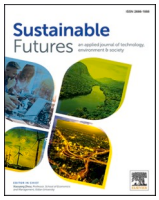
Sustainable Futures 11 (2026) 101622

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Sustainable Futures

journal homepage: www.sciencedirect.com/journal/sustainable-futures



Ethical leadership and corporate sustainability: Implications for workforce strategy- a systematic literature review

S. Asieh Hosseini Tabaghdehi [a,*], Ozlem Ayaz [b], Ekrem Tatoglu [c,d]

[a] Senior Lecturer in Strategy and Business Economics, Brunel University London, Brunel Business School, Uxbridge UB8 3PH, United Kingdom
[b] Senior Lecturer in Strategic Management, Brunel University London, Brunel Business School, Uxbridge UB8 3PH, United Kingdom
[c] Gulf University for Science & Technology, College of Business Administration, GUST Center for Sustainable Development (CSD), West Mishref 32093, Kuwait
[d] Department of Management, School of Business, Ibn Haldun University, Basaksehir, Istanbul 34480, Turkey

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Leadership
Corporate sustainability
Future of work
Business ethics
Transparency
Accountability

ABSTRACT

Pursuing ecological and social sustainability within organizations is a complex initiative that necessitates collective action at the workplace and leadership levels. However, the role of individual leadership characteristics and ethical decision-making in driving corporate sustainability (CS) initiatives remains underexplored in the context of the future of work. Ethical leadership can promote a sustainability-oriented organizational culture, fostering employee engagement and innovation that enhances social value both within the organization and in broader society. This study aims to deepen the understanding of how leadership ethics influence future of work practices in advancing CS by exploring the values, motivations, and strategic orientations of organizations undertaking CS initiatives. Additionally, it examines the impact of transparency and accountability -central tenets of business ethics- on sustainability-driven workplace policies and corporate performance. By integrating theoretical perspectives from business ethics, leadership studies, and future of work research, we conducted a systematic literature review of 95 peer-reviewed journal articles to illuminate the intersection of ethical leadership, the evolving nature of work, and CS, thereby enriching the discourse on responsible leadership and sustainable organizational development.

1. Introduction

There has been ongoing pressure from policymakers, social activists, consumers, and international organizations requesting organizations to focus on long-term and holistic corporate sustainability (CS) initiatives over short-term financial goals [1,2]. CS is best understood as an integrative and dynamic strategic orientation that enables firms to balance and pursue three interdependent objectives: economic viability, social equity, and environmental responsibility [3,4]. Therefore, CS should be framed as the organization's proactive role in ongoing value creation for all stakeholders, including current communities, ecosystems, and future societies. Leadership with a CS focus is an essential tool to improve corporate standards and address climate change [5]. These objectives closely align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which provide a globally recognized framework for advancing economic prosperity, social inclusion, and environmental protection. Increasingly, corporate sustainability initiatives operationalize the SDGs at the organizational level, requiring leaders to translate global sustainability ambitions into firm-level strategies, governance mechanisms, and ethical decision-making processes. Ethical leadership is therefore central to ensuring that SDG commitments extend beyond symbolic adoption and are meaningfully implemented across organizational practices.

In business practice, CS is reflected in the management of the triple bottom line (TBL), which encompasses economic, environmental, and social performance, along with a commitment to profitability and the pursuit of new growth opportunities [6]. Successful implementation of CS initiatives requires organizations to develop strategies that enhance their social and economic capabilities and create value [7]. For instance, corporations should integrate environmental impacts, such as reducing carbon emissions, managing waste, affecting food security, and promoting clean water initiatives, into their operations [8]. Leadership, particularly with a focus on CS, can empower organizations, communities, and society by promoting new thinking, creative ideas, and discoveries [9]. However, pursuing CS initiatives poses challenges for leaders who face complex economic, environmental, and social issues

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: asieh.hosseinitabaghdehi@brunel.ac.uk (S.A.H. Tabaghdehi).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sftr.2025.101622
Received 15 April 2025; Received in revised form 15 December 2025; Accepted 16 December 2025
Available online 15 January 2026

where leaders must adopt pragmatic approaches to integrate CS initiatives into decision- making processes [10]. Moreover, studies that examine leadership in CS contexts often adopt instrumental or performance-oriented lenses, neglecting the normative and ethical foundations that underpin sustainable decision-making.

Additionally, regulatory frameworks increasingly compel firms to embed CS across all facets of their operations [11]. However, much of the existing literature remains narrowly focused on single aspects of corporate sustainability, most notably environmental management, while overlooking its economic and social dimensions [2]. This fragmented landscape, shaped by diverse theoretical approaches and practical applications, underscores the need for a more holistic perspective that moves beyond compliance and surface-level commitments. Although ethical leadership and ethical decision-making have been examined extensively, most research remains situated within the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) [12,13] and tends to focus on compliance-driven activities. Such an emphasis provides limited insight into how ethics function within broader strategic, systemic, and long-term sustainability agendas that align with the TBL. Only a small number of studies present integrative frameworks that connect leadership mindsets with ethical principles such as accountability and transparency in the implementation of CS. This absence of conceptual integration leaves important questions about the ways in which ethical leadership shapes enduring sustainability outcomes. Given that leadership plays a crucial role in shaping organisational culture and strategic direction, this study explores how leadership mindsets influence the future of work, particularly in fostering inclusive, ethically grounded, and sustainability-driven decision-making across evolving workplace structures and practices.

Addressing this gap, our study builds on the premise that leadership is not only a strategic enabler of sustainability but also a moral actor. Existing reviews have not adequately theorized this ethical dimension in relation to CS outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of leadership and leaders' mindsets in taking CS initiatives. It also examines how transparency and accountability, which are central tenets of business ethics, influence the achievement of corporate sustainability performance. Through a comprehensive examination of prevailing literature that amalgamates themes of CS, leadership, and ethics, this systematic literature review (SLR) addresses several critical inquiries. Employing a comparative review method segmented by industry domain and methodology, the study seeks to answer: i) How do current leadership practices integrate CS initiatives within organizations? ii) How do transparency and accountability, as central tenets of business ethics, influence the effectiveness of CS initiatives in organizations? iii) Within the framework of the TBL, which facets are given precedence by leaders? and iv) What ethical and strategic challenges do leaders encounter in integrating TBL principles into corporate decision-making, and how can ethical frameworks guide these efforts?

This study scrutinizes existing literature to explore the intersections between leadership strategies and TBL priorities influenced by contemporary theories of business ethics evolved around accountability and transparency. By incorporating virtue ethics [14], this research provides a comprehensive understanding of how ethical leadership influences decision-making processes and CS initiatives considering the unpredictability of human behaviour and the complex dynamics within organizations. Moreover, the study considers the complex dynamics within organizations, examining how leadership strategies influence evolving workplace practices that underpin sustainable business outcomes. By investigating how ethical leadership shapes decision-making and organizational culture, it highlights critical mechanisms through which the future of work can support long-term sustainability goals. The study also identifies underexplored areas within the CS literature, particularly the intersection of leadership, ethics, and workplace transformation that warrant further empirical attention. Emphasizing the central role of leadership in shaping organisational culture [15], this research contributes to the advancement of CS theories that are grounded in ethical leadership and inclusive organizational practices.

2. Methodology

2.1. Systematic literature review process

Review articles highlight gaps in existing research and suggest potential future research directions [16]. In the case of CS and leadership mindset, the rapidly evolving and interdisciplinary nature of the field has led to a fragmented body of research, spanning business ethics, strategic management, organizational behaviour, and sustainability studies. Despite growing attention to leadership's role in CS implementation, there is limited integration of findings across these domains. Therefore, an SLR is needed to consolidate this scattered knowledge, identify conceptual convergence and divergence, and provide a clearer understanding of how leadership mindset influences CS outcomes.

SLR is a methodological approach where articles are rigorously assessed based on defined criteria [17]. By systematically assessing scientific findings and arguments, the SLR method serves as an invaluable tool to evaluate existing literature [18] and emphasize conceptual insights over solely empirical analysis [19]. In this context, our focus is on comprehensively examining the interplay of business ethics, CS, and leadership. The review process followed a structured four-step approach: searching, eliminating duplicates, analysing titles and abstracts, full text review, and manual searches [20].

a) *Searching and exclusion of duplicates:* To achieve excellent validation of existing arguments with the highest impact in the field, this study included only peer-reviewed journal articles, excluding any non-refereed publications [21]. We investigated Elsevier Science Direct (ESD), the most comprehensive archive of peer-reviewed journals in the social sciences. Following established guidelines [22], we searched the ESD database using the keywords 'corporate sustainability', 'business ethics', and 'leadership' separately in the title, keywords, or abstract. The document types searched were 'research article' and 'review article', excluding 'book review', 'book chapter', and 'editorial notes'; the language was 'English'; the subject areas were 'leadership', 'business ethics', and 'corporate sustainability'. We focused on relevant articles from the earliest available, from 2005 until 2020. The rationale for selecting articles up to 2020 is to allow sufficient time to assess their citation performance, as it typically takes at least a couple of years for recently published articles to receive citations. This time lapse is essential to accurately evaluate the impact and relevance of the articles. Citation performance of the selected articles was assessed using Google Scholar due to its comprehensive coverage of scholarly literature across various disciplines, accessibility, and up to date citation counts [23]. We found 143,437 papers in leadership, 66,625 papers in CS, and 38,559 papers in business ethics. Then, we searched for 'corporate sustainability', 'business ethics', and 'leadership' in the titles, keywords, or abstracts, yielding 119 papers. After removing duplicates, the sample was reduced to 109 titles.
b) *Title and abstract analysis:* Next, we reviewed all titles and abstracts to evaluate relevance based on predefined criteria [22]. Articles outside the chosen scope [24] were removed, resulting in 99 research articles that specifically investigated CS, business ethics, and leadership strategies. To ensure consistency in article selection, two authors independently reviewed titles and abstracts based on predefined inclusion criteria. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus, following guidelines from O'Connor and Joffe [25].
c) *Full text review:* In step three, we reviewed 99 full articles [26]. After an extensive review, 93 articles were included in the final sample. Six articles were excluded as they were out of scope.
d) *Hand searching:* Finally, through hand searching [24] and a more comprehensive review, we confirmed the final sample of 93 articles.

