

The Impact of Job Cliques on The Employee's Sustainable Performance

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Abstract: The study aimed to explore the nature of the relationship between Job cliques and sustainable performance at the Technical College of management in Mosul. The Job cliques independent variable consisted of the dimensions of the job cliques, namely structural, communication as the sustainable performance dependent variable consisted of the sustainable performance as a dimensions, namely environmental, social, and economic. The study aimed to answer the following question that is the research problem; What is the level of impact of job cliques on the sustainable performance of employees in the investigated organization? For this purpose, study was carried out using descriptive analytical method with hypothetical framework that shows the hypotheses of study variables availability and correlation and influence between study variables at overall and dimensional levels. A sample of 115 employees of the organization investigated were selected and a questionnaire was distributed. To analyze the collected data, descriptive and inferential statistics are used, with SPSS Version 26 and SmartPLS software. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant correlation and effect between job cliques and employees' sustainable performance. The results showed that the more the job cliques, the more negative is the impact on the job sustainable performance in the dimensions of environment, social and economic. In addition, it was determined that leadership and communication aspects have the biggest influence in weakening sustainable performance in relation to lack of coordination, slow decision-making process and lack of information flow in the organization. The structural dimension also added to administrative complexity and lack of organizational flexibility. The study ended with some findings and recommendations, the most significant of which were the necessity of tackling the job cliques, which can be done by creating an organizational structure, improving the administrative communication system, and strengthening the managerial leadership to make quick and flexible decisions. These would help to enhance sustainable performance as well as to create a balance between the organization's economic, social and environmental goals.

Keywords: Organizational Cliques, Sustainable Performance, Technical College of management.

1. Introduction

In all organizations, the main focus of attention is the employee because they are the keys to the implementation of different activities which help in the generation of values and achievement of organizational goals. Over the last few years, the study of the role of employees in the organization has been a growing concern of researchers and study of the factors and phenomena affecting employees' performance has been growing in the field. The phenomenon that is most highlighted in this study is job cliques and their influence on the sustainable performance of employees. Organizations are social systems that depend on the interplay between formal and informal relationships among people working in the organization. But management typically focuses on the formal organization structure, rules and procedures.

Informal groups are also often formed in the workplace, when employees share common interests, beliefs, and thoughts as a result of socialization and common intellectual interests. These are typically called job cliques. These



cliques have a big influence in the attitudes, behaviors and job performances of the employees. Cliques within an organization can be said to be a double-edged sword. They can help to build a positive workplace culture by fostering cohesion, improving relationships, alleviating stressors, and boosting job satisfaction, on the positive side. However, they can hinder organizational functioning by blocking change, communicating false information or having a negative impact on organizational decisions which benefit a small group of people, but are not conducive to the overall goals of the organization.

In the development of the management sciences, the concept of the sustainable performance of employees has come into focus as a consequence, which describes the ability of employees to efficiently achieve organizational goals using the resources in an efficient manner and to maintain high productivity over a period of time. This has led to the interests and questions about social and organizational factors affecting sustainable performance being raised. One of the most significant of these factors is the presence of job cliques as they affect the nature of interactions in the workplace, and they both directly and indirectly impact sustainable performance, especially the economic, social and environmental aspects.

Based on the absence of any research that studies the job cliques and employees' sustainable performance in organizational environments in general and in the examined organizational environment in particular, the present study aims at exploring the implications of job cliques on the sustainable performance of employees in the local organizational environment represented by the Technical College of management in Mosul. The study aims to answer the following research question: What is the degree of influence of the job cliques on the sustainable performance of the employees of the investigated organization?

This study is therefore set to examine the association between job cliques and employee's sustainable performance. The conclusions show the importance of job cliques in the sustainable employee performance. The theoretical background and hypothesis development is presented in Section Two, research methodology, results, discussion and conclusions are presented in Section Three, and the study concludes with recommendations and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

Previous research and literature pertaining to the study of job cliques and employees' sustainable performance are reviewed in this section. According to the literature review, most previous studies have studied the job cliques as an independent variable. Informal groups, which are not bound by formal rules or objectives or leadership, are called job cliques. They tend to be spontaneous, small, and short-lived, and communication tends to be honest and friendly among members and based on mutual interests.

