stores. Prior research ascertains that job crafting has catalyzed employee positivity and the workers' performance in the post-pandemic era (Svicher & Di Fabio, 2021). Job crafting can achieve decent work from vulnerable workers in the post-pandemic scenario (Svicher & Di Fabio, 2021).

The uniqueness of the present study lies in the fact that the survey gave insight into the concept of each leadership approach, developed a theoretical model with all three approaches, and statistically validated and backed with own research work. Researchers can use the survey instrument in related research to find the implementation of leadership styles for retail stores of other product categories. Future research can use one or any combination of two or all three approaches to develop a theoretical model in different contexts. As the research area on positive organizational behavior for sustainability is increasing, more related research is needed to learn about leadership tactics to boost positivity in an organization in the post-pandemic era. The current study also includes the employees' outlook for job satisfaction and future careers. Therefore, the findings will also contribute to career management literature for employees in retail stores. Boosting the employees' morale is one of the biggest concerns in an organization in the post-pandemic scenario. The results give an insight into the pandemic's effect on the apparel retail stores' workforce and be a subject of interest to the leaders of an organization. Due to stiff competition from online shopping, apparel retail stores help attract customers.

Despite the ongoing global crisis, research has considerable potential to understand employees' motivation at work. Managers alone cannot be solely responsible for it, as the cooperation of employees and the support of owners is also needed to create positive organizational behavior. In the post-pandemic era, the importance of a brand's behavior towards an employee can influence a customer's buying decision. Sashittal et al. (2023) showed that post-pandemic customers' intention to choose a brand takes into account many stresses, for example, the brand's behavior towards their employees. Consumers who had a dissatisfying experience with a brand try to reconcile with the brand by interacting with the pleasant personalities of the brand (Trump & Newman, 2021). The results will be helpful for retail store managers to understand the change in employees' behavior and reconsider their leadership style to motivate the employees to commit to their organization.

Conclusion

The study contributes to the pandemic recovery literature by focusing on the strategic shift of store brands to boost employee positivity. The findings determine how managers responded to the impact of the pandemic by adopting a change in their leadership style to enhance the employees' satisfaction, performance, and engagement. The results are lessons learned by managers of retail stores from the pandemic that can be valuable in changing their leadership style to adapt to the 'new normal.'

Research Limitations and Future Directions of Research

The study is descriptive and has limited theoretical contributions. Therefore, future research can cover the theoretical aspects of the strategies and practices through a wider theoretical lens. The response rate was lower than expected. The reason could be owing to the time we collected the data. It was before the festivities, wedding season, and the beginning of the year-end discounts available in stores in the country. Therefore, the cooperation from the staff was lesser than it would have been at other times of the year. Few employees hesitated to respond as it would expose their organization's culture and is against company policies. Only some human resource managers of top departmental stores in the country were utterly reluctant to allow any survey. The presence of store managers at the time of the study influenced the responses. There is a scope to further simplify the language of the questionnaires for ease of understanding. This research recommends a vernacular version of the questionnaires to facilitate the survey. Shorter statements for measurement items will save time for both the researcher and the participant, leading to easy employee participation and more study responses. Future studies can increase the sample size for better reliability and validity. As we statistically determined that the CMB was not a problem in the study, future research can consider various sources for data collection to reduce CMB further.

The study focuses on the clothing category in Kolkata in West Bengal, India. Other cities and countries can have varied responses owing to the difference in the impact of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions imposed by the government in different regions. Comparative studies can understand the difference in the strategic shift of the store brands to boost positivity in various economies. Related research can focus on other product categories. The study focused on three types of leadership that relate to positive organizational behavior: dynamic, ingenious, and morally stable. Other approaches can widen the motives to boost positivity among employees in retail stores. Future research can explore different leadership approaches and personal characteristics.

Informed Consent Statement:

Informed consent was obtained verbally from all subjects who participated in this study.

Data Availability Statement:

The article includes original contributions presented in the study. The corresponding author will respond to any further inquiries.

Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Tabular presentation of the sources of the scale for the measurement items and their reliability of constructs.