2.2. Data extraction and analysis

a) *Data extraction using Excel:* After the review process, we analysed the selected articles using a structured approach in Excel [22] to organize and store data from each of the 93 articles. This included details such as the title, year of publication, authors, number of citations and journals, along with underlying research focus or themes. We synthesized the collected information to offer a comprehensive avenue for future research.

b) *Categorization:* Thematic coding was employed to categorize the articles based on recurring themes such as leadership, CS, business ethics, transparency, accountability, and other relevant subthemes. In line with Braun and Clarke's [27] reflexive thematic analysis approach, coding was conducted iteratively. Two authors cross-checked emerging themes and refined categories through discussion to enhance conceptual clarity rather than seeking formal inter-coder reliability scores. Each article was classified according to its research methodology (i.e., qualitative, quantitative, and review) to identify patterns in research approaches.

c) *Synthesis:* For each article, we summarized the main findings and contributions to the field, providing concise descriptions of research outcomes and their relevance to the nexus of CS and leadership mindset. Research gaps and underrepresented areas were systematically identified by comparing themes and findings across articles to highlight inconsistencies and areas requiring further exploration.

d) *Data tabulation:* Excel's tools were utilized to provide the distribution of articles by year of publication, journal, methodology, and thematic focus. Graphical analysis identified trends over time, such as the increase in publications on leadership and CS in recent years.

e) *Quality assessment:* Each article was critically appraised for its methodological rigor and relevance to the research questions. This involved assessing the robustness of the research design, data collection, and analysis techniques used in the studies.

f) *Integration of insights:* We conducted a comparative analysis of findings from different studies to integrate insights and develop a cohesive understanding of the current state of research. This process involved reconciling conflicting findings and synthesizing themes into a comprehensive framework. Fig. 1 visually communicates the steps involved in both processes.

3. Results

3.1. Overview of reviewed literature: trends and scope

The following sections present the results of our thematic synthesis, based on categorization and comparative analysis of the 93 selected articles. The search results reveal that while there is an abundance of articles focusing on leadership, CS, and business ethics individually, there is a scarcity of studies that concurrently address all three aspects. Our review identified 93 such articles, emphasizing the limited research that explores the intersection of leadership, CS, and business ethics in the current business and management domain. Fig. 2 illustrates the annual publication trends for articles on leadership, CS, and business ethics from 2005 to 2020. The topic's novelty is highlighted by the first articles appearing in 2005, with a significant increase in interest leading to 22 publications in 2020. Notably, from 2018 to 2020, 44 % (41 articles) of the total 93 were published, reflecting the growing importance of ethical constructs in leadership.

Our industry-level analysis indicates that 71 % of the articles broadly span multiple industries, revealing a variability in the literature. Few articles focus on specific sectors examining leadership's ethical and sustainable facets. Of the 93 articles, 51 % primarily address leadership in the context of CS initiatives (e.g., [28]), 32 % focus on leadership in relation to business ethics (e.g., [29]), and 17 % explore the interplay between business ethics and CS. Geographically, 61 % of the articles have a global perspective, while the remainder are region-specific: 23 %

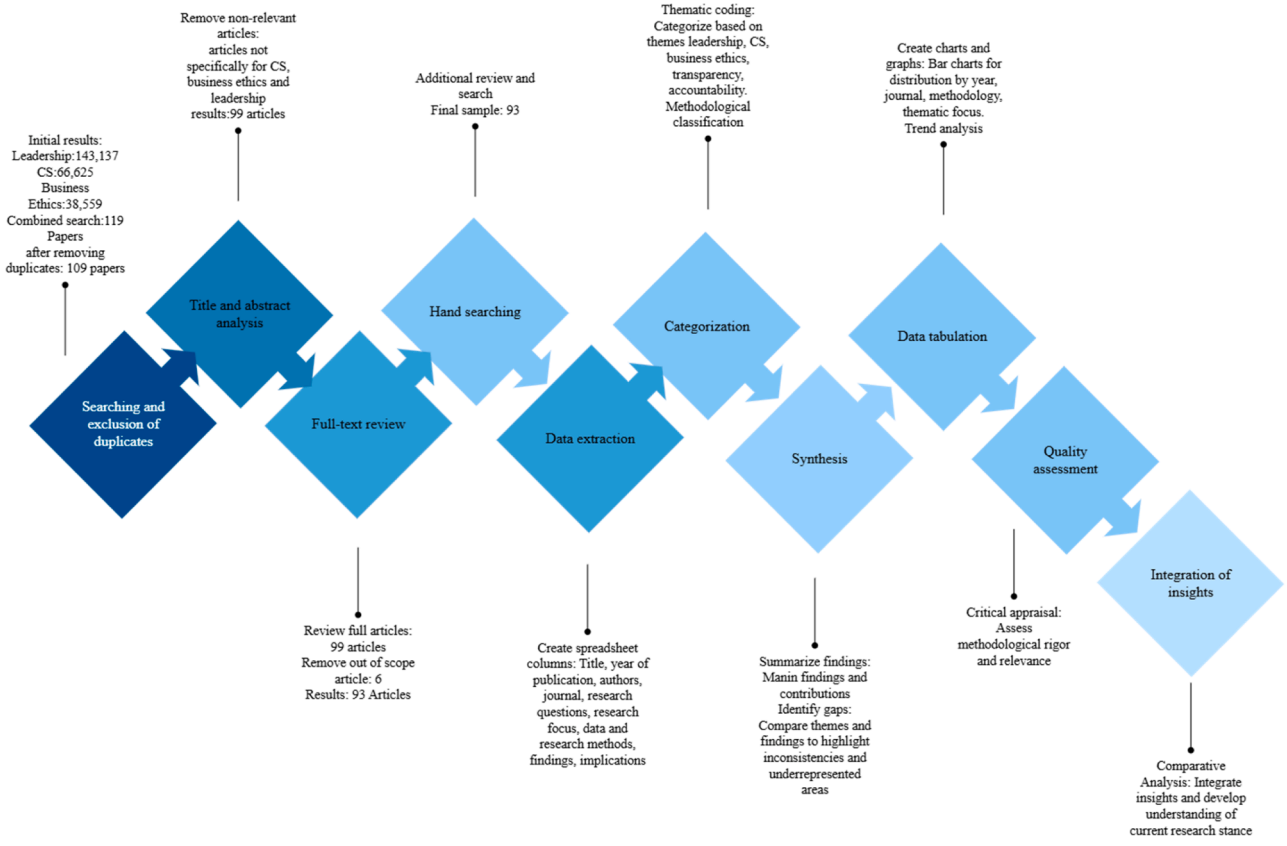


Fig. 1. Systematic literature review process and data extraction.

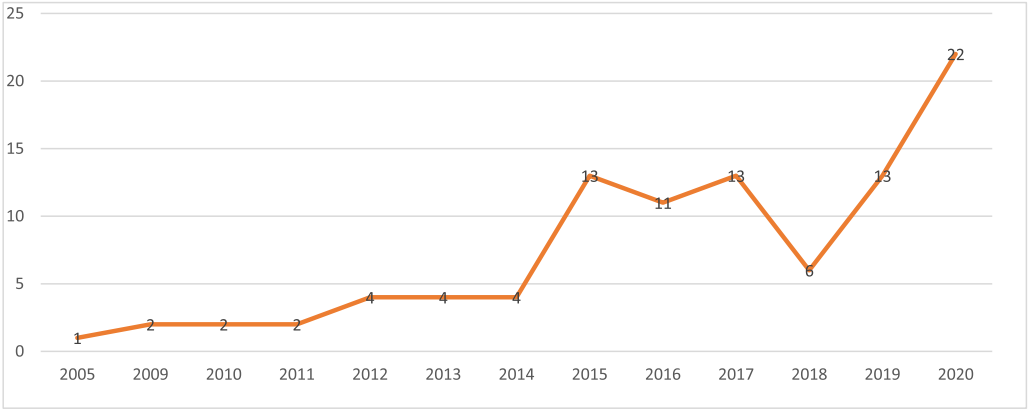


Fig. 2. Annual progress of articles on leadership, corporate sustainability and business ethics (2005–2020).

are European, 12 % are Asian, with the rest being from the US and Australia. This limited repertoire of articles highlights a significant research gap at the intersection of leadership, business ethics, and CS. We categorized the 93 articles into three methodological categories, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the topic with a particular focus on CS and ethics. These categories include review articles, qualitative studies, and quantitative studies. Review articles constitute the largest segment at 43.16 %. Among the empirical studies, qualitative research predominates, comprising 31.58 % of the articles, while quantitative studies are comparatively underrepresented at 25.26 %.

3.2. Review articles (i.e., narrative reviews, conceptual reviews and theory-based reviews)

Paul and Criado [30] broadly classify review articles into domain-based, theory-based, and method-based categories, which include narrative reviews, conceptual reviews, meta-analytical reviews, and theory-based reviews. Following Kitchenham [31], we assembled a comprehensive collection of articles to identify leadership-related gaps in ethics and CS. While SLRs are critical in elucidating themes of ethics and CS, their application remains sparse in the leadership domain. Table 1 presents a comprehensive spectrum of review articles on leadership within CS, encompassing narrative reviews, conceptual reviews, and theory-based reviews. Our search yielded 39 articles focusing on leadership within CS. Notably, Hall et al.'s [32] paper, with 1771 citations, discusses the role of entrepreneurship in addressing environmental concerns. Reave's [33] article, published in *Leadership Quarterly*, has garnered 1526 citations and offers a profound examination of how values such as integrity, honesty, and humility, which are central to ethical leadership, influence leadership success. These spiritual values and practices are shown to enable leaders to achieve organizational goals, including increased productivity, reduced turnover rates, greater CS, and improved employee health. Reave's work highlights the critical interplay between leadership ethics and CS, demonstrating that ethical leadership not only encourage a positive organizational culture but also drives sustainable business practices. Engert et al.'s [34] work, published in the *Journal of Cleaner Production*, stands out with an average of 797 citations. They reviewed 119 pieces, merging CS and strategic management insights, and underscoring the field's growth trajectory anchored in traditional strategic management through a CS lens.

3.3. Empirical qualitative studies

Qualitative research is esteemed for its in-depth analysis, employing techniques such as constant comparison analysis, domain analysis, thematic analysis, and others [68,69]. Table 2 provides a comprehensive list of articles utilizing qualitative methods. Our assessment highlighted 30 articles addressing CS across various industries. Notable contributions include works by Petrini and Pozzebon [70], Caldera et al. [71], and Epstein et al. [3]. Petrini and Pozzebon [70] explored how business intelligence can enhance CS, employing grounded theory to propose a systematic model for information planning and reporting. Caldera et al. [71] examined how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) achieved both environmental responsibility and operational efficiency. Epstein et al. [3] contrasted the roles of companies' formal and informal systems regarding CS, noting a conventional financial focus in formal systems.

Additionally, Tate et al. [73] investigated the nascent phase of environmental buying and contractor management, observing industry-specific variances influenced by external pressures. These studies collectively provide valuable insights into the practical implementation of CS across different contexts, emphasizing the nuanced and multifaceted nature of qualitative research in this field.

3.4. Empirical quantitative studies

Positivism is a prevailing perspective in social sciences, particularly in fields such as psychology, management, and operations research [96]. The proliferation of statistical tools and the rise of quantitative methods have reinforced this dominance, particularly in hypothesis testing and theory development [97]. Quantitative studies primarily focus on the outcomes of final analyses, emphasizing theory creation [98]. In our review, the top-cited quantitative papers employed surveys or secondary data. Table 3 presents the list of articles utilizing quantitative methods, encompassing a total of 24 studies. Among the most notable studies in terms of citation records, Naciti [99] highlighted the influence of board composition on CS performance. Blok et al. [100] highlighted the importance of leadership in promoting environmental behaviours at work, while Martens and Carvalho [101] examined project managers' views on CS.