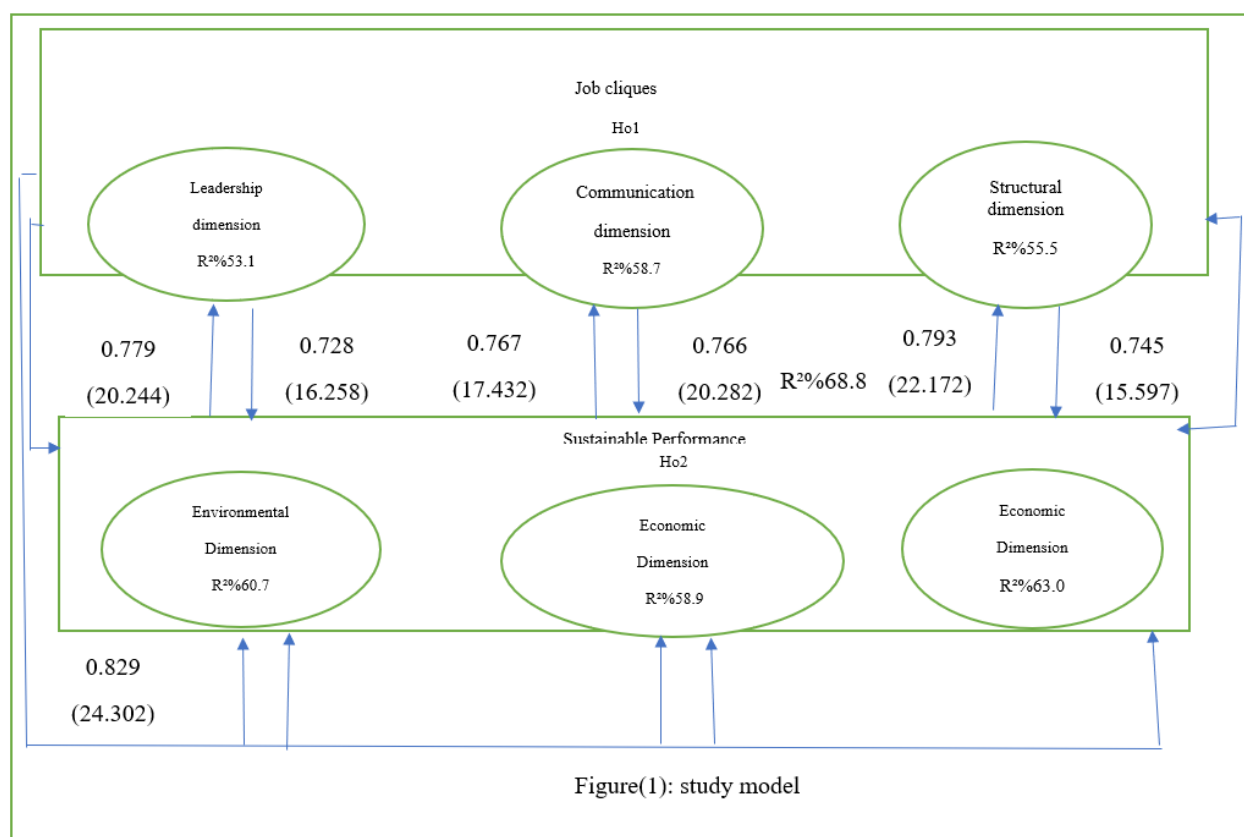
In the current study, job cliques are researched from three perspectives leadership perspective, communication perspective, and structural perspective. Leadership dimension involves the traits, qualifications and acquired skills of an employee which help them to lead an informal group. The communication dimension encapsulates a spontaneous communication network which is not constrained by hierarchy or formal organizational norms, but rather, is based on personal and social relationships within the organization. The structural dimension is the collection of informal social relationships and interactions that arise among employees in the organization and which generally shape the behavior of the employees, apart from the formal organizational hierarchy and formalized rules.