Serial number	Measurement Items	No. of constructs	Cronbach's alpha value	Sources of scale
Dynamic leader (DL)				
1	My manager has the required technical knowledge to meet the gaps between online as well as offline demand and supply (DL1);			Dirani et al., 2020; Amrutrao, 2022
2	To adopt the new market dynamics, my manager sets clear goals and provides meaningful roles (DL2);			Vercueil & Nicolaides, 2021; Aslam et al., 2022
3	My manager is very approachable and acknowledges my thoughts and fears in adjusting to the new normal (DL3);			Koehn, 2020; Einwiller et al., 2021; Vercueil & Nicolaides, 2021
4	My manager gives attention to my opinions and has a flexible approach to both the customers' and employees' problems (DL4);	5	0.52	Schwantes, 2020,
5	I work well with my manager to sail through complex situations (DL5).			Authors
Ingenious leader (IL)				
6	My manager is passionate about work, which motivates me to keep improving myself (IL1);			Obrenovic et al., 2021
7	My manager has scientific planning and creative solutions to increase the visibility of the garments in the store (IL2);			Obrenovic et al., 2021
8	My manager can innovate new sales models for a smooth and customized experience for customers (IL3);	5	0.79	Amrutrao, 2022
9	I feel engaged and satisfied with my job despite rapidly changing retail policies (IL4);			Dong & Zhong, 2022

10	My manager supports in-person training to update us with technologies and skills (IL5).			Authors
Morally stable leader (MSL)				
11	My manager boosts my morale to deal with the unpredictable nature of modern customers (MSL1);			Pattnaik & Jena, 2021
12	I can maintain a work-home balance under my manager's disciplined supervision (MSL2);			Amrutrao, 2022
13	I am confident that I can keep my job under the innovative retail solutions of my manager (MSL3);	5	0.77	Obrenovic et al., 2021
14	My manager is emotionally stable to handle customer detachment after the pandemic (MSL4);			Dirani et al., 2020
15	My manager helps me emotionally invest in the job by noticing and appreciating my hard work (MSL5).			Dirani et al., 2020; Schwantes, 2020
Positive Organisational Behaviour (POB)				
16	I have developed a resilient attitude at work after facing the new and rigorous challenge faced by the fashion industry (POB1);			Nassereddine et al., 2021; Soomro et al., 2022
17	I am optimistic about my career as the retail industry is undergoing a massive transformation (POB2);			Leslie-Miller et al., 2021; Ahmad & Bilal, 2022
18	I feel hopeful and confident about dealing with the burning issues and improving adaptability post-COVID-19 (POB3).	4	0.74	Leslie-Miller et al., 2021; Nassereddine et al., 2021; Ricou et al., 2021
19	After the pandemic, when we physically joined our organization, I felt that my organization had adopted various means to inject positivity among us (POB4).			Authors

Source: The authors

Table A2. Statistics of the construct items that depict the composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and average variance extracted.

Latent Variables	Items	Composite reliability (CR)	Cronbach's alpha	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Dynamic leader (DL)	To adopt the new market dynamics, my manager sets clear goals and provides meaningful roles (DL2);	0.73	0.64	0.51
	My manager is very approachable and acknowledges my thoughts and fears in adjusting to the new normal (DL3);			
	I work well with my manager to sail through complex situations (DL5).			
Ingenious leader (IL)	My manager has scientific planning and creative solutions to increase the visibility of the garments in the store (IL2);	0.91	0.75	0.78
	My manager can innovate new sales models for a smooth and customized experience for customers (IL3);			
	Despite rapidly changing retail policies, I feel engaged and satisfied with my job (IL4).			
Morally stable Leader (MSL)	My manager boosts my morale to deal with the unpredictable nature of modern customers (MSL1);	0.86	0.74	0.55
	I can maintain a work-home balance under my manager's disciplined supervision (MSL2);			
	I am confident that I can keep my job under the innovative retail solutions of my manager (MSL3);			
	My manager is emotionally stable to handle customer detachment after the pandemic (MSL4);			
	My manager helps me emotionally invest in the job by noticing and appreciating my hard work (MSL5).			

Positive Organizational Behaviour (POB)	I have developed a resilient attitude at work after facing the new and rigorous challenge faced by the fashion industry (POB1);	0.73	0.68	0.51
	I am optimistic about my career as the retail industry is undergoing a massive transformation (POB2);			
	I feel hopeful and confident about dealing with the burning issues and improving adaptability post-COVID-19 (POB3).			

Source: The authors

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