Noteworthy contributions from the *Journal of World Business* include studies by Miska et al. [102] and Zheng et al. [13]. Miska et al. [102] explored the effects of culture on companies' economic, social, and environmental CS practices. Zheng et al. [13] analysed Chinese firms, revealing that these firms use both charitable giving (philanthropy) and environmental practices (sustainability) for social responsibility, choosing which to emphasize based on stakeholder groups: philanthropy for external stakeholders and sustainability for internal ones. These studies collectively highlighted the role of leadership in CS, CSR, and eco-friendly initiatives [104]. Most quantitative research was cross-sectional, utilizing surveys and regression analysis or structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM is preferred due to its error-correction capabilities [121]. However, merely enlarging sample sizes in regression studies does not necessarily yield unbiased estimates, underscoring the importance of comprehensive research design for accurate results.

Table 1
Review articles (i.e., SLR, narrative reviews, conceptual reviews and theory-based reviews).

Author(s)	Journal	Citation	Industry	Research theme(s)
1. Hall et al. [32]	*Journal of Business Venturing*	1771	Various	Economic performance, social performance
2. Reave [33]	*Leadership Quarterly*	1526	Not specified	Cultural impact, social performance
3. Engert et al. [34]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	797	Various	Cultural impact, economic impact, social impact, transparency
4. Di Vaio et al. [35]	*Journal of Business Research*	771	Various	Cultural impact, economic impact, social impact, transparency, business ethics,
5. Lozano [36]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	690	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance, accountability
6. Chams and García-Blandón [37]	*Resources, Conservation and Recycling*	630	Not specified	Cultural impact, economic impact, social impact, transparency
7. Amrutha and Geetha [38]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	607	Various	Cultural impact, economic impact, social impact
8. Williams et al. [39]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	570	Various	Social performance
9. Macke and Genari [40]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	530	Not specified	Economic impact, social impact, leadership, business ethics, corporate sustainability
10. Voegtlin and Greenwood [41]	*Human Resource Management Review*	529	Not specified	Cultural impact, economic impact, social impact
11. Coles et al. [42]	*Tourism Management Perspectives*	471	Tourism	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance, transparency, accountability
12. Isensee et al. [43]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	470	Various	Cultural impact, social impact, leadership, business ethics, corporate sustainability
13. Ansari and Kant [44]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	460	Various	Economic performance, social performance
14. Quarshie et al. [45]	*Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*	390	Various	Social impact, transparency
15. Morioka and de Carvalho [46]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	377	Various	Economic impact, social impact, accountability, corporate sustainability
16. Epstein et al. [3]	*Long Range Planning*	323	Various	Cultural impact, economic impact, social impact, corporate sustainability
17. Jia et al. [47]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	322	Various	Cultural impact, economic impact, social impact, transparency
18. Guenther et al. [48]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	233	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
20. Zhu and Sarkis [49]	*International Journal of Production Economics*	210	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
21. Salim et al. [50]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	208	Not specified	Cultural impact, economic impact, social impact
22. Fritz et al. [51]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	162	Various	Economic performance, social performance, transparency
23. Wells [52]	*IIMB Management Review*	162	Various	Economic performance, social performance
24. Agudelo et al. [53]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	138	Energy	Cultural impact, social impact, transparency
25. Zhang and Watson [54]	*Industrial Marketing Management*	129	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
26. Streimikiene et al. [55]	*Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*	124	Energy	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
27. Nulkar [56]	*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*	112	Various	Social performance
Author(s)	**Journal**	**Citation**	**Industry**	**Research theme(s)**
28. Barnett et al. [57]	*Long Range Planning*	87	Various	Economic performance, social performance
29. Kudłak and Low [58]	*Long Range Planning*	72	Not specified	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
30. Wannags and Gold [59]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	72	Various	Cultural impact, economic impact, social impact
31. Olalla and Merino [60]	*International Journal of Management Education*	65	Not specified	Cultural impact, social impact
32. Dixon-Fowler et al. [61]	*Human Resource Management Review*	49	Not specified	Social performance
33. Ketprapakorn [62]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	49	Manufacturing and mixed industry	Cultural impact, economic impact, social impact, transparency
34. Rosenbloom et al. [63]	*International Journal of Management Education*	40	Not specified	Economic performance, social performance
35. Trkman [64]	*International Journal of Management Education*	38	Education	Economic performance, social performance
36. Elmualim [65]	*Procedia Engineering*	37	Construction	Economic performance, social performance
37. Bouchet et al. [66]	*Sport Management Review*	9	Sports	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
38. Thiel [29]	*International Journal of Management Education*	7	Not specified	Economic performance, social performance, transparency, accountability
39. Buyukbalci [67]	*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*	5	Not specified	Economic performance, social performance

Table 2
Articles using qualitative methods.

Author(s)	Journal	Citation	Industry	Research theme(s)
1. Petrini and Pozzebon [70]	*Journal of Strategic Information Systems*	440	Not specified	Economic performance, social performance, transparency
2. Caldera et al. [71]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	408	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
3. Epstein et al. [3]	*Long Range Planning*	323	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
4. Bassano et al. [72]	*Cities*	322	Tourism	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
5. Tate et al. [73]	*Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*	223	Various	Social performance, accountability
6. Szczepańska-Woszczyna [28]	*Procedia Economics and Finance*	186	Not specified	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance, transparency
7. Ylönen and Laine [74]	*Critical Perspectives on Accounting*	163	Pulp and papers	Economic performance, social performance, transparency, accountability
8. Lee and Wu [75]	*British Accounting Review*	131	Transportation	Economic performance, social performance
9. Inigo and Albareda [4]	*Technological Forecasting and Social Change*	111	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
10. Meza-Ruiz et al. [76]	*Procedia Manufacturing*	83	Various	Economic performance, social performance
11. Ortiz and Huber-Heim [77]	*International Journal of Management Education*	74	Education	Social performance
12. Jankalova [78]	*Procedia Economics and Finance*	72	Not specified	Economic performance, social performance, transparency, accountability
13. Koç and Durmaz [79]	*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*	72	Airport	Economic performance, social performance, accountability
14. Scandelius and Cohen [80]	*Industrial Marketing Management*	72	Food and drink	Social performance
15. Obara and Peattie [25]	*Journal of World Business*	61	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
16. Simoes et al. [81]	*Industrial Marketing Management*	60	Various	Economic performance, social performance
17. Frolova and Lapina [82]	*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*	54	Not specified	Cultural impact, social performance
18. Lu and Zhang [83]	*Ecological Indicators*	54	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
19. de los Reyes and Scholz [84]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	50	Automotive	Cultural impact, social performance
20. Sarmah et al. [85]	*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*	38	Agriculture	Social performance, transparency
21. Erdil [86]	*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*	37	Home appliance	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance, transparency
22. Laasch and Pinkse [87]	*Long Range Planning*	34	Education	Economic performance, social performance
23. Rodriguez et al. [88]	*Evaluation and Program Planning*	30	Healthcare	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
24. Toft and Rüdiger [89]	*Energy Research & Social Science*	26	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance, transparency, accountability

(*continued on next page*)

Table 2 (*continued*)

Author(s)	Journal	Citation	Industry	Research theme(s)
25. Grayar and Calvo [90]	*Revista de Contabilidad*	24	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance, accountability
26. Rive et al. [91]	*International Journal of Management Education*	20	Various	Economic performance, social performance
27. Hıdıroğlu [92]	*Procedia Computer Science*	17	Energy	Others
28. Potdar et al. [93]	*Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*	16	Retail	Cultural impact, social performance
29. Özcüre et al. [94]	*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*	6	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
30. Wut and Ng [95]	*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*	2	Various	Social performance

Table 3
Articles using quantitative methods.

Author(s)	Journal	Citation	Industry	Research theme(s)
1. Naciti [99]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	644	Various	Social performance
2. Blok et al. [100]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	609	Various	Social performance
3. Martens and Carvalho [101]	*International Journal of Project Management*	514	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
4. Miska et al. [102]	*Journal of World Business*	246	Various	Cultural impact, social performance
5. Zheng et al. [13]	*Journal of World Business*	220	Various	Social performance
6. Jerónimo et al. [103]	*Journal of Business Research*	182	Various	Economic performance, social performance
7. Shahzad et al. [104]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	171	Manufacturing	Social performance
8. Sila and Cek [105]	*Procedia Computer Science*	165	Various	Economic performance, social performance
9. Miao et al. [106]	*International Journal of Production Economics*	137	Logistics, automotive	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
10. Chantziaras et al. [107]	*Journal of Business Research*	98	Various	Economic performance, social performance
11. Wang et al. [108]	*International Journal of Hospitality Management*	84	Hospitality	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
12. Pätäri et al. [109]	*Forest Policy and Economics*	52	Forestry	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
13. Kriyantono [110]	*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*	48	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance, transparency, accountability
14. Paul et al. [111]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	47	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance
15. Anastasiadou and Zirinoglou [112]	*Procedia Economics and Finance*	46	Education	Cultural impact, social performance
16. Kazmi et al. [113]	*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*	45	Various	Cultural impact
17. Zhang et al. [54]	*British Accounting Review*	42	Various	Economic performance, social performance, transparency
18. Prasad et al. [114]	*Transportation Research Procedia*	32	Various	Cultural impact, economic performance, social performance, accountability
19. Hernández-López et al. [115]	*International Journal of Management Education*	30	Education	Cultural impact, social performance
20. Shi et al. [116]	*Journal of Accounting and Public Policy*	29	Various	Social performance
21. Zehir et al. [117]	*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*	27	Healthcare	Transparency, accountability
22. LaFont et al. [118]	*Journal of Business Research*	21	Not specified	Social performance
23. Mombeuil et al. [119]	*Journal of Cleaner Production*	21	Various	Economic performance, social performance, transparency, accountability
24. Zioło et al. [120]	*Procedia Computer Science*	14	Finance	Economic performance, social performance

4. Insights into corporate sustainability and ethical leadership

Building on the methodology and results discussed in the previous sections, this section explores further our findings and offers a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of research in CS, leadership, and business ethics. Understanding these interconnected domains is crucial for addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by CS initiatives in contemporary business environments. By examining the growth and perspectives in CS research, the theoretical foundations of ethical leadership, and the practical implications of ethical leadership in business ethics, we aim to provide a holistic view of how ethical leadership can drive sustainable business practices.

4.1. Trends and challenges in corporate sustainability and leadership research

Research on CS has grown, offering various perspectives. Some emphasised on the enhanced utilisation of natural resources within the context of the fourth industrial revolution [122]. Others examine leadership models, whether vision-based [123], ethical [124], or responsible leadership [125]. However, a gap remains in understanding the leadership mindset in ethically addressing CS initiatives. While CS aims to ensure a plethora of resources, from cultural to environmental, to uplift the global quality of life, its ethical dimension extends to both human and non-human interests [126]. Regrettably, some corporate leaders fall short, overlooking their ethical responsibilities towards societal well-being and natural resource preservation [127].