The few studies on sustainable performance measure sustainable performance as a dependent variable. Sustainable performance is when an organization can operate efficiently and sustainably in the long term to meet their objectives. It is both a part of the growth and a goal that organizations work towards achieving. Organizations focus on performance as it becomes the basis for meeting other organizational goals as they strive to build a competitive footing. The sustainable performance can be broadly broken down into three pillars, namely, environmental, social and economic performance. The environmental dimension is related to the way the organization manages its environmental policies and commitments. Social dimension is the dimension which relates to the way that the organization runs and meets its social responsibilities and how it contributes to the solution of social problems and issues. The economic dimension is related to the way in which the organization creates economic value for all stakeholders over the long term within a social and environmental framework.

The study carried out by Daniel (2018) amongst 319 employees showed that cliques in the organization positively influenced employee performance and that there was a positive level of relationship between job cliques and employee self-confidence in Nigerian organizations In the same way, Shadrack (2013) studied the influence of

informal groups on organizational performance and found a positive influence of job cliques on organizational performance. The study also found that clique norms, organizational norms and leadership had significant impact on organizational performance in India statistically. Another study done in Nigerian organizations by Chukuigwe (2022) indicated that the informal activity which was a form of job cliques positively influenced organizational growth and development. In Iraq, Hassan et al. (2023) have investigated the relationship and effect of ethical leadership with the performance of sustainable performance at Al-Mustaqbal University and obtained positive results. Moreover, Aggarwal et al. (2023) revealed that green HRM practices significantly and positively influenced sustainable performance of HR staff in healthcare institutions of India. Meetnam (2024) finally examined the industrial organizations in India with the help of the questionnaire and interview data. The results showed negative correlation between job cliques and organizational activities which suggested that the level of clique formation may have a negative influence on the organizational activities.

The literature review reviewed in this study results in two main hypotheses to be tested on the relationship between job cliques and the sustainable performance of employees. Based on the literature reviewed, the results of the current study indicate two main hypotheses that will be examined for the relationship between job cliques and employees' sustainable performance.



H1: Correlation Hypothesis

There is a statistically significant correlation between organizational cliques and each dimension of sustainable performance.

Sub-hypotheses:

- **H1a:** There is a statistically significant correlation between job cliques and the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainable performance.
- **H1b:** There is statistically significant correlation between job cliques and the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainable performance.

H2: Regression hypothesis

There is a statistically significant impact of job on sustainable performance and the dimensions of job cliques.

Sub-hypotheses:

- **H2a:** There is no statistically significant relationship between sustainable performance and the leadership, communication, and structural dimensions of organizational cliques.
- **H2b:** There is a statistically significant relationship between sustainable performance and the leadership, communication, and structural dimensions of organizational cliques.

Descriptive-analytical approach was chosen as the best method in this study in order to gain the

objectives of the study. The population for the study was employees of Technical College of management in the city of Mosul. The selection of the study participants was randomly done, which ensured adequate representation of the target population and reduced potential sampling bias. Data collection was mainly carried out by using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaires were sent to the selected participants who were randomly selected. The statistical software used for data analysis and hypothesis testing were SPSS Version 26 and SmartPLS. The data gathered were subjected to preliminary checks for statistical assumptions and requirements before analysis. Next, the importance of the links between the dimensions of organizational cliques and the dimensions of employees' sustainable performance was examined. The overall effect of organizational cliques on sustainable employee performance was also investigated. Finally, the effects of the job cliques on employees' sustainable performance were tested to understand how much influence these informal groups have on sustainable organizational outcomes.

4. Results and Discussions

The suitability of the suggested research model to the data obtained during the study was confirmed through the assessment of model fit indices that showed the acceptable fit of the model to the data and compliance with the necessary statistical criteria. Thus, the hypotheses of the study, formulated in the methodology part, have been tested as follows.

First: Correlation Hypotheses Testing

To verify the first main hypothesis and examine its validity, Spearman's correlation coefficient was calculated using **SPSS Version 26**. The results are presented below.

1. Testing the First Main Hypothesis

The first main hypothesis states:

H1: *There is a statistically significant relationship between job cliques and sustainable performance in the investigated organization.*

Table 1 presents the correlation analysis between job cliques and sustainable performance.

Table 1. Correlation Analysis between job Cliques and Sustainable Performance

Variables	Sustainable Performance	Sig.	Significance
Organizational Cliques	0.786	<0.001	Significant

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS Version 26 outputs.

As shown in Table 1, there is a strong positive correlation between job cliques and sustainable performance. The significance value associated with the correlation coefficient is less than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the first main hypothesis is accepted.

2. Testing the Relationship between job Cliques and the Dimensions of Sustainable Performance

The first sub-hypothesis was tested by examining the relationship between job cliques and each dimension of sustainable performance.

Table 2. Correlation Analysis between job Cliques and the Dimensions of Sustainable Performance

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Significance
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Environmental Dimension	0.737	<0.001	Significant
Social Dimension	0.689	<0.001	Significant
Economic Dimension	0.768	<0.001	Significant

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS Version 26 outputs.

The table 2 shows that there exists statistically significant positive correlation between job cliques and all three dimensions of sustainable performance. It is noted that the highest value was found between job cliques and economic dimension of sustainable performance ($r = 0.768$) whereas the lowest one was between organizational cliques and social dimension ($r = 0.689$). In this regard, since all values are less than 0.05, the first sub-hypothesis under the first main hypothesis is accepted.

3. Testing the Relationship between Sustainable Performance and the Dimensions of job cliques

The second sub-hypothesis was tested by examining the relationship between sustainable performance and each dimension of organizational cliques.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis between Sustainable Performance and the Dimensions of Organizational Cliques

Variables	Sustainable Performance	Sig.	Significance
Leadership Dimension	0.699	<0.001	Significant
Communication Dimension	0.718	<0.001	Significant
Structural Dimension	0.673	<0.001	Significant

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS Version 26 outputs.

As can be seen from Table 3, all dimensions of job cliques are correlated significantly positively with sustainable performance. Communication dimension shows the strongest correlation with sustainable performance ($r = 0.718$), then follows leadership dimension ($r = 0.699$), while structural dimension shows slightly lower yet significant correlation ($r = 0.673$). As all significance values are below the accepted significance level of 0.05, the second main hypothesis is confirmed. The correlation analysis proves the existence of significant relationships between job cliques and sustainable performance, not only in general but also among their particular dimensions. This means that the features of job cliques are strongly related to changes in sustainable performance of employees in the studied organization.

Second: Testing the Effect Hypotheses

To verify the effect hypotheses and examine their validity, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed using **SmartPLS 3** software. The proposed structural models were tested to confirm or reject the main and sub-hypotheses, as presented below.

1. Testing the Effect of job Cliques on Sustainable Performance

The second main hypothesis was tested, which states:

H2: The dimensions representing employees' sustainable performance (economic, social, and environmental) are significantly influenced by organizational cliques within the investigated organization.

Figure 2 illustrates the structural model for this hypothesis, while Table 4 presents the structural model analysis results.

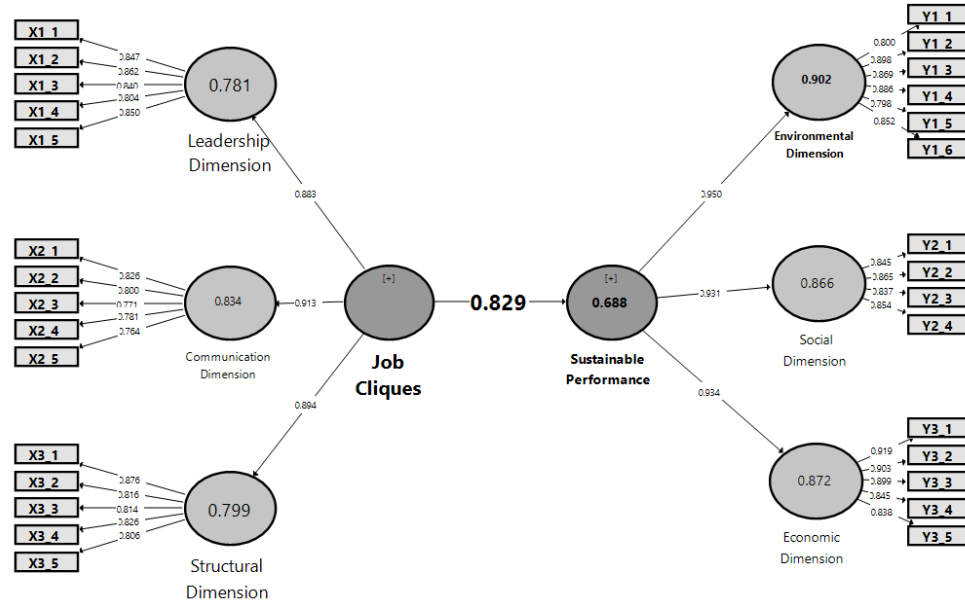


Figure2. Effect of Organizational Cliques on Sustainable Performance

Source: Prepared by the researchers using SmartPLS 3.

Table 4. Effect of Organizational Cliques on Sustainable Performance

Independent Variable	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	Sig.	R ²
Organizational Cliques	0.829	24.302	<0.001	68.8%

Source: Prepared by the researchers using SmartPLS 3.

From Table 4 below, the value of significance is less than the accepted significance level of 0.05, meaning there exists a significant relationship between organizational cliques and sustainable performance. The second hypothesis is therefore accepted. The coefficient of determination, $R^2 = 68.8\%$, shows that organizational cliques account for 68.8% of the variation in sustainable performance.

2. Testing the Effect of Organizational Cliques on the Dimensions of Sustainable Performance

The third main hypothesis was tested by examining the effect of organizational cliques on each dimension of sustainable performance. Figure3 presents the structural model, while Table 5 summarizes the analysis results.

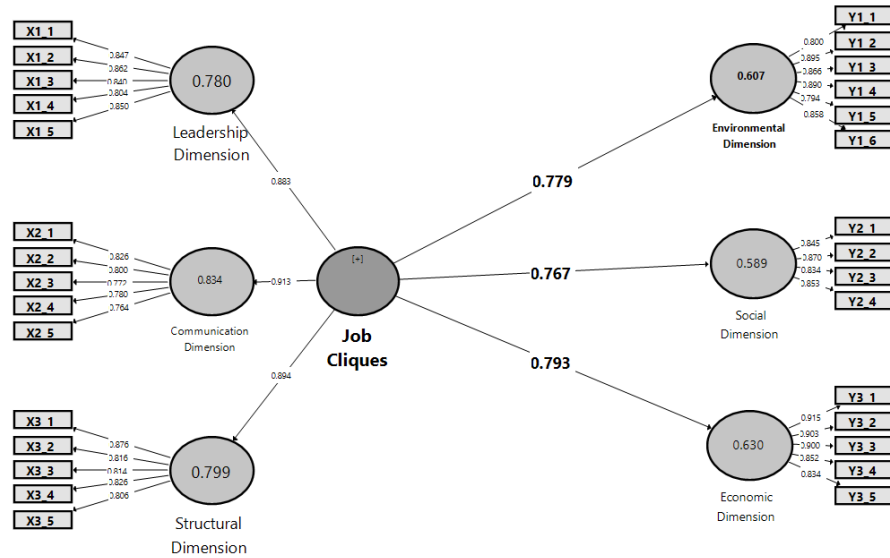


Figure3. Effect of Organizational Cliques on the Dimensions of Sustainable Performance

Source: Prepared by the researchers using SmartPLS 3.

Table 5. Effect of Organizational Cliques on the Dimensions of Sustainable Performance

Dependent Variable	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	Sig.	R ²
Environmental Dimension	0.779	20.244	<0.001	60.7%
Social Dimension	0.767	17.432	<0.001	58.9%
Economic Dimension	0.793	22.172	<0.001	63.0%

Source: Prepared by the researchers using SmartPLS 3.

It can be seen from Table 5 that all significance levels are lower than 0.05; therefore, job cliques have a statistically significant impact on the dimensions of sustainable performance. The highest impact is related to the economic dimension ($\beta = 0.793$), then comes the environmental dimension ($\beta = 0.779$), while the lowest impact coefficient is associated with the social dimension ($\beta = 0.767$). The explanatory power of the model varies between 58.9% and 63.0%, which proves the considerable impact of organizational cliques on the variation of sustainable performance dimensions. Consequently, the third main hypothesis is proved.

3. Testing the Effect of job Cliques Dimensions on Sustainable Performance

The fourth main hypothesis was tested by examining the effect of each dimension of jobcliques on sustainable performance. Figure 4 presents the corresponding structural model, while Table 6 summarizes the results of the structural model analysis.

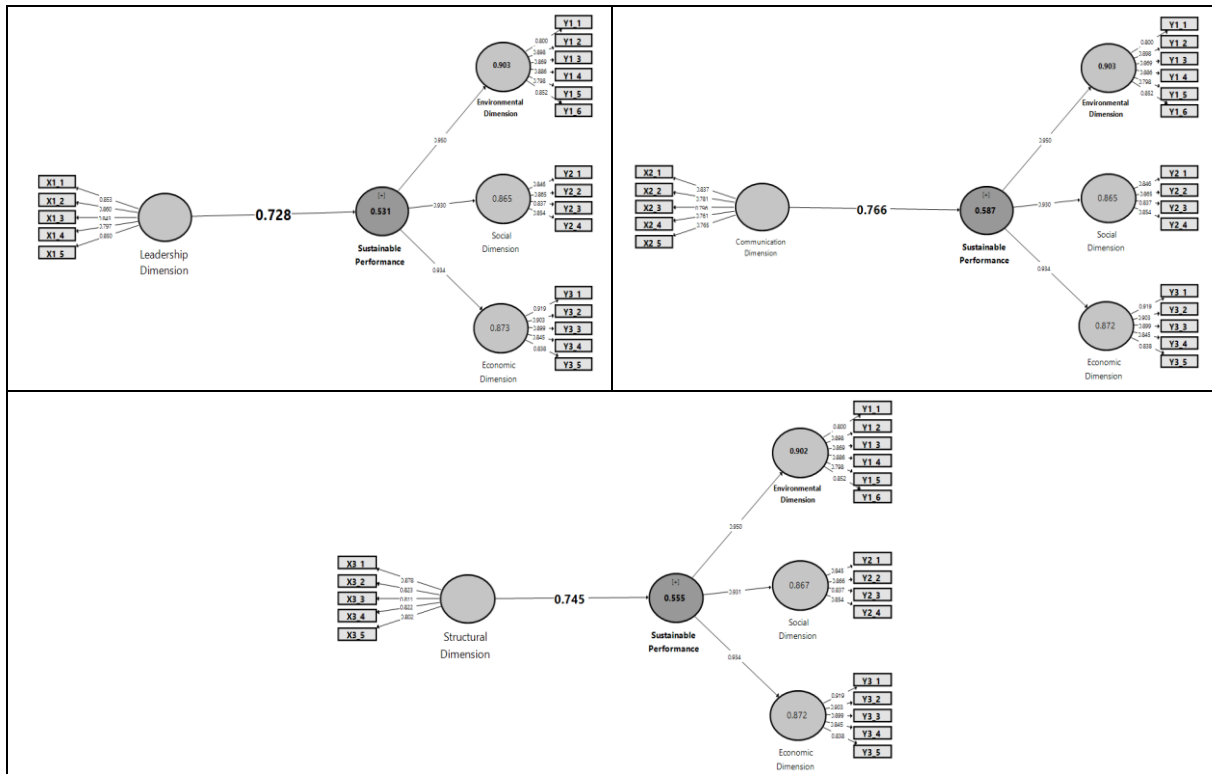


Figure4. Effect of job Cliques dimensions on Sustainable Performance

Source: Prepared by the researchers using SmartPLS 3.

Table 6. Effect of organizational Clique dimensions on Sustainable Performance

Independent Variable	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	Sig.	R ²
Leadership Dimension	0.728	16.258	<0.001	53.1%
Communication Dimension	0.766	20.282	<0.001	58.7%
Structural Dimension	0.745	15.597	<0.001	55.5%

Source: Prepared by the researchers using SmartPLS 3.

It is clear from Table 6 that all levels of significance are less than the acceptable significance level of 0.05, and therefore, there exist statistically significant influences of job cliques dimensions on sustainable performance. From the three dimensions, communication dimension shows the highest explanatory power with 58.7%, followed by structural dimension with an explanatory power of 55.5%. The lowest explanatory power is found in the leadership dimension with 53.1%. This implies that communication related aspects of organizational cliques are more influential on sustainable performance. Generally, the findings show that all dimensions of organizational cliques have significant positive impacts on employees' sustainable performance.

5. Discussion

This study revealed that there is a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship between job cliques and sustainable performance of employees. This correlation suggests that the presence of job cliques within the organizational environment is accompanied by variations in behaviours and dynamics and sustainable performance in parallel. Statistically, there was a clear and significant effect of organizational cliques on the overall sustainable performance and this indicates that there is a direct and noticeable effect of job cliques on overall sustainable performance efficiency of the organization.

Additionally, the results showed that there was a significant direct effect of job cliques on all dimensions of sustainable performance. As regards the environmental dimension, findings showed that there was a significant

relationship, meaning that job cliques directly affect the environmental performance practices in the organization. In relation to social dimension it was found that the job cliques are significant in the social performance of the college both inside and outside. Regarding the economic aspect, a strong relationship and impact were detected, which suggests that job cliques are influential in the economic sustainability and economic outcomes of productivity.

Beyond that, there were also different levels of impact for the size of job cliques on sustainable performance. The dimension of communication was found to be the most important explanatory and shaping factor for sustainable performance. This indicates that the nature (and quality) of information flow and communication within informal group structures is a key factor of affecting performance sustainability. The structural dimension also proved to be significant, showing that complex and/or inflexible organizational structures can obstruct workflow and reduce the adaptability of the organization to changes in its surroundings, with a negative impact on long-term performance sustainability and goal attainment. Lastly, while the leadership dimension also exhibited a statistically significant relationship, it was the lowest of the three dimensions in influencing sustainable performance.

These findings are generally similar to a number of other studies although there are some different contexts. For instance, they are congruent with studies like Daniel (2018), Shadrack (2013) and Chukuigwe (2022) which had investigated the job cliques and organizational outcomes. They are also consistent with studies that are concerned with sustainable performance such as the study by Aggarwal et al. (2023) and Hassan et al. (2023) that examined the related organizational and behavioral variables.

6. Conclusion

The findings showed that there is a direct and positive relationship between job cliques and sustainable performance of employees. They also noted a strong connection between job clique practices and degradation of the sustainable performance indicators. Furthermore, the results indicated that job cliques effect on sustainable performance was significant compared to other examined variables because the path coefficient obtained was relatively high, namely 0.829 for the overall effect, 0.728 for the leadership dimension, 0.766 for the communication dimension and 0.745 for the organizational structure dimension. The environmental dimension had a coefficient of 0.779, the social dimension 0.767 and the economic dimension 0.793, whereas the social and economic dimensions both had a coefficient of 0.797.

The results of this study suggest that the concept of job cliques and employee sustainable performance are interrelated with an influence of one another, varying in degrees and directions. The investigated organization's administration seems to set environmental goals as continuous strategic goals and has shown direct and indirect effects on the sustainable performance due to the job cliques.

This research only examined two key variables (job cliques and sustainable performance). For future study, it is suggested to consider other variables which could lead to a more extensive description of the relationships studied. There is also an inclination to future research that accounts for additional intervening variables that could further impact the relationship between job cliques and employees' sustainable performance, including job satisfaction and organizational climate.

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