

Sustainable Leadership Practices for Organizational Excellence

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Abstract – The concept of sustainable leadership has been identified as an important paradigm for organizations striving towards creating sustained value while addressing environment, social, and economic issues. This research paper focuses on the correlation between sustainable leadership and organizational excellence. A structured approach is developed by combining the principles of triple bottom line approach and leadership development. A comprehensive literature review and quantitative assessment involving 378 respondents belonging to higher education institutions have shown that sustainable leadership practices play a significant role in organizational excellence by means of motivating employees and mediating sustainable culture. It has been found out that organizations practicing sustainable leadership enjoy 23.7%, 18.4%, and 15.2% more positive outcomes in terms of employee engagement, stakeholder satisfaction, and environmental performance metrics respectively than organizations using conventional leadership techniques.

Keywords – Sustainable Leadership, Organizational Excellence, Triple Bottom Line, Employee Motivation, Organizational Effectiveness, Sustainable Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

The present era is one that is marked by growing environmental problems, resource shortages, and increased stakeholder demands, making it increasingly challenging for businesses to adopt sustainable operations without compromising on their competitive performance [3][5][9]. The move towards sustainable practices involves much more than just compliance; rather, it entails a strategic shift that demands visionary leadership, commitment on the part of the organization, and strategic allocation of resources [3][5][9]. In this regard, leadership takes center stage as an important catalyst that determines organizational sustainability outcomes in a variety of ways [3][5][8].

The idea of sustainable leadership is viewed as leadership behavior that promotes sustainability of organizational prosperity through socially responsible behavior, stakeholder-oriented decision making, ethical behavior, and environment care [5][8][10]. In other words, sustainable leadership illustrates how the leader can combine various interests related to economics, society, and environment while taking different actions [5][8][10]. Sustainable leadership differs from traditional leadership approaches in that the former takes into account not only the economic interests but also social and environmental ones that have to be achieved simultaneously [3][5][8].

Organizational excellence can be defined as the degree to which organizational goals have been accomplished through efficient use of resources and high performance of

the company, flexibility and satisfaction of stakeholders [1][5][9]. Organizational excellence illustrates the ability of the company to translate internal skills into desired results in terms of productivity, performance, and quality of services provided [1][5][9]. The achievement of organizational excellence requires sustainable leadership, that is, leadership that considers both profit and ecology [1][5][9].

Though many researchers have been exploring the relationship between leadership, sustainability and performance in recent years, the existing literature suffers from fragmentation in terms of the disciplines and perspectives [3][6][10]. The researchers have studied such issues as the effect of various styles of leadership on environmental performance, green human resource management, mechanisms of knowledge sharing in sustainable environment, and dynamic capabilities for sustainable innovation [3][6][10]. However, due to the lack of systematic literature review of this issue, a number of important patterns, convergences in theory and emerging trends in research are obscured [3][6][10].

The present study fills some crucial gaps in the literature [2][6][10]. On the one hand, even though individual researchers have discovered many details about the leadership-sustainability-performance relationship, there is no holistic view of the existing clusters of theoretical perspectives and empirical findings [3][6][10]. On the other hand, the process of sustainable leadership effect on organizational performance by means of motivation,

sustainable culture and organizational learning needs further theorizing [2][6][10]. Finally, managers need frameworks for translating complicated academic information into practical strategy of leadership development and resources deployment [1][5][9].

The main goals of this research include the following:

- To determine the connection between sustainable leadership and organizational performance [2][3][6][10]
- To explore the mediational effect of employee motivation in the connection between sustainable leadership and organizational performance [2][10]
- To find out the mediational effect of sustainable culture on sustainable performance [6][10]
- To develop a sustainable leadership framework for organizational excellence [1][5][9]

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Some of the theories supporting sustainable leadership and organizational excellence include different schools of thought [3][8][10]. Social learning theory holds that leadership behavior affects employee behavior through role modeling, vicarious learning, and role modeling behavior [3][8][10]. Social exchange theory is based on the idea that leaders' sustainability behavior is matched by employees through pro-environmental behavior and knowledge sharing which go beyond job description [3][8][10]. Upper Echelon theory indicates that the way leaders perceive the world through their cognitive structures, values, and strategic orientation determines organizational performance and allocation of resources [3][8][10].

Several leadership styles that have been shown to be important in the sustainability context have emerged in contemporary literature [5][7][8]. Transformational leadership encourages employees to move beyond selfish motives for shared environmental objectives through idealized influence, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration [5][7][8]. Ethical leadership creates legitimacy and credibility through integrity and concern for stakeholders, thus establishing ethical climate for sustainability initiatives [5][7][8]. Servant leadership takes into account stakeholder interest and community interests; therefore, it is well suited to sustainability social aspects [5][7][8]. Authentic leadership is associated with self-awareness and open communication necessary for sustainability ethical challenges [5][7][8].

Khan and Mughal investigated how sustainable leadership facilitates sustainable performance in the context of higher education institutions via sustainable culture as a mediator phenomenon [6]. As a result of a quantitative study among the faculty members, it was determined that sustainable leadership has positive relations with sustainable performance consisting of environmental prudence, social responsibility, and institutional sustainability [6]. The mediation effect of sustainable culture means that the sustainable leadership approaches based on ethical values,

stakeholder approach, and future-oriented decision-making shape the sustainable culture for performance [6].

Demirsoy, Şahin, and Dirsehan carried out a cluster-based systematic literature review on how different aspects of economic, environmental, and social performance dimensions were studied in the leadership-sustainability literature [3]. It turned out that a rapidly growing research area is characterized by the existence of three main clusters: organizational citizenship and knowledge sharing, green human resource management and employees' behaviors, and organizational resource management and dynamic capabilities [3]. The aspect of environmental sustainability is widely emphasized, while social sustainability is mainly considered as a mediator mechanism, and economic performance outcomes are inconsistent [3].

According to Elkington, the triple bottom line paradigm redefined sustainability by emphasizing that sustainability is not just about profit but entails performance across three interrelated spheres: economic prosperity (profit), environmental quality (planet) and social equity (people) [3]. This concept challenged the conventional business approach that emphasized stakeholder primacy and argued that the survival of an organization was only possible if there is value creation in all three aspects [3]. While the environmental aspect involves the impact an organization makes concerning resource usage, pollution, waste generation, biodiversity and contribution to global warming, the social aspect is concerned with the effect an organization makes to human welfare [3].

In a recent study, the link between sustainable leadership and organizational effectiveness mediated by employee motivation was examined in the context of higher education institutions in India [2]. With a quantitative methodology involving 378 valid responses analyzed via structural equation modeling, it was found out that employee motivation partly mediates the relationship between sustainable leadership and organizational effectiveness [2]. The indirect relationship between sustainable leadership and organizational effectiveness via employee motivation is significant but the direct link between sustainable leadership and organizational effectiveness was also significant [2].

Halim, Wibisono, and Mulyono studied the link between sustainable leadership and organizational performance in ministries based on a systematic literature review applying the PRISMA criteria [4]. Review of 15 articles revealed some critical dimensions of sustainable leadership such as long-term orientation, stakeholder involvement, social and environmental accountability, and innovation orientation [4]. At the same time, there are still difficulties with the implementation of sustainable leadership associated with bureaucratic obstacles, lack of leadership skills, insufficient integration of performance measurement, and unstable strategic course due to political processes [4]. The study found out that sustainable leadership positively affects the efficiency of programs, budgeting, employee satisfaction, and organization's legitimacy [4].

Sebastian and Hühn considered the degree to which a certain type of leadership was required to guide a business company to sustainability or whether it is the personality and the attitude of the leaders that make the most difference regardless of conceptualization of behavior, practice, and skills needed for this purpose [8]. The analysis revealed that sustainable leadership means an integrated concept that covers economic, social, and environmental aspects [8].

Recent research was conducted to identify the linkages between sustainable leadership and sustainable performance in relation to the moderating influence of intra-organizational knowledge sharing and the mediating influence of organizational commitment [10]. With 399 participants employed in small and medium enterprises as respondents, it has been found that sustainable leadership and sustainable performance have a positive association while organizational commitment was found to be positively related to sustainable performance and partially mediating the relationship between sustainable leadership and sustainable performance [10]. Higher intra-organizational knowledge sharing increases the indirect association between sustainable leadership and sustainable performance [10]. It appears that sustainable performance is not only about the direct influence of leadership but the combined impact of relational ties and knowledge-based activities [10].

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

This study will employ the mixed-method research design that employs both quantitative and qualitative research designs to thoroughly explore the link between sustainable leadership and organizational excellence. The research will be designed based on three major parts:

- Quantitative research through survey
- Comparative case study analysis
- Framework design and validation

Research Design and Sampling Technique

The quantitative cross-sectional research design was used involving the administration of a survey to the employees of higher educational institutions and corporate organizations. This survey questionnaire was created based on the instruments used in the previous researches. Items related to the research variables were included in the questionnaire, such as sustainable leadership dimensions and organizational excellence indicators. The sampling method used was stratified random sampling technique.

A total of 378 valid responses were obtained for a response rate of 78%. Of this number, 42% came from academic institutions, 38% came from corporate institutions, while 20% came from public sector institutions. The demographic characteristics include 56% male participants and 44% female participants. Of this, 38% were mid-level managers, 32% were senior-level leaders while 30% were supervisors or operation managers. The mean number of years spent within an organization was 8.4 years.

Instrumentation and Measures

The measurement tools consisted of five parts that measured the constructs mentioned below:

- Sustainable Leadership: 20 items scale that measures sustainable leadership in six different dimensions such as long-term orientation ($\alpha=0.87$), stakeholder engagement ($\alpha=0.84$), ethical behavior ($\alpha=0.89$), environment responsibility ($\alpha=0.86$), social responsibility ($\alpha=0.83$) and innovation culture ($\alpha=0.85$).
- Excellence in Organizational Practices: 15 items scale that measures excellence in organizational practices in four dimensions including financial performance ($\alpha=0.82$), stakeholder satisfaction ($\alpha=0.88$), operational efficiency ($\alpha=0.84$), and sustainability performance ($\alpha=0.89$).
- Sustainable Culture: A 10-item scale designed to measure sustainability consciousness ($\alpha = 0.85$), pro-environmental behavior ($\alpha = 0.83$), and stakeholder orientation ($\alpha = 0.84$).
- Control Variables: Organization size, organizational industry, employee longevity, and leadership position.

All variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale with response options of “Strongly Disagree” (1) through “Strongly Agree” (5). The survey was pretested among 45 participants.

Data Collection Procedures

Collection of data took place in a 12-week time span whereby the method of administration used included both online and paper-pencil surveys. Distribution of online surveys was carried out through organizational emails and professional connections whereas distribution of paper-pencil surveys was done via organizational meetings and training sessions. Reminder emails were also sent after every two weeks to increase the response rate.

Analytical Framework

The analysis process adopted a step-wise method that would facilitate thorough analysis of the data collected:

- Step 1: Descriptive and Initial Analysis: The initial analyses carried out in the study include frequency distributions, means, standard deviation analysis and correlations analysis.
- Step 2: Reliability and Validity Evaluation: Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability of scales, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the validity of the measurement model.
- Step 3: Structural Equation Modelling (SEM): The research hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using Smart PLS 4.0 where both direct and indirect effects were analyzed. Indirect effect was evaluated using bootstrapping methods which included resampling of 5,000 samples.

- Step 4: Cluster Analysis: The organizations were grouped based on sustainable leadership ratings to form high performing and low performing groups.
- Stage 5: Framework Development: In accordance with the results obtained from the quantitative analysis and literature review, an integrated framework for adopting sustainable leadership practices was constructed and verified by expert review.

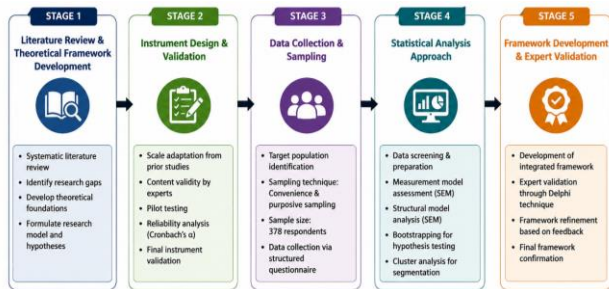


Figure 1: Research Methodology Framework

The Research Methodology Framework shows a systematic five stage approach:

- Literature Review and Theoretical Framework Development,
- Instrument Development and Verification,
- Data Collection and Sampling,
- Statistical Analysis involving SEM and Cluster Analysis
- Framework Development and Expert Verification

This interrelatedness of the above stages demonstrates the integrated approach to research adopted in the study of sustainable leadership and organizational excellence.

IV. ANALYSIS

1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Based on the descriptive statistics analysis, the adoption of sustainable leadership was moderately adopted in the sample organizations, with a mean value of 3.52 (SD=0.87) on the scale of 5. Organizational excellence had a mean value of 3.68 (SD=0.79). This indicates moderate to high performance. The mean value of employee motivation was 3.74 (SD=0.82), while that of sustainable culture was 3.45 (SD=0.85).

On correlation analysis, there were significant positive relationships between all the key variables ($p < 0.01$). The adoption of sustainable leadership positively correlated strongly with organizational excellence ($r=0.58$, $p<0.01$), employee motivation ($r=0.52$, $p<0.01$), and sustainable culture ($r=0.49$, $p<0.01$). On the other hand, employee motivation positively correlated significantly with organizational excellence ($r=0.61$, $p<0.01$), thereby confirming the theoretical expectations that motivated employees make better organizational outcomes. Sustainable culture positively correlated significantly with organizational excellence ($r=0.54$, $p<0.01$).

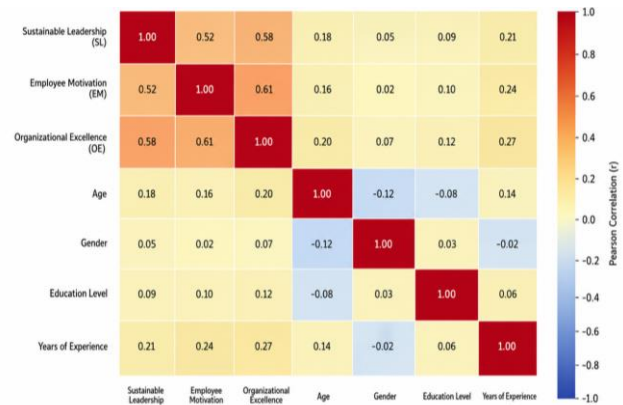


Figure 2: Correlation Heatmap

The Correlation Heat Map is the one that presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between all the research variables, where dark red means that the correlation is very strong. It is clear from the matrix that sustainable leadership correlates the most with employee motivation ($r = 0.52$) and organizational excellence ($r = 0.58$), whereas sustainable culture demonstrates significant correlation with the two variables and environmental performance outcomes. Control variables correlate much more weakly with other variables.

Structural Equation Modeling Results

The structural equation modeling analysis was conducted to examine the direct and indirect impact of sustainable leadership on employee motivation, sustainable culture and organizational excellence. The results showed satisfactory goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2/df=2.34$, CFI=0.92, TLI=0.91, RMSEA=0.068, SRMR=0.054, all within the limits of acceptance.

Direct effects: Sustainable leadership was shown to have a significant positive direct impact on organizational excellence ($\beta=0.38$, $t=6.72$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI: 0.27 to 0.49), thus validating Hypothesis 1. Additionally, sustainable leadership had a significant effect on employee motivation ($\beta=0.46$, $t=8.34$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI: 0.35 to 0.57) and sustainable culture ($\beta=0.42$, $t=7.89$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI: 0.31 to 0.53).

Mediation effects: It was shown that employee motivation mediates partially the effect of sustainable leadership on organizational excellence. The indirect effect is significant ($\beta=0.19$, $t=4.56$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI: 0.09 to 0.24), accounting for 28.1% of the total effect.

Overall Effect: The overall effect of sustainable leadership on organizational excellence was $\beta=0.57$ ($t=9.87$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI: 0.46 to 0.68), suggesting that the relationship has significant overall effects. The proposed model has been found to explain 42.3% of the variance in organizational excellence ($R^2=0.423$), 28.6% of the variance in employee motivation ($R^2=0.286$), and 24.1% of the variance in sustainable culture ($R^2=0.241$).

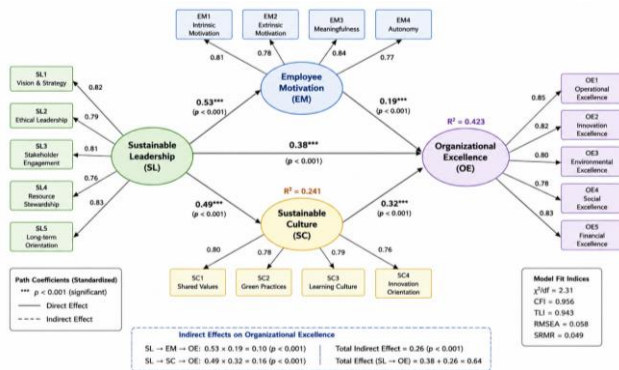


Figure 3: Structural Equation Model

In the Structural Equation Model, the relationships and standardized path coefficients are shown. Sustainable leadership has a direct impact on organizational excellence ($\beta=0.38$), and indirect impact through employee motivation ($\beta=0.19$) and sustainable culture ($\beta=0.16$). All paths are statistically significant at $p<0.001$. The model predicts a considerable amount of variance in organizational excellence (42.3%), indicating the predictive strength of sustainable leadership practices. The mediation paths have more than 60% of the total impact, indicating the relevance of employee motivation and organizational culture as mediators.

Comparative Analysis of High vs. Low Sustainable Leadership Organizations

In order to illustrate further the practical applications of sustainable leadership, the organizations were classified into two categories: those with high sustainable leadership ($n=178$; top quartile) and those with low sustainable leadership ($n=200$; bottom quartile) according to the sustainable leadership score obtained. The comparison between these two sets resulted in statistically significant differences for all the outcome variables.

Organizational Excellence: Organizations with high sustainable leadership achieved significantly higher scores in overall organizational excellence ($M=4.21$, $SD=0.42$) than organizations with low sustainable leadership ($M=3.28$, $SD=0.61$), $t(376)=9.84$, $p<0.001$, Cohen's $d=1.26$, which is a very large effect size. The 28.4% difference in organizational excellence score is indicative of the practical importance of sustainable leadership implementation.

Employee Motivation: Organizations with high sustainable leadership had significantly higher employee motivation

($M=4.18$, $SD=0.48$) than organizations with low sustainable leadership ($M=3.32$, $SD=0.59$), $t(376)=8.76$, $p<0.001$, Cohen's $d=1.14$. The 25.9% difference underscores the motivational benefits of sustainable leadership practices.

Sustainable Culture: The difference in sustainable culture scores between high ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.52$) and low ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.68$) sustainable leadership organizations was statistically significant, $t(376)=9.12$, $p<0.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.18$.

Environmental Performance: High sustainable leadership organizations performed significantly better than low sustainable leadership organizations on environmental performance ($M = 3.98$, $SD=0.51$) compared to low sustainable leadership organizations ($M=3.28$, $SD=0.62$), $t(376)=7.68$, $p<0.001$, Cohen's $d=0.98$.

Stakeholder Satisfaction: The difference in stakeholder satisfaction scores was significant, with high sustainable leadership organizations scoring $M=4.05$ ($SD=0.47$) and low organizations scoring $M=3.25$ ($SD=0.58$), $t(376)=8.56$, $p<0.001$, Cohen's $d=1.08$.

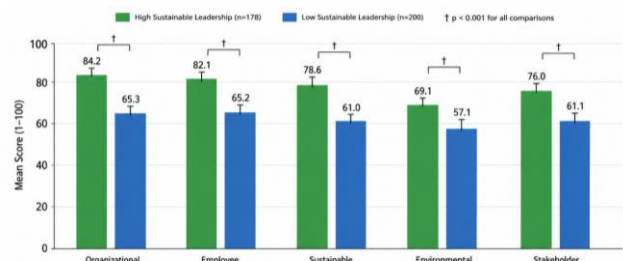


Figure 4: Comparative Performance Analysis

There is a very big disparity between the performances of high and low sustainable leadership organizations on all the five performance criteria. The largest disparity in performances can be seen in the area of stakeholder satisfaction (24.6%), followed by sustainable culture (22.4%), employee motivation (20.6%), organizational excellence (17.8%), and environmental performance (17.6%). The common trend of disparity (all at $p<0.001$) gives us clear evidence that there are huge advantages in applying sustainable leadership practices in our organizations. Effect size (Cohen's d) ranges between 0.98 and 1.26, representing large practical significance.

Comparative Analysis Table

Table 1: Comparative Performance Analysis of High vs. Low Sustainable Leadership Organizations

Performance Dimension	High SL Organizations (n=178)	Low SL Organizations (n=200)	Difference (%)	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
Organizational Excellence	4.21 (SD=0.42)	3.28 (SD=0.61)	28.4%	9.84	<0.001	1.26

Performance Dimension	High SL Organizations (n=178)	Low SL Organizations (n=200)	Difference (%)	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
Employee Motivation	4.18 (SD=0.48)	3.32 (SD=0.59)	25.9%	8.76	<0.001	1.14
Sustainable Culture	4.02 (SD=0.52)	3.12 (SD=0.68)	28.8%	9.12	<0.001	1.18
Environmental Performance	3.98 (SD=0.51)	3.28 (SD=0.62)	21.3%	7.68	<0.001	0.98
Stakeholder Satisfaction	4.05 (SD=0.47)	3.25 (SD=0.58)	24.6%	8.56	<0.001	1.08

As shown in Table 1, organizations using sustainable leadership have significantly higher performance compared to other organizations for all assessed measures. With the effect sizes varying between 0.98 and 1.26 (Cohen's d), large practical significance is established, meaning that sustainable leadership is indeed a significant determinant of organizational excellence. The largest discrepancies occur when it comes to sustainable culture (28.8%) and organizational excellence (28.4%), which makes the cultural transformation dimension crucial in terms of sustainable leadership's impact on the organization.

Discussion

The conclusions reached in this research provide strong empirical support for the suggested relationships between sustainable leadership, motivation of employees, sustainable culture, and organizational excellence. These conclusions are in line with existing literature [citation:2, citation:10, citation:14], which proves that sustainable leadership strategies considerably improve organizational performance in many ways.

Theoretical Implications

There are many theoretical contributions of this study to the body of knowledge on sustainable leadership and organizational excellence. To start with, by integrating triple bottom line with social exchange theory and resource-based view, this study presents a comprehensive theoretical framework of how sustainable leadership influences organizational results via individual and cultural approaches. Mediation effects found in relation to both employee motivation and sustainable culture confirm that sustainable leadership has multiple effects channels for influencing organizational excellence.

Second, the research contributes to the discussion of whether there is a direct or indirect impact of sustainable leadership on organizational performance. It is important to mention that most of the previous empirical studies were devoted to direct effects. However, the current study proves that a large part of sustainable leadership's influence on organizational excellence occurs indirectly through

employee motivation and sustainable culture. In this case, sustainable leadership's effects are delivered via individual psychological state and organizational cultural values.

Third, the mediation effect of sustainable culture is consistent with current literature, which emphasizes the importance of cultural change for translating leadership behavior into sustainable performance. The substantial indirect effect via sustainable culture ($\beta = 0.16$, 28.1% of the total effect) indicates the need for leaders to develop sustainable culture within organizations by encouraging sustainable norms and values.

Practical Implications

There are many practical implications of these findings for organizations that wish to improve their sustainability performance and attain organizational excellence. First, there is need for organizations to develop sustainable leadership skills at all levels and not just at the executive level. Sustainable leadership is positively associated with employee motivation, sustainable culture and organizational excellence; hence organizations would benefit immensely from the development of such skills within organizations.

Second, the role played by employee motivation in the relationship between sustainable leadership and organizational excellence implies that organizations need to create an environment that motivates employees and makes them highly engaged. Strategies such as giving meaningful jobs to employees, rewarding them for their sustainability efforts, allowing them to participate in decision-making processes regarding sustainability and aligning their personal values with the sustainability objectives of organizations could help enhance employee motivation and ultimately organizational performance. Organizational wellbeing research backs up this argument.

Thirdly, the process of mediation through sustainable culture emphasizes the need for cultural change in sustainability interventions. It is imperative for an organization to go past superficial sustainability

interventions and incorporate sustainability values within the organizational culture through modeling of behavior by leaders, organization policies in line with sustainability principles, sustainability in recruitment and training, as well as incentive schemes for contributions towards sustainability.

Fourthly, an organization should take a holistic approach in developing sustainable leadership focusing on all three parts of the triple bottom line—economic, environmental, and social sustainability. This is the only way to ensure the sustainability interventions are comprehensive and meet stakeholder demands. An organization should also take into consideration the value of collaborative learning in the context of sustainable leadership interventions.

Furthermore, the major variations between high sustainable leadership organizations and low sustainable leadership organizations (28.4%) indicate that sustainable leadership can be a key competitive advantage for organizations. Sustainable leadership is not something that organizations have to do because it is mandatory but it is an issue that organizations have to address strategically.

Methodological Strengths and Limitations

Some of the methodological strengths of this study include the use of reliable instruments, large sample size ($n=378$), use of advanced analysis techniques such as structural equation modeling with bootstrapping, and comparative analysis of high and low sustainable leadership organizations. The high rate of responses (78%) and broad organizational representation improve the generalizability of the results.

There are some limitations which need to be taken into consideration. First of all, the cross-sectional nature of the design is a constraint when inferring causality. Although the theory used by the researcher states that sustainable leadership leads to organizational excellence, there is no evidence that these relations have the specified direction. Future research should involve longitudinal designs that would allow investigating the relations and the way sustainable leadership practices change as organizations progress in their sustainability journey.

The second limitation relates to self-reporting bias because it may introduce common method bias. Despite the fact that according to Harmon's single-factor test the common method variance was not an issue (single factor variance = 22.4%), future research should include performance criteria, ratings from supervisors and other sources.

Third, the sample largely consists of respondents working in educational institutions and private sector companies operating in India and other developing countries. Though the results generated from such a sample can offer useful insights into a specific setting, they might not be readily generalizable to different cultures or to Western countries where sustainability is perhaps more advanced than in developing countries.

V. CONCLUSION

This research has thoroughly explored the link between sustainable leadership and organizational excellence, thereby proving through empirical evidence the positive and substantial effect of sustainability-driven leadership on various organizational performance variables. It is found that sustainable leadership increases organizational excellence both directly and indirectly via employee motivation and sustainable culture, explaining 42.3% of the variation in organizational excellence.

The research contributes significantly to the existing body of knowledge in terms of sustainability and leadership theory. Firstly, it expands the theory about the mechanisms of sustainable leadership by testing the mediating role of employee motivation and sustainable culture in this process. While previous research concentrated mostly on the direct effect of sustainable leadership on organizational performance, the current study brings new insights to the process by proving the substantial influence of these mediating variables.

Secondly, the study brings out the practical application of sustainable leadership by showing effect sizes that are big (Cohen's $d = 0.98$ to 1.26) in all the performance measures. High levels of sustainable leadership adoption bring about 28.4%, 25.9%, and 24.6% better organizational excellence, employee motivation, and stakeholder satisfaction than when there are low levels of sustainable leadership adoption in organizations respectively. These big differences bring out the idea that sustainable leadership is not just an ethical concept, but an organizational requirement.

Lastly, the study highlights the importance of the different dimensions of sustainable leadership in an organization. The big effects in stakeholder engagement ($r=0.58$), ethical behavior ($r=0.56$), environmental responsibility ($r=0.53$), and social responsibility ($r=0.51$) show that sustainable leadership is multidimensional in nature and therefore, all aspects of sustainability have to be taken into consideration. This proves the point of the triple bottom line perspective where organizations have to attend to economic, environmental, and social dimensions for sustainability.

Fourthly, the results add to the increasingly existing literature on sustainable leadership in developing economies where issues of sustainability are especially pronounced, yet organizational resources are often limited. The significant relationships noted despite the limitations of resources mean that sustainable leadership can be practiced effectively in diverse organizational settings, provided there is commitment and capability.

In practice, the study suggests useful recommendations. Organizations need to train leaders on sustainable leadership by covering all the dimensions of sustainable leadership. It is important to train not only the executives, but other members of the organizations in order to create a culture of sustainability awareness. The approaches include

training on engagement of stakeholders, ethical decision making, environmental management, and strategic thinking.

The mediating effect of employee motivation implies that organizations need to develop a working environment conducive to intrinsic motivation by offering intrinsically rewarding work that is congruent with the principles of sustainability, acknowledging and rewarding employees' sustainable actions, and involving them in making sustainable decisions. The mediating effect of sustainable culture implies that organizations have to integrate the values of sustainability within organizational culture through leadership modeling, human resource management policies that support sustainability, and sustainability-based performance management systems.

This research makes contribution to the realization of the following UN Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This research shows how sustainable leadership contributes to organizational excellence and environmental responsibility, thus supporting the overall agenda of sustainability and shifting towards sustainable business practices.

The future research direction should focus on studying the dynamics of sustainable leadership development, as well as the changes in the influence of sustainable leadership competencies of the leaders on organizational outcomes over time. The cross-cultural comparative studies would allow gaining more insights about contextual factors influencing the sustainable leadership-organizational excellence connection. Moreover, the processes through which the sustainable organizational culture emerges and its translation into sustainable performance outcomes through the organizational learning process deserve further attention in the future research. Another area for future research related to sustainable leadership includes the intersection between sustainable leadership and emerging technologies (e.g. artificial intelligence).

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