On the other hand, business ethics significantly influences

leadership. For instance, leaders who prioritise their firm's performance can adopt a pragmatic approach, emphasizing financial gains while adhering to established routines [128]. While corporate leaders play a pivotal role in integrating ethical perspectives within a CS framework, certain leadership styles in the corporate realm have been slow to embrace this [129]. Dixon-Fowler et al. [61] highlight how leadership ethics play a crucial role in shaping sustainability-oriented employee expectations through ideology-infused psychological contracts. When leaders demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability, employees internalize these values, reinforcing ethical behaviour and long-term CS integration. Recent evidence indicates ethical leadership significantly enhances employee work engagement via trust in the leader with engagement strengthened when employees exhibit harmonious work passion [130]. In addition, ethical leadership fosters innovative work behaviour through improvements in employee psychological well-being, particularly when coupled with high perceived organizational support [131]. Thus, ensuring a long-term commitment to CS requires adopting a responsible leadership which often utilize systemic approaches [132], incorporating a cross-level perspective. This principle of business ethics not only strengthens a firm's ethical foundation but also promote robust relationships with stakeholders [133].

CS initiatives present leaders with complex challenges that stem from the intersection of economic, environmental, and social considerations [134]. These challenges are intensified by the inherent tensions within the TBL, where competing priorities often arise [135]. Voegtlin and Greenwood [41] emphasize the crucial role of leadership in managing these tensions, arguing that ethical leadership can align sustainability goals with organisational strategies by embedding ethical and responsible decision-making across all operational dimensions. Their findings suggest that leadership acts as a key mediator between business ethics and CS objectives.

Embedding sustainability metrics into performance management, leadership development, and organisational learning practices enhances credibility and demonstrates a long-term commitment to responsible governance [41]. Ethical leadership also plays a critical role in guiding environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices, which increasingly serve as operational mechanisms for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By promoting accountability, transparency, and responsible governance, ethical leaders ensure that ESG metrics move beyond symbolic reporting toward substantive sustainability outcomes. For example, environmental ESG practices support SDGs related to climate action and resource efficiency, while social and governance dimensions align with goals on decent work, reduced inequalities, and institutional integrity. Through ethical leadership, ESG frameworks become strategically embedded, enabling organizations to monitor progress, manage risks, and reinforce long-term commitments to SDG achievement.

This lays the groundwork for the next section, which explores the ethical foundations of responsible leadership and the theoretical perspectives that inform leadership behaviour in the context of CS. From a global perspective, the SDGs have intensified expectations for leadership accountability in advancing sustainability outcomes beyond compliance. Ethical leadership contributes to SDG implementation by embedding transparency, responsibility, and stakeholder engagement into organizational processes, thereby reinforcing initiatives related to climate action, decent work, reduced inequalities, and responsible consumption. At the country level, leadership ethics also influence how firms align national sustainability priorities with global SDG commitments, shaping institutional trust and long-term development outcomes.

4.2. Foundations of ethical leadership

The relationship between leadership and ethics has attracted growing scholarly attention, especially within the framework of responsible leadership [136]. Globally, researchers increasingly advocate for the integration of ethical principles into organizational structures. Central to this discourse is the concept of responsible leadership, an approach that emphasizes social accountability and aligns with principles of corporate governance, reinforcing the obligation of leaders to act in the interest of a broad spectrum of stakeholders [137]. Despite growing emphasis on ethical leadership, limited attention has been paid to how these values shape an individual leader's career development and professional growth within the evolving sustainability landscape. Emerging research on the future of work reveals that ethical leadership plays a key role in fostering employee engagement, job satisfaction, and commitment to shared organizational values [138]. By embedding ethical frameworks into leadership models, organizations can nurture workplace cultures that support long-term sustainability and retention [139].

A foundational ethical perspective in leadership theory is virtue ethics [140]. This school of thought focuses on individual moral character- emphasizing virtues like honesty and fairness- over rule-based frameworks. As a branch of normative ethics, virtue ethics highlights the cultivation of internal moral habits and character traits as a guide for ethical leadership, rather than strict adherence to codified regulations. In the future of work, where adaptability and values-based leadership are paramount, developing leaders grounded in virtue ethics offers strategic value. Leadership development programs that integrate these principles can foster stronger ethical reasoning and prepare leaders to navigate multifaceted sustainability challenges [141]. Moreover, virtue ethics aligns with the demands of increasingly complex work environments that require personal integrity, self-awareness, and accountability- especially in the face of ethical ambiguity [142].

Metaethics and normative ethics further enrich our understanding of moral reasoning. While metaethics explores the foundations and objectivity of moral claims [143], normative ethics provides prescriptive standards for evaluating right and wrong [144]. Together, these fields help shape organizational norms and leadership expectations. However, in highly competitive and dynamic work settings, static ethical codes often fall short. As Kidder [145] observed, real-world ethical dilemmas tend to pit two "rights" against each other- requiring moral discernment rather than black-and-white judgments. Within the future of work paradigm, ethical leadership must be adaptive, enabling leaders to respond effectively to evolving societal expectations and workplace realities while maintaining integrity. Leaders who internalize such ethical standards have been shown to reduce misconduct, foster employee trust, and strengthen organizational sustainability objectives [146].

Virtue-based leadership also requires a sense of individual moral responsibility- leaders must consistently act in alignment with ethical principles and remain attuned to the wellbeing of others. Such dispositional ethics have been shown to reduce executive corruption and improve overall accountability [147]. As Etzioni [148] and Weaver et al. [149] argue, the ethical tone set by leadership deeply influences organizational values and group behaviours. Research within organizational behaviour supports this, noting that ethical climates- shaped largely by leadership style- are crucial in advancing sustainability goals [138]. Leaders who create ethically sound environments promote motivation, trust, and shared commitment to purpose.

The practical relevance of these theoretical foundations is particularly visible in applied ethics, which combines the principles of metaethics and normative ethics to address real-world moral dilemmas. Business ethics, a form of applied ethics, enables organizations to evaluate the ethical implications of leadership decisions and sustainability strategies [144]. In the context of the future of work, applied ethics is increasingly essential to shaping decisions on corporate responsibility, stakeholder engagement, and long-term impact [150]. Applied ethics also ensures coherence in ethical expectations across hierarchical levels. When leaders institutionalize these principles into workplace policies and strategic decision-making, they create a consistent ethical framework that supports organizational responsibility and stakeholder trust.

To meaningfully address ethical issues in leadership and sustainability, it is necessary to consult a range of normative principles and

understand their philosophical underpinnings through metaethics. These perspectives not only help identify the roots of ethical evidence but also inspire deeper reflection and purpose-driven leadership [151]. As scholars have noted, strong ethical values directly correlate with business viability and broader societal wellbeing [152,153]. Somers [154] further emphasized that ethical practices in leadership directly influence organizational performance and effectiveness. Ethical leadership is associated with improved job performance, stronger commitment to CS goals, and greater long-term impact [155]. Still, leaders face moral paradoxes, where decisions may require balancing conflicting ethical demands rather than choosing between clearly defined right and wrong paths [145]. Therefore, this study further explores how ethical leadership principles are integrated into emerging leadership models and examines how these frameworks support the pursuit of sustainability and responsibility in organizational strategies.

Ultimately, embedding CS into core strategy requires senior leadership to actively champion social values and align them with the company's mission [156]. Ethical leadership has also been found to enhance employee green behaviour by fostering green human resource management (HRM) practices and building environmental knowledge [157], thereby linking leadership ethics to organizational sustainability outcomes. As organizations evolve, this often involves redefining the business model to position the firm as a proactive agent of societal change [158]. Within the future of work, this transition is best supported by responsible leadership frameworks that integrate ethics, sustainability, and employee empowerment across all layers of organizational life. By linking leadership development to broader sustainability and ethics goals, organizations create conditions for enduring positive impact. The next section explores further how these ethical foundations are operationalized in leadership behaviours and decision-making practices, particularly in relation to CS and business ethics.

4.3. *Leadership and business ethics*

The ethical mindset adopted by leaders has been conceptualised in various ways, with its theoretical foundations rooted in ethical cultures shaped by normative structures that aim to inspire ethical conduct [159]. Leaders who act in alignment with ethical principles are often perceived by followers as both moral individuals and moral managers [160]. Such leaders demonstrate behaviours intended to benefit others while avoiding harm [161], and they model normatively appropriate actions that influence followers to emulate similar ethical conduct [162]. This relationship between leadership and ethics becomes particularly salient in the context of the future of work, where evolving workplace models demand high levels of trust, adaptability, and purpose-driven engagement. Ethical leadership is instrumental in fostering inclusive, transparent, and values-based cultures that support organisational resilience and long-term sustainability. By shaping norms and expectations around fairness, accountability, and social responsibility, ethical leaders play a critical role in ensuring that emerging work environments- whether hybrid, digital, or decentralised- align with broader CS goals. Studies indicate that ethical leadership not only enhances employees' job satisfaction but also reduces unethical workplace behaviours, reinforcing an ethical climate within organizations [139].

The Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS), developed by Craig and Gustafson [163] and validated by Parry and Proctor [164], focuses on unethical and abusive behaviours of leaders. One of the biggest drawbacks of this scale is that the absence of abusive behaviour or unethical behaviour does not necessarily lead to evidence of ethical behaviour [165]. Moreover, the PLIS was designed for two reasons: one is to evaluate specific leader behaviours for development purposes, while the other is to assess leaders' perceptions of moral issues in order to discern leaders who are ineffective but have ethical behaviours. Trevino et al. [160] conducted a study of ethical leadership, in which they asked employees about the characteristics and behaviours of ethical leaders. They found that along with honesty and integrity, being a role model for followers in pursuing ethical conduct was also significantly supported by employees. Beyond ethical perception, ethical leadership also shapes organizational citizenship behaviours, ensuring that employees voluntarily contribute to ethical workplace norms and CSR-related initiatives [166]. Ethical leadership positively influences team dynamics, reinforcing fairness and inclusion, which are crucial for workforce management frameworks that emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion [155].

Hence, defining the characteristics of leaders who focus on ethics may seem to be harmonious with metaethical theories, since metaethics is about questioning where ethical principles come from. Furthermore, Brown et al. [162], in their study of normative ethics, justified that some behaviours, such as listening to employees' voices and having the best interests of employees at heart, were more important than being an ethical leader. Further, the Ethical Leadership Work Questionnaire (ELWQ) developed by De Hoog and Hartog [167], examines behaviour in terms of fairness, morality, role clarification and delegation of power as well as despotic leadership behaviours. Although De Hoogh and Hartog's study [167] focused on normative structures, it also showed the importance of the meta-ethical foundations in assessing ethical behaviours, and that the leader's internal obligation was significantly related to ethical leadership aligned with their social responsibility. Furthermore, Kalshoven et al. [168] extended the ELWQ with seven subscales of ethical guidance, fairness, integrity, people orientation, power sharing, role clarification, and concern for CS. They found it to be related to ethical leadership in accordance with normative ethical foundations specifying how to act in social, task-related, and regulative terms, with a lack of reasoning in terms of individual and collective mechanisms. In this regard, talent management practices play a pivotal role in encouraging ethical leadership by embedding ethical considerations into recruitment, performance management, and employee development processes [150]. When organizations integrate ethical leadership training into workplace strategies, they reinforce responsible decision-making and sustainable business practices [138].

Similarly, behavioural ethics adopts the assumptions and theoretical foundations of the normative theory. Trevino et al. [160] defined behavioural ethics as 'individual behaviour that is subject to or judged according to generally accepted norms of behaviour.' Ethical intentions and behaviour largely result from individuals' cognitive processes, which are based on moral awareness and judgement [169]. External factors such as material gain and social influence are important in engaging ethical behaviours [170]. However, unethical behaviour may take place without the awareness of individuals [171]. Moreover, to explore further the reasons behind ethical and unethical behaviours, we need to understand psychological perspectives such as moral awareness, ethical decision-making processes and responding to unethical events [172]. An ethical work climate, nurtured by human resource policies, reduces unethical behaviours by embedding ethical considerations into reward systems, performance evaluations, and corporate governance structures [146]. Organizations that emphasize ethical leadership in workforce management are more likely to see long-term improvements in employee engagement and organizational effectiveness [142].

The challenges related to business ethics originate from the nature of the market economy, which represents the western ethical tradition rather than human nature [173]. Hence, the meaning of ethics in defining leaders' actions needs to be expanded in terms of values and context and should go beyond a narrow set of universally accepted norms. This is particularly relevant in global workplace strategy, where cross-cultural ethical variations require leaders to balance localized ethical perspectives with global business ethics frameworks [41]. Adopting an ethical mindset and actions have an important role in the decision-making procedure of an organisation [12]. Recent organisational development studies further highlight the role of paradoxical leadership, where leaders must balance competing ethical demands, such as profitability and sustainability by adopting flexible, context-dependent ethical decision-making approaches [141]. In this

context, ethical leadership serves as a governance mechanism that enables organizations to align their strategic priorities with SDG targets by fostering responsible decision-making, monitoring progress, and reinforcing ethical standards across evolving workplace structures.

4.4. An integrated framework linking leadership, ethics, and corporate sustainability

Drawing on the findings of this systematic literature review, this study proposes an integrated propositional framework that synthesizes how leadership mindsets, ethical principles, and governance mechanisms jointly shape corporate sustainability outcomes. As illustrated in Fig. 3, ethical leadership forms the foundational driver influencing organizational decision-making through core ethical principles, particularly transparency and accountability. These principles operate as governance mechanisms that guide leadership actions and shape ESG practices, enabling organizations to translate ethical intentions into structured sustainability processes. The framework further demonstrates how ethical leadership influences the prioritsation of the triple bottom line (economic, environmental, and social dimensions), addressing variations in how leaders balance competing sustainability objectives. Through this process, ESG practices act as operational instruments that connect leadership ethics with measurable sustainability outcomes, including SDG alignment, stakeholder trust, and long-term corporate sustainability performance. The framework addresses the research questions by showing how ethical leadership shapes corporate sustainability practices,[1] with transparency and accountability serving as key mechanisms influencing their effectiveness.[2] It further highlights how leaders prioritise triple bottom line dimensions[3] and navigate ethical and strategic challenges in embedding sustainability into organizational decision-making.[4] Together, these elements provide an integrated perspective on how ethical leadership drives sustainable value creation across complex organizational and institutional contexts.

5. Conclusion and future research avenues

Our findings underline that ethical leadership enhances organizational credibility and stakeholder trust, and it drives long-term sustainable development by integrating economic, environmental, and social dimensions [6,8]. This section will discuss the identified research gaps, propose future research avenues, address the limitations of our study, and conclude with our contributions to the field.

5.1. Identified research gaps

This review highlights three key research gaps that must be addressed to advance CS, especially in relation to the future of work. Addressing these gaps will deepen understanding of how ethical leadership and business ethics shape sustainable practices. First, current literature often treats business ethics and CS as separate domains, overlooking how core ethical values, such as transparency and accountability, directly influence sustainability outcomes. These values are critical to embedding CS beyond regulatory compliance. In future workplaces, ethical talent development, inclusive decision-making, and value-driven assessments are essential mechanisms for institutionalising these principles. Understanding how such practices influence stakeholder engagement and organizational culture can uncover new pathways for transformative CS.

Second, there is a lack of robust theories linking ethical leadership with CS and sustainable HRM practices like employee well-being, diversity, and ethical conduct. More work is needed to explore how ethics-informed leadership shapes decisions and culture, and to develop practical frameworks that help organisations integrate ethical values into CS strategies and navigate barriers to implementation. Third, while leadership styles are well studied, their ethical dimensions remain underexplored, particularly in relation to CS and agile workforce practices. Future research should examine how leaders' ethical mindsets influence sustainability decisions, shape culture, and impact stakeholder trust. Identifying traits that define ethical leadership will be critical for supporting future-ready organisations. By addressing these gaps, future studies can build ethically grounded frameworks to guide effective, inclusive, and responsible CS implementation in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

5.2. Future research directions

Existing literature reveals significant disparities between CS knowledge, executive decision-making, and strategic priorities like the TBL. Addressing the identified research gaps is essential to understanding how ethical leadership and agile workforce practices can support effective CS strategies. Integrating ethical principles into leadership enhances organizational credibility, stakeholder trust, and long-term sustainability, offering both academic and practical value.

Leadership in stakeholder engagement

While past research often centres on environmental impacts, future studies should examine how leadership influences broader social dimensions of CS. Ethical leadership plays a critical role in stakeholder engagement by fostering trust, collaboration, and transparency. Research should explore how various leadership styles and ethical frameworks shape stakeholder involvement, particularly through transparent communication and inclusive decision-making. Cultural, social, and economic contexts also influence stakeholder expectations and engagement practices. Comparative studies can highlight regional differences and inform context-sensitive strategies. Additionally, digital tools offer new avenues for engagement and accountability. Research should investigate how digital transformation enhances transparency and stakeholder collaboration in CS initiatives.

Integrating ethical frameworks with CS

There is a clear need for models that link ethical frameworks with CS strategies to establish systemic accountability. Virtue ethics, which focuses on moral character, offers a promising theoretical lens. Interdisciplinary research drawing from ethics, psychology and management, can provide insights into how ethical mindsets affect CS leadership. Future studies should also examine how ethical leadership is cultivated, including through education, mentorship, and ethical training. Operationalizing ethical leadership through green HRM practices may provide a tangible mechanism to embed environmental sustainability into daily organizational routines [157]. Agile workforce strategies and supportive organizational cultures can reinforce ethical values and long-term sustainability commitments, making them integral to future research in CS.

Ethical leadership and the SDGs

Future research should explicitly examine how ethical leadership facilitates the implementation and reinforcement of the SDGs at organizational and country levels. Empirical studies could investigate how leadership values such as accountability and transparency influence firm-level SDG performance, ESG reporting practices, and stakeholder trust. Cross-country analyses may also reveal how institutional environments shape leaders' capacity to embed SDGs into corporate strategies. Longitudinal designs would be particularly valuable in assessing how ethical leadership sustains SDG progress over time rather than through short-term initiatives. ESG frameworks can act as practical governance instruments through which ethical leadership translates SDG commitments into measurable organizational practices.

Leading digital transformation in CS initiatives

Digital transformation plays a vital role in advancing CS, driving

[1] Research Question 1
[2] Research Question 2
[3] Research Question 3
[4] Research Question 4

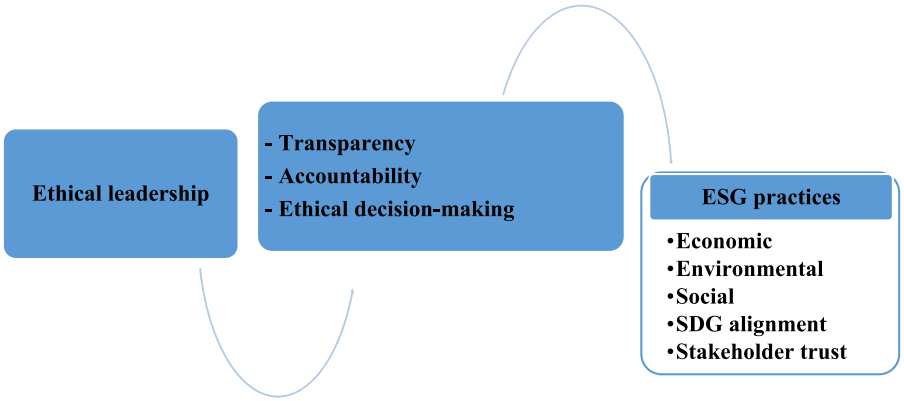


Fig. 3. Integrated framework linking ethical leadership, ESG practices, and corporate sustainability.

changes in management and workforce practices [174]. Embedding CS into business strategy is essential in today's digital economy [175]. Agile workforce management is crucial in implementing CS initiatives, particularly in facilitating employee training, managing resistance to change, and promoting a culture of sustainability. Recent advancements such as environmental, social, and governance (ESG) reporting software and AI-driven ethics audit tools are playing an increasingly central role in anchoring CS initiatives in transparent, data-driven practices [176], in developed and developing countries. These technologies support automated compliance tracking, stakeholder communication, and risk detection, enabling firms to align sustainability goals with ethical governance frameworks.

Future research should explore how organizations integrate digital tools like AI and machine learning into CS decision-making, including environmental monitoring and stakeholder engagement. Digital ESG reporting tools improve real-time access to an organization's sustainability data, supporting more dynamic and responsive CS efforts, increasing accountability, and enhancing transparency.

Cross-cultural perspectives on ethical leadership

Our review underscores the importance of understanding how cultural differences shape leaders' ethical mindsets and influence CS initiatives. Culture significantly affects ethical decision-making and the implementation of CS strategies [177,178]. Workforce development programs that enhance cultural intelligence (CQ) can equip leaders to navigate diverse environments and promote sustainability. Future research should examine how CQ supports ethical leadership in multicultural teams and international contexts. Additionally, studies should explore how cultural dimensions, such as power distance or long-term orientation, shape leadership behaviour and CS outcomes. As globalization expands, leaders face the challenge of reconciling ethical norms across contexts. Investigating how multinational corporations implement consistent CS strategies can offer valuable guidance.

Longitudinal studies on ethical leadership and corporate sustainability outcomes

This study identified a significant gap in longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of ethical leadership on CS outcomes [179]. Longitudinal studies are crucial for examining the lasting effects of ethical leadership on CS. These studies can reveal how ethical leaders' consistent commitment to CS principles impacts long-term organizational outcomes, such as financial performance, environmental impact, and social responsibility. Longitudinal research can explore how ethical leadership builds and maintains stakeholder trust over time, assess the impact on specific CS metrics, and understand the resilience of ethical leadership in the face of organizational challenges. Additionally, these studies can examine the interplay between ethical leadership and innovation in CS practices, as well as the broader societal impacts of ethical leadership on CS.

Moreover, longitudinal studies can provide insights into the mechanisms through which ethical leadership influences organizational culture and employee behaviour. By tracking changes over extended periods, researchers can identify how sustained ethical leadership contributes to the development of a culture of integrity and responsibility, which in turn supports long-term CS goals. These studies can also highlight the processes and strategies that ethical leaders use to navigate challenges and maintain their focus on CS objectives. Workplace strategies like performance reviews, leadership development, and talent management can help track how leaders influence CS outcomes over time and can be used to identify and nurture future leaders in the area of sustainability.

Finally, longitudinal research should consider the broader societal impacts of ethical leadership on CS. By tracking the contributions of ethical leaders to sustainable development goals (SDGs) and other global CS initiatives, researchers can assess the role of leadership in driving systemic change and addressing complex environmental and social challenges. Understanding these broader impacts can inform the development of leadership strategies that promote sustainability not only within organizations but also at the societal level. Addressing the need for longitudinal studies on ethical leadership and CS outcomes is essential for advancing our understanding of the long-term effects of ethical leadership. These studies can provide a comprehensive view of how sustained ethical leadership influences organizational performance, stakeholder trust, and specific CS metrics, contributing to the development of robust, evidence-based frameworks that support sustainable business practices.

5.3. Limitations of the study

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of ethical leadership in advancing CS, several limitations must be acknowledged to contextualize our findings and guide future research. First, the study relies on an SLR, which inherently depends on the scope and quality of the existing literature. This methodological approach may not fully capture emerging trends and recent developments in the field that have not yet been extensively documented. As such, future research should aim to include more up-to-date studies and consider incorporating ongoing developments in ethical leadership and CS. Future-ready workforce practices could also play a role here by helping organizations stay informed about emerging leadership styles and practices that align with sustainability, ensuring human resource professionals stay ahead of these trends.

Second, the review focuses on articles published up to 2020. This temporal limitation means that recent advancements, innovative practices, and newly proposed theories in the domain of ethical leadership and CS may not be included in our analysis. Workforce development practices, such as performance evaluations, training programs, and leadership development, should be updated regularly to incorporate the

latest research and align with new trends. Future research should update the literature review to encompass the latest contributions and explore how new findings integrate with established knowledge.

Third, the study primarily utilizes data from peer-reviewed journal articles, potentially excluding relevant insights from non-refereed publications, industry reports, and practitioner perspectives. This exclusion may lead to a narrower view of the practical applications and challenges faced by leaders in implementing CS initiatives. Future studies should aim to broaden the scope by including grey literature and insights from practitioners to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the practical implications of ethical leadership in CS. Collaborative practices such as collaborating with external stakeholders and practitioners can help bridge this gap and enhance the research's applicability to real-world settings.

Fourth, the review process focused on articles written in English, which may have resulted in the exclusion of valuable research published in other languages. This language bias limits the diversity of perspectives considered in the study. Future research should strive to include non-English publications to capture a wider range of cultural and regional insights into ethical leadership and CS. Including organizational development from non-English regions or culturally diverse organizations can shed light on how leadership styles are applied across different cultural contexts.

Finally, while the study identifies significant research gaps and proposes future research avenues, the interdisciplinary nature of ethical leadership and CS calls for a more integrative approach. Future research should consider employing mixed methods, longitudinal studies, and cross-disciplinary collaborations to explore the complex interactions between leadership, ethics, and CS comprehensively. Integrating quantitative and qualitative data could offer deeper insights into the causal relationships and long-term effects of ethical leadership on CS outcomes. People-centric practices could facilitate such integrative approaches by encouraging collaborations between organizational development professionals, sustainability teams, and researchers.

5.4. Conclusion

This study offers a comprehensive exploration of the pivotal role ethical leadership plays in advancing CS. Through a SLR of 93 peer-reviewed journal articles, we have illuminated the interconnectedness of leadership, business ethics, and CS, identifying significant gaps in the current body of research. Our findings underline that ethical leadership is not only essential for enhancing organizational credibility and fostering stakeholder trust but also for driving long-term sustainable development. Ethical leaders, by integrating economic, environmental, and social considerations into their decision-making processes, are well-positioned to navigate the complex challenges of CS. This integrated approach is critical for shaping strategies that go beyond mere regulatory compliance, fostering a culture of sustainability within organizations. Moreover, leadership frameworks that promote ethical decision-making contribute to the development of adaptive, resilient organizational structures capable of responding to global sustainability challenges. As organizations continue to evolve, the role of leadership development initiatives, including training, coaching, and employee engagement, becomes central to ensuring that ethical leadership remains deeply embedded in CS efforts. These practices are key to building and sustaining a leadership pipeline that is committed to integrating sustainability principles throughout the organizational ecosystem, promoting continuous improvement and long-term positive impact.

This study makes three distinct contributions. First, it advances theoretical understanding by integrating ethical leadership and CS through the lens of business ethics, a link often treated separately in existing literature. Second, it provides a practical framework for organizations by identifying key ethical values, such as transparency and accountability that are critical to embedding CS into leadership practices and workplace strategies. Third, it contributes methodologically by offering a structured synthesis of 93 peer-reviewed articles, categorized across industry domains and methods, which can serve as a replicable basis for future interdisciplinary reviews in CS and leadership.

The identified research gaps present promising avenues for future exploration. By addressing the need for a deeper understanding of the relationship between business ethics and CS, developing theories that bridge ethical frameworks with CS initiatives, and exploring the influence of ethical considerations on leadership styles and strategies, future research can significantly advance the field. Additionally, examining the role of digital transformation and cross-cultural perspectives in CS can provide valuable insights into how organizations can adapt to the evolving business landscape and promote sustainable practices globally. This study contributes to the development of robust, ethically grounded frameworks that support sustainable business practices and leadership. By highlighting the critical role of ethical leadership in CS, our research establishes a foundation for future studies and offers several research avenues that can enhance the understanding and implementation of sustainable practices in the corporate world. Through these efforts, we encourage a more sustainable and ethically responsible business environment, ultimately contributing to the long-term well-being of society and the planet [42,45,89,104].

CRediT authorship contribution statement

S. Asieh Hosseini Tabaghdehi: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Ozlem Ayaz:** Writing – original draft, Visualization, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Ekrem Tatoglu:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

We confirm that all the authors of this work have no conflict of interest to disclose. We confirm that we have never received any financial or non-financial, direct or indirect funding for this research and study.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

References

[1] M. Remchukov, D. Rozhok, COVID-19 is testing corporate attitudes to sustainability, World Econ. Forum (2020), 16 Octoberavailable at: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/covid-19-litmus-test-sustainability/ (accessed 26 July 2021.
[2] H. Walker, S. Seuring, J. Sarkis, R. Klassen, Sustainable operations management: recent trends and future directions, Int. J. Oper. Prod. Manag. 35 (4) (2014) 1–12.
[3] M.J. Epstein, A.R. Buhovac, K. Yuthas, Managing social, environmental and financial performance simultaneously, Long. Range Plann. 48 (1) (2015) 35–45.
[4] E.A. Inigo, L. Albareda, Sustainability oriented innovation dynamics: levels of dynamic capabilities and their path-dependent and self-reinforcing logics, Technol. Forecast. Soc. Change 139 (2019) 334–351.
[5] G. Papagiannakis, S. Lioukas, Corporate environmental management: individual-level drivers and the moderating role of charismatic leadership, Eur. Manag. Rev. 15 (4) (2018) 475–489.
[6] S. Grewatsch, I. Kleindienst, How organizational cognitive frames affect organizational capabilities: the context of corporate sustainability, Long. Range Plann. 51 (4) (2018) 607–624.
[7] E. Kollenscher, D. Eden, B. Ronen, M. Farjoun, Architectural leadership: the neglected core of organizational leadership, Eur. Manag. Rev. 14 (3) (2017) 247–264.
[8] P. Shrivastava, The role of corporations in achieving ecological sustainability, Acad. Manage Rev. 20 (4) (1995) 936–960.
[9] M.H. Anderson, P.Y. Sun, Reviewing leadership styles: overlaps and the need for a new 'full-range theory, Int. J. Manag. Rev. 19 (1) (2017) 76–96.
[10] M. Mura, M. Longo, P. Micheli, D. Bolzani, The evolution of sustainability measurement research, Int. J. Manag. Rev. 20 (3) (2018) 661–695.
[11] E.M. Collins, K. Kearins, Delivering on sustainability's global and local orientation, in: Acad. Manag. Learn. Educ., 9, 2010, pp. 499–506.

[12] K.S. Groves, M.A. LaRocca, An empirical study of leader ethical values, transformational and transactional leadership, and follower attitudes toward corporate social responsibility, J. Bus. Ethics 103 (4) (2011) 511–528.
[13] Q. Zheng, Y. Luo, V. Maksimov, Achieving legitimacy through corporate social responsibility: the case of emerging economy firms, J. World Bus. 50 (3) (2015) 389–403.
[14] F.N. Brady, C.P. Dunn, Business meta-ethics: an analysis of two theories, Bus. Ethics Q. 5 (3) (1995) 386–398.
[15] E.H. Schein, What is Culture, Sage, Newbury Park, CA, 1991, pp. 243–253.
[16] J. Cornelissen, Editor's comments: developing propositions, a process model, or a typology? Addressing the challenges of writing theory without a boilerplate, Acad. Manage Rev. 42 (1) (2017) 1–9.
[17] R. Adams, S. Martin, K. Boom, University culture and sustainability: designing and implementing an enabling framework, J. Clean. Prod. 171 (2018) 434–445.
[18] A. Ginsberg, N. Venkatraman, Contingency perspective of organizational strategy: a critical review of the empirical research, Acad. Manage Rev. 10 (1985) 421–434.
[19] R.K. Yin, Discovering the future of the case study. Method in evaluation research, Eval. Pr. 15 (3) (1994) 283–290.
[20] A. Calabrò, M. Vecchiarini, J. Gast, G. Campopiano, A. De Massis, S. Kraus, Innovation in family firms: a systematic literature review and guidance for future research, Int. J. Manag. Rev. 21 (3) (2019) 317–355.
[21] P.M. Podsakoff, S.B. MacKenzie, D.G. Bacharach, N.P. Podsakoff, The influence of management journals in the 1980s and 1990s, Strateg. Manage J. 26 (2005) 473–488.
[22] L. Rashman, E. Withers, J. Hartley, Organizational learning and knowledge in public service organizations: a systematic review of the literature, Int. J. Manag. Rev. 11 (4) (2009) 463–494.
[23] A.W. Harzing, S. Alakangas, Google Scholar, Scopus and the Web of Science: a longitudinal and cross-disciplinary comparison, Scientometrics. 106 (2) (2016) 787–804.
[24] R. Adams, S. Jeanrenaud, J. Bessant, D. Denyer, P. Overy, Sustainability-oriented innovation: a systematic review, Int. J. Manag. Rev. 18 (2) (2016) 180–205.
[25] L.J. Obara, K. Peattie, Bridging the great divide? Making sense of the human rights-CSR relationship in UK multinational companies, J. World Bus. 53 (6) (2018) 781–793.
[26] R.M. Bakker, Taking stock of temporary organizational forms: a systematic review and research agenda, Int. J. Manag. Rev. 12 (4) (2010) 466–486.
[27] V. Braun, V. Clarke, One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? Qual. Res. Psychol. 18 (3) (2021) 328–352.
[28] K. Szczepańska-Woszczyna, Responsible leadership contribution to human resource management-a study of CSR-HR interface, Procedia Econ. Finance 34 (2015) 403–409.
[29] M. Thiel, Governing indifference in social performance reporting: implications for responsible management education, Int. J. Manag. Educ. 18 (1) (2020) 100331.
[30] J. Paul, A.R. Criado, The art of writing literature review: what do we know and what do we need to know? Int. Bus. Rev. 29 (4) (2020) 101717.
[31] B. Kitchenham, Procedures For Performing Systematic Reviews, 33, Keele University, Keele, UK, 2004, pp. 1–26.
[32] J.K. Hall, G.A. Daneke, M.J. Lenox, Sustainable development and entrepreneurship: past contributions and future directions, J. Bus. Ventur. 25 (5) (2010) 439–448.
[33] L. Reave, Spiritual values and practices related to leadership effectiveness, Leadersh. Q. 16 (5) (2005) 655–687.
[34] S. Engert, R. Rauter, R.J. Baumgartner, Exploring the integration of corporate sustainability into strategic management: a literature review, J. Clean. Prod. 112 (2016) 2833–2850.
[35] A. Di Vaio, S. Hasan, R. Palladino, O. Escobar, Artificial intelligence and business models in the sustainable development goals perspectives: a systematic literature review, J. Bus. Res. 121 (2020) 283–314.
[36] R. Lozano, Towards better embedding sustainability into companies' systems: an analysis of voluntary corporate initiatives, J. Clean. Prod. 25 (2012) 14–26.
[37] N. Chams, J. García-Blandón, On the importance of sustainable human resource management for the adoption of sustainable development goals, Resour. Conserv. Recycl. 141 (2019) 109–122.
[38] V.N. Amrutha, S.N. Geetha, A systematic review on green human resource management: implications for social sustainability, J. Clean. Prod. 247 (2020) 119131.
[39] A. Williams, S. Kennedy, F. Philipp, G. Whiteman, Systems thinking: a review of sustainability management research, J. Clean. Prod. 148 (2017) 866–881.
[40] J. Macke, D. Genari, Systematic literature review on sustainable human resource management, J. Clean. Prod. 208 (2019) 806–815.
[41] C. Voegtlin, M. Greenwood, Corporate social responsibility and human resource management: a systematic review and conceptual analysis, Hum Resour Manag Rev 26 (3) (2016) 181–197.
[42] T. Coles, E. Fenclova, C. Dinan, Tourism and corporate social responsibility: a critical review and research agenda, Tour. Manage Perspect. 6 (2013) 122–141.
[43] C. Isensee, F. Teuteberg, K.M. Griese, C. Topi, The relationship between organizational culture, sustainability, and digitalization in SMEs: a systematic review, J. Clean. Prod. 275 (2020) 122944.
[44] Z.N. Ansari, R. Kant, A state-of-art literature review reflecting 15 years of focus on sustainable supply chain management, J. Clean. Prod. 142 (2017) 2524–2543.
[45] A.M. Quarshie, A. Salmi, R. Leuschner, Sustainability and corporate social responsibility in supply chains: the state of research in supply chain management and business ethics journals, J. Purch. Supply Manag. 22 (2) (2016) 82–97.
[46] S.N. Morioka, M.M. de Carvalho, A systematic literature review towards a conceptual framework for integrating sustainability performance into business, J. Clean. Prod. 136 (2016) 134–146.
[47] X. Jia, J. Chen, L. Mei, Q. Wu, How leadership matters in organizational innovation: a perspective of openness, Manage Decis. 56 (1) (2018) 6–25.
[48] E. Guenther, J. Endrikat, T.W. Guenther, Environmental management control systems: a conceptualization and a review of the empirical evidence, J. Clean. Prod. 136 (2016) 147–171.
[49] Q. Zhu, J. Sarkis, Green marketing and consumerism as social change in China: analyzing the literature, Int. J. Prod. Econ. 181 (2016) 289–302.
[50] N. Salim, M.N. Ab Rahman, D. Abd Wahab, A systematic literature review of internal capabilities for enhancing eco-innovation performance of manufacturing firms, J. Clean. Prod. 209 (2019) 1445–1460.
[51] M.M. Fritz, J.P. Schöggl, R.J. Baumgartner, Selected sustainability aspects for supply chain data exchange: towards a supply chain-wide sustainability assessment, J. Clean. Prod. 141 (2017) 587–607.
[52] P. Wells, Sustainable business models and the automotive industry: a commentary, IIMB Manag. Rev. 25 (4) (2013) 228–239.
[53] M.A.L. Agudelo, L. Johannsdottir, B. Davidsdottir, Drivers that motivate energy companies to be responsible. A systematic literature review of corporate social responsibility in the energy sector, J. Clean. Prod. 247 (2020) 119094.
[54] J.Z. Zhang, G.F. Watson IV, Marketing ecosystem: an outside-in view for sustainable advantage, Ind. Mark. Manag. 88 (2020) 287–304.
[55] D. Streimikiene, Z. Simanaviciene, R. Kovaliov, Corporate social responsibility for implementation of sustainable energy development in Baltic States, Renew. Sustain. Energy Rev. 13 (4) (2009) 813–824.
[56] G. Nulkar, SMEs and environmental performance- A framework for green business strategies, Procedia-Soc. Behav. Sci. 133 (2014) 130–140.
[57] M.L. Barnett, N. Darnall, B.W. Husted, Sustainability strategy in constrained economic times, Long. Range Plann. 48 (2) (2015) 63–68.
[58] R. Kudłak, K.Y. Low, Special issues dedicated to CSR and corporate sustainability: a review and commentary, Long. Range Plann. 48 (3) (2015) 215–227.
[59] L.L. Wannags, S. Gold, Assessing tensions in corporate sustainability transition: from a review of the literature towards an actor-oriented management approach, J. Clean. Prod. 264 (2020) 121662.
[60] C.B. Olalla, A. Merino, Competences for sustainability in undergraduate business studies: a content analysis of value-based course syllabi in Spanish universities, Int. J. Manag. Educ. 17 (2) (2019) 239–253.
[61] H. Dixon-Fowler, A. O'Leary-Kelly, J. Johnson, M. Waite, Sustainability and ideology-infused psychological contracts: an organizational-and employee-level perspective, Hum. Resour. Manag. Rev. 30 (3) (2020) 100690.
[62] N. Ketprapakorn, Toward an Asian corporate sustainability model: an integrative review, J. Clean. Prod. 239 (2019) 117995.
[63] A. Rosenbloom, M. Gudić, C. Parkes, B. Kronbach, A PRME response to the challenge of fighting poverty: how far have we come? Where do we need to go now? Int. J. Manag. Educ. 15 (2) (2017) 104–120.
[64] P. Trkman, Value proposition of business schools: more than meets the eye, Int. J. Manag. Educ. 17 (3) (2019) 100310.
[65] A. Elmualim, CSR and sustainability in FM: evolving practices and an integrated index, Procedia Eng. 180 (2017) 1577–1584.
[66] A. Bouchet, M. Troilo, J.W. Peachey, Major league baseball and the Dominican Republic: what is in the best interest of the players? Sport. Manag. Rev. 16 (2) (2013) 236–250.
[67] P. Büyükbalcı, Sustaining firm performance through innovation oriented value investments, Procedia-Soc. Behav. Sci. 41 (2012) 450–455.
[68] N.L. Leech, A.J. Onwuegbuzie, An array of qualitative data analysis tools: a call for data analysis triangulation, Sch. Psychol. Q. 22 (4) (2007) 557.
[69] A.J. Onwuegbuzie, N.L. Leech, K.M. Collins, Innovative data collection strategies in qualitative research, Qual. Rep. 15 (3) (2010) 696–726.
[70] M. Petrini, M. Pozzebon, Managing sustainability with the support of business intelligence: integrating socio-environmental indicators and organisational context, J. Strat. Inf. Syst. 18 (4) (2009) 178–191.
[71] H.T.S. Caldera, C. Desha, L. Dawes, Exploring the characteristics of sustainable business practice in small and medium-sized enterprises: experiences from the Australian manufacturing industry, J. Clean. Prod. 177 (2018) 338–349.
[72] C. Bassano, S. Barile, P. Piciocchi, J.C. Spohrer, F. Iandolo, R. Fisk, Storytelling about places: tourism marketing in the digital age, Cities. 87 (2019) 10–20.
[73] W.L. Tate, L.M. Ellram, K.J. Dooley, Environmental purchasing and supplier management (EPSM): theory and practice, J. Purch Supply Manag. 18 (3) (2012) 173–188.
[74] M. Ylönen, M. Laine, For logistical reasons only? A case study of tax planning and corporate social responsibility reporting, Crit. Perspect. Account. 33 (2015) 5–23.
[75] K.H. Lee, Y. Wu, Integrating sustainability performance measurement into logistics and supply networks: a multi-methodological approach, Br. Account. Rev. 46 (4) (2014) 361–378.
[76] I.D. Meza-Ruiz, L. Rocha-Lona, R. del, M. Soto-Flores, J.A. Garza-Reyes, V. Kumar, G.C. Lopez-Torres, Measuring business sustainability maturity-levels and best practices, Procedia Manuf. 11 (2017) 751–759.
[77] D. Ortiz, K. Huber-Heim, From information to empowerment: teaching sustainable business development by enabling an experiential and participatory problem-solving process in the classroom, Int. J. Manag. Educ. 15 (2) (2017) 318–331.
[78] M. Jankalova, Approaches to the evaluation of corporate social responsibility, Procedia Econ. Finance 39 (2016) 580–587.

[79] S. Koç, V. Durmaz, Airport corporate sustainability: an analysis of indicators reported in the sustainability practices, Procedia-Soc. Behav. Sci. 181 (2015) 158–170.
[80] C. Scandelius, G. Cohen, Sustainability program brands: platforms for collaboration and co-creation, Ind. Mark. Manag. 57 (2016) 166–176.
[81] C. Simoes, J. Singh, M.G. Perin, Corporate brand expressions in business-to-business companies' websites: evidence from Brazil and Inia, Ind. Mark. Manag. 51 (2015) 59–68.
[82] I. Frolova, I. Lapina, Corporate social responsibility in the framework of quality management, Procedia-Soc. Behav. Sci. 156 (2014) 178–182.
[83] Y. Lu, X. Zhang, Corporate sustainability for architecture engineering and construction (AEC) organizations: framework, transition and implication strategies, Ecol. Indic. 61 (2016) 911–922.
[84] G. de los Reyes Jr, M. Scholz, The limits of the business case for sustainability: don't count on 'creating shared value' to extinguish corporate destruction, J. Clean. Prod. 221 (2019) 785–794.
[85] B. Sarmah, J.U. Islam, Z. Rahman, Sustainability, social responsibility and value co-creation: a case study based approach, Procedia-Soc. Behav. Sci. 189 (2015) 314–319.
[86] T.S. Erdil, Strategic brand management based on sustainable-oriented view: an evaluation in Turkish home appliance industry, Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci. 99 (2013) 122–132.
[87] O. Laasch, J. Pinkse, Explaining the leopards' spots: responsibility-embedding in business model artefacts across spaces of institutional complexity, Long. Range Plann. 53 (4) (2020) 101891.
[88] R. Rodriguez, G. Svensson, G. Wood, Sustainability trends in public hospitals: efforts and priorities, Eval. Program Plann. 78 (2020) 101742.
[89] K.H. Toft, M. Rüdiger, Mapping corporate climate change ethics: responses among three Danish energy firms, Energy Res. Soc. Sci. 59 (2020) 101286.
[90] A. Garayar, J.A. Calvo, Joining the un global compact in spain: an institutional Aproach: la adhesión al pacto mundial en españa: un enfoque institucional, Rev. Contab-Span Account. Rev. 15 (2) (2012) 311–355.
[91] J. Rive, M. Bonnet, C. Parmentier, V. Pelazzo-Plat, L. Pignet-Fall, A contribution to the laying of foundations for dialogue between socially responsible management schools, Int. J. Manag. Educ. 15 (2) (2017) 238–248.
[92] D. Hıdıroğlu, Self-assessment performance measurement in construction companies: an application of the EFQM excellence model on processes and customer stages, Procedia Comput. Sci. 158 (2019) 844–851.
[93] B. Potdar, T. Garry, L. McNeill, J. Gnoth, R. Pandey, M. Mansi, J. Guthrie, Retail employee guardianship behaviour: a phenomenological investigation, J. Retail. Consum. Serv. 54 (2020) 102017.
[94] G. Özcüre, H. Demirkaya, N. Eryiğit, Is it possible to be a sustainable energy company in Turkey? A case study of OMV's thermal electric power plant in Samsun, Procedia-Soc. Behav. Sci. 181 (2015) 97–106.
[95] E. Wut, A. Ng, CSR practice and sustainable business performance: evidence from the global financial centre of China, Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci. 195 (2015) 133–141.
[96] E.G. Guba, Y.S. Lincoln, Competing paradigms in qualitative research, Handb. Qual. Res. 2 (163–194) (1994) 105.
[97] M.J. Goertzen, Introduction to quantitative research and data, Libr. Technol. Rep. 53 (4) (2017) 12–18.
[98] Bansal, P., & Corley, K. (2012). Publishing in AMJ - part 7: what's different about qualitative research? 55(3), 509–513.
[99] V. Naciti, Corporate governance and board of directors: the effect of a board composition on firm sustainability performance, J. Clean. Prod. 237 (2019) 117727.
[100] V. Blok, R. Wesselink, O. Studynka, R. Kemp, Encouraging sustainability in the workplace: a survey on the pro-environmental behaviour of university employees, J. Clean. Prod. 106 (2015) 55–67.
[101] M.L. Martens, M.M. Carvalho, Key factors of sustainability in project management context: a survey exploring the project managers' perspective, Int. J. Proj. Manag. 35 (6) (2017) 1084–1102.
[102] C. Miska, I. Szőcs, M. Schiffinger, Culture's effects on corporate sustainability practices: a multi-domain and multi-level view, J. World Bus. 53 (2) (2018) 263–279.
[103] H.M. Jerónimo, P.L. Henriques, T.C. de Lacerda, F.P. da Silva, P.R. Vieira, Going green and sustainable: the influence of green HR practices on the organizational rationale for sustainability, J. Bus. Res. 112 (2020) 413–421.
[104] M. Shahzad, Y. Qu, S.A. Javed, A.U. Zafar, S.U. Rehman, Relation of environment sustainability to CSR and green innovation: a case of Pakistani manufacturing industry, J. Clean. Prod. 253 (2020) 119938.
[105] I. Sila, K. Cek, The impact of environmental, social and governance dimensions of corporate social responsibility on economic performance: australian evidence, Procedia Comput. Sci. 120 (2017) 797–804.
[106] Z. Miao, S. Cai, D. Xu, Exploring the antecedents of logistics social responsibility: a focus on Chinese firms, Int. J. Prod. Econ. 140 (1) (2012) 18–27.
[107] A. Chantziaras, E. Dedoulis, V. Grougiou, S. Leventis, The impact of religiosity and corruption on CSR reporting: the case of US banks, J. Bus. Res. 109 (2020) 362–374.
[108] C. Wang, R. Hu, T.C. Zhang, Corporate social responsibility in international hotel chains and its effects on local employees: scale development and empirical testing in China, Int. J. Hosp. Manage 90 (2020) 102598.
[109] S. Pätäri, H. Arminen, L. Albareda, K. Puumalainen, A. Toppinen, Student values and perceptions of corporate social responsibility in the forest industry on the road to a bioeconomy, For. Policy. Econ. 85 (2017) 201–215.
[110] R. Kriyantono, Public relations and corporate social responsibility in mandatory approach era in Indonesia, Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci. 211 (2015) 320–327.
[111] A. Paul, J.W. Lang, R.J. Baumgartner, A multilevel approach for assessing business strategies on climate change, J. Clean. Prod. 160 (2017) 50–70.
[112] S.D. Anastasiadou, P.A. Zirinoglou, EFQM dimensions in Greek primary education system, Procedia Econ. Finance 33 (2015) 411–431.
[113] S.A.Z. Kazmi, M. Naaranoja, J. Kytola, J. Kantola, Connecting strategic thinking with product innovativeness to reinforce NPD support process, Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci. 235 (2016) 672–684.
[114] D.S. Prasad, R.P. Pradhan, K. Gaurav, A.K. Sabat, Critical success factors of sustainable supply chain management and organizational performance: an exploratory study, Transp. Res. Procedia 48 (2020) 327–344.
[115] L.E. Hernandez-Lopez, F.R. Alamo-Vera, J.L. Ballesteros-Rodriguez, P. De Saa-Perez, Socialization of business students in ethical issues: the role of individuals' attitude and institutional factors, Int. J. Manag. Educ. 18 (1) (2020) 100363.
[116] G. Shi, J. Sun, L. Zhang, Y. Jin, Corporate social responsibility and geographic dispersion, J. Account. Public Policy 36 (6) (2017) 417–428.
[117] C. Zehir, Y. Gurol, T. Karaboga, M. Kole, Strategic human resource management and firm performance: the mediating role of entrepreneurial orientation, Procedia-Soc. Behav. Sci. 235 (2016) 372–381.
[118] J. Lafont, F. Ruiz, H. Gil-Gómez, R. Oltra-Badenes, Value creation in listed companies: a bibliometric approach, J. Bus. Res. 115 (2020) 428–434.
[119] C. Mombeuil, A.K. Fotiadis, Z.H. Wang, The Pandora's box of corporate social irresponsibility: an exploratory study within a failed State context, J. Clean. Prod. 234 (2019) 1306–1321.
[120] M. Zioło, I. Bąk, K. Cheba, A. Spoz, The relationship between banks and company business models-sustainability context, Procedia Comput. Sci. 176 (2020) 1507–1516.
[121] G.W. Cheung, R.S. Lau, Accuracy of parameter estimates and confidence intervals in moderated mediation models: a comparison of regression and latent moderated structural equations, Organ. Res. Methods 20 (4) (2017) 746–769.
[122] N. Carvalho, O. Chaim, E. Cazarini, M. Gerolamo, Manufacturing in the fourth industrial revolution: a positive prospect in sustainable manufacturing, Procedia Manuf. 21 (2018) 671–678.
[123] S. Kantabutra, Relating vision-based leadership to sustainable business performance: a Thai perspective, Kravis Leadersh. Inst. Leadersh. Rev. 6 (3) (2006) 37–53.
[124] M.E. Brown, L.K. Treviño, Ethical leadership: a review and future directions, Leadersh. Q. 17 (2006) 595–616.
[125] K. Cameron, Responsible leadership as virtuous leadership. Responsible Leadership, Springer, Dordrecht, 2011, pp. 25–35.
[126] R. Shearman, The meaning and ethics of sustainability, Env. Manage. 14 (1) (1990) 1–8.
[127] J.G. York, S. Vedula, M.J. Lenox, It's not easy building green: the impact of public policy, private actors, and regional logics on voluntary standards adoption, Acad. Manage J. 61 (4) (2018) 1492–1523.
[128] J.P. Doh, N.R. Quigley, Responsible leadership and stakeholder management: influence pathways and organizational outcomes, Acad. Manage Perspect. 28 (3) (2014) 255–274.
[129] L. Metcalf, S. Benn, Leadership for sustainability: an evolution of leadership ability, J. Bus. Ethics 112 (3) (2013) 369–384.
[130] T. Islam, A. Khatoon, A.U. Cheema, Y. Ashraf, How does ethical leadership enhance employee work engagement? The roles of trust in leader and harmonious work passion, Kybernetes 53 (6) (2024) 2090–2106.
[131] T. Islam, I. Zulfiqar, H. Aftab, O.H.M. Alkharabsheh, M.K. Shahid, Testing the waters! the role of ethical leadership towards innovative work behavior through psychosocial well-being and perceived organizational support, J. Organ. Change Manag. 37 (5) (2024) 1051–1072.
[132] E. Meliou, M. Ozbilgin, T. Edwards, How does responsible leadership emerge? An emergentist perspective, Eur. Manag. Rev. 18 (4) (2021) 521–534.
[133] T. Maak, N.M. Pless, Responsible leadership in a stakeholder society- a relational perspective, J. Bus. Ethics 66 (1) (2006) 99–115.
[134] J.F. Molina-Azorin, J.J. Tari, E. Claver-Cortes, M.D. Lopez-Gamero, Quality management, environmental management and firm performance: a review of empirical studies and issues of integration, Int. J. Manag. Rev. 11 (2) (2009) 197–222.
[135] W. Nawaz, M. Koc, Development of a systematic framework for sustainability management of organizations, J. Clean. Prod. 171 (2018) 1255–1274.
[136] C.L. Pearce, C.L. Wassenaar, C.C. