



LEADERSHIP STYLES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY: AN EMPIRICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Considering the vital role of leadership styles in accomplishing organizational sustainability, this review aims to examine the linkage between leadership styles and organizational sustainability. It also reviewed the stakeholder's theory and system theory of corporate sustainability. A variety of innovative approaches was proposed for the study of leadership styles and sustainability. A total of 42 articles (including conceptual models and methods) were reviewed. These empirical reviews were categorized into: studies by journal, method, time and correlations between leadership and organizational sustainability. The most discussed leadership style was transformational leadership which had been linked with sustainable performance. Studies show that there is a growing interest in the relationships between leadership styles and organizational sustainability. This review contributes to a deep understanding of the mechanisms underlying organizational sustainability in the service context as well as extending research on the leadership style on organizational sustainability nexus.

Keywords: Leadership styles, Organizational sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Both the current functioning and development of each organization depend on the characteristics of its leaders. To manage an organization, not only vision and the efficient communication of that vision are required, but also skills related to motivating people. It seems evident that appropriate leadership is necessary (Chen et al., 2018). However, what is understood by the term “appropriate leadership” has been changing for years (Kjellstrom et al., 2020).

To sustain organization is one of the primary objectives of leadership in companies because the activities of the companies do not remain within the organization alone but extend to the external environment. leadership involves setting achievable vision and developing passion towards the realization of such vision to achieve organizational sustainability (Renko et al., 2015).

Organizational sustainability hinges on the principle of strengthening the environmental, social as well as the economic systems within firms' operation (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012). Organizational sustainability is driven by a culture within an organization that is conducive to achieving sustainability and has underlying common assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding the resolution of sustainability issues. It influences organizational behavior through corporate decision-making and organizational practices (Ketprapakorn and Kantabutra, 2022).

Leadership style is the manner in which a manager inspires employees to perform at a high level of competence and self-assurance for the good of the whole firm. They are inspired to do their best job by receiving constructive feedback and encouragement from management (Vecchiotti, 2018). Chen et al. (2016) assert that leaders who are heading a business in a rival and changing environment must consider generating new ideas and seeking new opportunities in order to improve performance and growth of the organization.



Sustainability is related to sustainable development and sustainability involves preserving cultural beliefs, traditions, heritage, culture as an entity, and the question of whether any given culture will survive, aligning organizational strategy with sustainability increases the competitiveness of industrial systems (Amui et al. 2017).

According to Rivai (2017), leadership style is a set of characteristics used by leaders to influence subordinates so that organizational goals are achieved. Leadership is the act of leading a group of people towards the achievement of a set goal. It is the art of inspiring, influencing, and motivating people to bring about beneficial change in organizations. This helps employees to respond in the same direction when they are influenced by their leader (DuBrin, 2019).

Organizational sustainability is a holistic organizational strategy that enhances the capability to adapt to environmental, social, economic, and political or institutional dynamics. To achieve this, firms need competent leadership, a respectable talent pool, resources, organizational behavior, and a culture that addresses sustainability issues and creates organizational sustainability as a whole (Rahman et al., 2022).

The organizational consideration of stakeholder characteristics can also help employees think differently and boost their sustainable behavior. Using the theoretical framework analysis. System based approach exists to help scholars and practitioners to understand the process of corporate sustainability and allow them to advance toward sustainability as soon as needed (Kantabutra, & Ketrapakorn, 2020).

There is some literature review on sustainability, A literature review conducted by Santana and Lopez-Cabrales (2019) on the performance of sustainable human resource management found that sustainable leadership is a weakly developed and marginalized topic. In turn, Kjellstrom et al. (2020) stated that leadership in general is a multifaceted phenomenon which needs closer exploration. Orlitzky et al. (2011) reviewed only nine publications, focused on environmental sustainability and found that inspirational leadership with a long-term focus on stakeholder-based values is needed. Strand (2011) in his review did not present the research methodology and focused on the linkage between leadership theories, organizational culture and broadly defined corporate responsibility (CSR, covering: processes, practices and outcomes, and such issues as, e.g., philanthropy) In the domain of sustainability alone, only a limited number of interim theories is reported scholarly (Rezaee, 2016). Though, several studies exist on organizational sustainability and business ethics among others (Ugoani, 2019; Akhtar et al, 2015; Quarshie et al, 2016; Tormo-Carbo, et al, 2018), to the best of researcher's knowledge no empirical researched have been done on leadership styles and organizational sustainability.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Review of Concept

2.1.1 Leadership Styles

Leadership, as defined by Fahmi (2016), is the art of mobilising one's followers to accomplish a common objective. Ability to move, influence, and control the attitude, the way members operate, so that they may take on their own duties and make their own choices for the purpose of reaching pre-set objectives is another definition of leadership (Wahyudi, 2017). A new reality for leadership styles in the modern era has been imposed by the rapid development of technology, the proliferation of office management, the increase in working hours, and modern work methods, all of which have had an effect on the way employees work and accomplish their work, as well as on the career creativity of employees. It has been shown that this occurs (Alghizzawi et al. 2019; Berger et al. 2019). Administrative empowerment, which is collective involvement in the decision-making sector, may be used to track success, get insight into what



work and employees are really worth, and implement trying to cut management and leadership practises (Darwish, 2019).

Akca (2017) found that leadership styles is crucial since it primarily incorporates many types that efficiently provide critical factors to the growth of a business. To better manage all operations and activities and boost employee performance and happiness, many styles of leadership have been analysed in light of the organization's goals. Now, transformational leadership has become the standard method of leadership. Leaders play a pivotal role in inspiring followers to go above and beyond in their pursuit of the organization's success. Inspiring and motivating employees to develop and innovate change that successfully supports creating and expanding future organizational performance has been acknowledged as a crucial leadership style. According to Shafique, et al. (2018), the leadership style helps boost morale, job performance, and motivation by implementing a wide range of operational strategies, such as encouraging employees to connect their sense of self with the organization's values and vision and giving them credit for contributing to a crucial project.

2.1.2 Organizational Sustainability

The issue of sustainability is deeply rooted in the Industrial Revolution, Firms and industries have taken advantage of natural resources to fill their needs for energy and raw materials (Bergquist, 2017). It must be emphasized that the concept of business sustainability is based on long-term thinking, not a short-term perspective (Ritika & Montu, 2018). Business sustainability is also known as corporate sustainability, is the management and coordination of environmental, social and economic demands and concerns to ensure responsible, ethical and ongoing success (Rouse, 2013). Sustainability is reflected in long term competitive advantage, on the business ability to thrive over time, to survive their founders and to accommodate to changes in the business environment, to respond to new regulation and to secure the support of other parties that supply critical resources (Biggemann, et al. 2013). Organizational sustainability denotes everything about integrating the goals of sustainable development, for example, societal fairness, economic efficacy, and eco-friendly exposures, into the operating atmosphere of industries (Varsei et al., 2014). Hence, sustainability means the essence of goods or services that are environmentally friendly, while the means for achieving them vary in their purpose. Modern companies are paying special attention to the social aspects of sustainable development due to the pressure from stakeholders ranging from environmental to societal issues (Yawar & Seuring, 2017). Aspects of social sustainability can address both internal and external human resource concerns. Internal human resources may include job security, accommodation, health and safety, and capacity building (Ahmadi et al., 2017). According to global reporting initiatives (GRI), economic sustainability is "an organization's impacts on the economic circumstances of its stakeholders and economic systems at the local, national, and global levels" (GRI, 2002,). Organizations that achieve competitive advantages through economic and nonviable capacities can survive in the long run, but they cannot contribute to economic systems at the local, national, or global levels

Organizational sustainability from the perspective of stakeholders to firm's level means fulfilling both direct and indirect stakeholders' (employees, customers, shareholders, pressure group, community, government etc.) requirements without compromising firms' ability to fulfill the needs of future stakeholders (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002). This definition, is in relation to the broader perspective of Brundlandt notion of sustainability. Furthermore, sustainability relatively in organizational context can be viewed from the Triple-P point of view, as developed by Elkington (1997). The triple P, denotes people, planet as well as profit and is based on the notion that organization is sustainable if a certain minimum performance is achieved relatively in the areas of people, planet as well as profit. This perspective on organizational sustainability



emphasizes the need for organizations to maintain a balance between economic objective (profit) as well as the objective of the social (people) and ecological (planet) environment rather than focusing on profits alone because firms are equally liable to the social and ecological environment.

In addition to the Triple-Bottom Line approach to organizational sustainability, McDonough and Braungart (2002) and Kainuma and Tawara (2006) put forward a more advance approach to organizational sustainability known as the ‘Zero waste approach’. The approach suggest that products needs to be created or designed in a manner that during its life cycle, it enhances the natural environment as well as the social environment. In other words, the approach suggest that product should be design in such a way that at the end of the its life cycle it becomes usable or reuse as a raw material to the development of a new product. They termed this approach as ‘cradle to cradle’ which supports considerably the Triple P as well as (Profit, People and Planet also known as Economy, Equity and Ecology) not as a ‘Triple bottom line’, that is after the fact, but as ‘Triple top line’ which means an integral part of firms’ strategy and design procedure.

2.1.3 Autocratic leadership style and organizational sustainability

Leaders under autocratic leadership are led by the ability to withhold or give rewards and punishment. Autocratic leadership is extremely important when quick decisions are needed which is usually the case for businesses. In this case there is no need to involve workers because it will delay the decision-making process However, there are many times in a business this type of leadership is prevalent even though there is a small group of employees. (inderman, 2013). Michael (as cited in Al-Mahayreh, et al. 2016) stated that they do not embrace a shared vision, Innovation, commitment, and creativity are eliminated by this leadership style. Followers of autocratic leaders are believed to bide their time as they wait for the failure of their leaders. Owners of businesses should encourage team-working in small groups, where individual members become closer to one another, causes that employees feel committed to performing tasks, since their efforts and performance may be easily noticed and appreciated.

2.1.4 Democratic leadership style and organizational sustainability

A democratic leadership style is important when team agreement matters but it can be quite difficult to manage when there are lots of different perspectives and ideas. According to Koontz & Weihrich (2010) the following features describe democratic or participative leaders: involve people in decision making and goal setting; attitudes, feelings, suggestions of members are considered while making decisions; freedom of thinking and action is available to a reasonable extent; two-way, open communication between members; and the opportunity to use one’s potential in the service of the organization exists (Inderman, 2013).

2.1.5 Transformational leadership style and organizational sustainability

The concept of transformational leadership which was developed by Burns (1978) and extended by Bass (1985) is close to the democratic leadership style. Transformational leaders inspire employees who become capable of changing their attitudes and are motivated toward goal achievement. To make it happen, leaders apply four behavioral attitudes which refer directly (individual consideration) or indirectly (intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, idealized influence) to the participative management style, Moreover, leaders who demonstrate such an attitude toward subordinates enhance two-way communication and become more sensitive to ideas and proposals coming from staff members (Dyczkowski & Dyczkowski, 2018). Khalifa & Ayoubi (2015) stated that transformational leaders laid emphasis on moral values and conducts, and the impacts on behaviors inspired and motivated their followers to find a meaning of work and to apply their intellectual strength to solve



problems and question known assumptions. Tromp & Blomme (2014) noted that the key element of Transformational leadership was the ability to inspire followers through an appealing future vision of the organization, setting high-performance objectives, and encouraging their subordinates to achieve them.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Sustainable Leadership Theory

According to Avery's (2005) theory of sustainable leadership, sustainable leadership entails having the ability to make long-term decisions, supporting systematic innovation, creating a committed staff team, and providing high-quality products, services, and solutions. Its objective is to achieve a balance between people, profits, and the environment and to improve the enterprise's sustainability through corresponding management practices. These management practices encompass management systems, principles, processes, and values and can constitute a self-reinforcing leadership structure within the firm, including CEO role shift, decentralized decision-making, ethical conduct, and high social and environmental responsibility. Nonetheless, this

strategy is founded on geosocial development procedures, which seek to ensure that enterprises completely integrate social and environmental responsibilities into their operations and give genuine care to their numerous stakeholders. It also prioritizes a vision of sustainability, an innovative culture, and a dedication to social and environmental responsibility. Its effect on long-term viability is demonstrated by its greater capacity to drive competitive performance, withstand crises, and maintain market leadership. Sustainability reporting (Safari and Areeb, 2020; Bebbington and Unerman, 2018); sustainable supply chain management (Hussain and Malik, 2020); and cleaner production (Hens et al., 2018) are the most important practices connected with this theory.

2.2.2 Stakeholder Theory

As stakeholder theory has become more of a worldwide phenomenon, one of the first questions is to what extent the institutional and regulatory frameworks of various countries support or even compel companies to pursue more balanced objectives that include a variety of stakeholders (Campbell, 2007). According to Sodhi (2015) and Freeman et al. (2021), stakeholder theory is a truly unique method that emphasizes creating and maintaining sustainable stakeholder connections to boost company performance through resource-based considerations. Stakeholder theory was a startling break from the normal understanding of business as a vehicle to maximize profits for the owners of capital (Freeman et al., 2010). The resource-based view (RBV) holds that valuable, uncommon, non-imitable, and organized company resources can give organizations a competitive edge. Stakeholder resource-based theory emphasizes positivity above normativity. Instead of providing a moral standard to judge a firm's activities, stakeholder theory predicts how profit-maximizing organizations would behave. The principle of stakeholders covers workers, service providers, local communities, creditors, and others affected by companies (Lin & Tom, 2018). It discusses morals and management principles such as social responsibility, the business economy, and social contracts. Phillips & Robert (2003) describe a popular version that looks at how managers deal with the different people who have an interest in an organization. stakeholder theory has been applied to investigate corporate sustainability issues such as sustainable supply chain management (Co and Barro, 2009).

2.2.3 System Theory

System theory aims to explicate dynamic relationships and interdependence between components of the system and the organization–environment relationships. A system is



established based on the structure and patterns of the relationships emerging from interactions among components. As a result of these emergent patterns and relationships, each system is different from another. According to systems theory, components of each system are structured in a hierarchical ordering, and components are interdependent with one another in the system to the extent that one component cannot function without the support of other components (Luhmann, 1995). Components of a system can be tightly coupled, where the components are closely interdependent, or loosely coupled, where the smaller subsets of tightly connected components are loosely connected to one another. At the organizational level, the organizations and other organizations in the environment are also interdependent on one another. Underlying this interdependence are the permeable boundaries, both within and among organizations. Invariably, social organizations have to maintain permeable boundaries of a certain degree in order to receive materials or export products to survive. The process of receiving resources (input) and exporting products (output) is the exchange process. When the raw materials are received, components of a system will work together to transform the materials into products exported to the environment (Yoon et al. 2005).

2.3 Empirical Review

Nwuke (2017) studied Leadership Transition Strategies for Medium-Sized Family Businesses' Sustainability. The population for this study included 3 family business leaders in Lagos and Port Harcourt in Nigeria who have sustained their family businesses after the leadership transition from their founders. The conceptual framework for the study was based on the transformational leadership theory and the theory of planned behavior.

Inderman (2013) studied an assessment of the various leadership styles and its influence on management decision-making. The literature acknowledges that management leadership styles play an important role within businesses in terms of decision making. The research consists of quantitative analysis conducted on business in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. The target population selected for this study consisted of forty-two employees. Respondents were surveyed using a forced choice questionnaire. Findings revealed that the laissez faire and democratic leadership styles seem to be predominant at the organization. However, there is still a need for more transformational leaders within the organization, in an attempt to enhance the motivation, morale, and performance of employees. Leaders should create an environment of team spirit as people work more effectively when they feel acknowledged as part of a team. Failure to do so could hamper the growth of the business.

De witt (2015) investigated the influence of leadership styles on the business performance of businesses in the Eastern Cape. Business owners and employees working in the organization were approached by fieldworkers and asked to participate in the study. In total, 266 questionnaires were usable, 133 from business owners and 133 from business employees. Descriptive statistics were calculated in order to summarize the sample data, while t-tests were used to determine whether the differences in mean scores returned by the business owner and employee sample groups for the leadership styles under investigation, were significantly different from each other. The findings of this study show that for both the business owner and employee sample group, Ethical leadership returned the highest mean score, followed by Servant and Participative leadership.

Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski (2018) studied Democratic or Autocratic Leadership Style Participative Management and its Links to rewarding Strategies and Job Satisfaction in SMEs. The paper aims at detecting relations between participative management and rewarding strategies as well as employees' job satisfaction in SMEs. Unlike many studies which examine effectiveness of rewarding policies from a managerial perspective, the article takes employees' point of view. The empirical part of the paper presents conclusions resulting from analyses of:



employee strategic awareness, involvement in goal-setting processes and integration in discussion on company performance, linked to diverse rewarding systems applied in Polish enterprises. Results presented in the paper refer to data from 93 SMEs and 86 large companies, collected at the turn of 2013 and 2014. The authors' research contributes to the discussion on rewarding strategies, demonstrating that involvement of employees in managerial activities is a precondition for developing performance-based rewarding strategies, and that such involvement makes employees more satisfied with their work. Thus, the paper fills in the research gap on linking leadership styles with forms of and satisfaction with remuneration systems.

Onyeukwu & Jekelle (2019) investigated Leadership succession and sustainability of small family owned businesses in South-East, Nigeria. The study employed the survey research design which was carried out in Onitsha and Nnewi commercial and industrial hubs of Anambra state. The simple random sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 298 registered small business owners. The findings revealed that, mentoring and human capital development has significant influence on sustainability of small family owned businesses. The study therefore recommended that family business owners should identify the successor early enough, adopt mentorship process and the successor must however show willingly shoe genuine interest and is not coerced into the business, and adequate time should be devoted for training of chosen successors, in order to equip them with relevant skills that will make their businesses survive beyond the present through several generations.

Lkama, et al, (2018) examined Leadership planning for succession of small and medium scale enterprises for entrepreneurs in Nigeria. The population consisted of 93 SMEs owners. Questionnaire was used to elicit data. Mean and standard deviations was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses. The study found out that common practices of leadership succession were not practiced in the northern part of Nigeria. The study recommended that leadership succession programmes should be strengthened to prolong the life span of the SMEs. It concludes that there should be deliberate strategic plans by the owners of industries for leadership succession in northern, Nigeria.

Rahman et al. (2022) establish and clarify multidimensional components linked to human resource management, stakeholder consideration, and government involvement, along with employee green and innovative behavior, toward the sustainability of manufacturing organizations. Sustainability literature explores numerous goals, including the elements that drive sustainability orientation.

The empirical evidence of (Khizar et al., 2022), discovered that some studies link a firm's sustainability orientation to better organizational outcomes (Cheng, 2020), whereas others find the opposite scenario (Amankwah-Amoah & Syllias, 2020). Thus, recent evaluations have revealed that the literature lacks a cohesive conception of the organizational sustainability construct. For instance, researchers have examined organizational sustainability within the context of strategic direction. A lack of consensus regarding the definition of the concept of organizational sustainability may result in uneven outcomes.

3.0 Methodology

This study of leadership styles and organizational sustainability considerations employs a critical analysis methodology based on multiple levels of textual analysis that provide theoretical and empirical research on the topic at hand. The research paper are based mostly on journals, books and different literature from different authors of leadership and organizational sustainability, qualitative research methods were used for the research. The theoretical and empirical research papers are chosen, and the reasons why the subject is supported are given,

along with suggestions for appropriate assessment groups that are built into the interpretation. The collection and choice of data sections are framed as an indication and allocated to the categories by (journal, method, time and correlation), allowing for the identification of differences and similarities that may be used to distinguish and explore the subjects following the documented. The link to all of the works investigated from theoretical, conceptual, and perspectives in the intersections and study type are considered.

4.0 Findings

Sustainable leadership (Burawat, 2019) and transformational leadership (Burawat, 2019; Jiang et al., 2017) both significantly influence sustainable performance. On the other hand, Pantouvakis and Vlachos (2020) claimed that talent, which is viewed as a high-value human capital (Yu et al., 2014) and operant resources (Pantouvakis and Vlachos, 2020; Smith et al., 2014), has a stronger influence on organizational sustainability than leadership (stakeholder, formal, authoritarian, and growth). Responsible leadership significantly influences each dimension of sustainable performance, namely, economic, social, and environmental performance (Javed et al., 2020). Though past studies have validated the positive impact of socially responsible leaders and entrepreneurial leadership on environmental and social performance (Nor-Aishah et al., 2020; Phillips et al., 2019), this is not the case with economic performance (Nor-Aishah et al., 2020). Contrary to this, ethical leadership and responsible leadership were found to significantly influence social performance (Fatoki, 2019; Javed et al., 2021), but not environmental performance (Fatoki, 2019). Gupta and Zhang (2020) concluded that there is a significant impact of transformational leadership on environmental performance. Sapta et al. (2021) conducted an empirical study among farmers in Indonesia and found that transformational leadership indirectly influenced SP through knowledge management. Furthermore, controlling for left- and right-wing populism, populist leadership significantly lowers environmental performance (Bohmelt, 2021). Moreover, two dimensions of ethical leadership leader humane orientation and leader responsibility and sustainability orientation – significantly influence social performance. The impact of one dimension of ethical leadership, leader moderation orientation, on social performance is not significant (Wang et al., 2017).

4.1 Discussion

From the review of extant literature study investigated the link between leadership styles and organizational sustainability, this article provides some clarification by reflecting on the many concepts and definitions provided in the literature as forms of leadership and sustainability consideration and evaluating their potential benefits to organizational sustainability. This study also comes up with a different way to define organizational sustainability, with the more ambitious goal of figuring out if an effort is really sustainable or not. The link between leadership and sustainable development is extremely necessary, because there is no development without leadership particularly within the social, human and cultural dimension. Stakeholder theory also offers an opportunity to reinterpret a variety of concepts, models and phenomena across many different disciplines, including economics, public administration, and management, among others. In particular, stakeholder theory is multi-faceted, and offers the opportunity to reinterpret situations from a variety of new perspectives, including perspectives that involve multiple stakeholders simultaneously.

5.0 Conclusion

The aim of this article was to map the leadership styles and organizational sustainability research field and to collect findings from previous studies. As a result, this study contributes to the field of knowledge about leadership styles and organizational sustainability, filling a gap in such studies by focusing on the linkage between leadership and sustainable performance. As



discussed above, this study has many implications for both researchers and practitioners. It provides evidence that there is growing interest in this research field. It also presents numerous findings related to the impact of a given leadership style on sustainable performance and the impact of the underlying mechanism and conditional factors. This article also offers prospects for future research in terms of research topics, methodology, and variables as well as terminological clarity, a holistic approach to sustainable performance, activating researchers from other countries and increasing collaboration between researchers. Practitioners may use the information presented herein in decision-making processes and training for leaders. Finally, the achievement of organizational sustainability and sustainable development is determined as a cyclical relationship with planning and implementation and monitoring of the techniques as key duties of the leader.

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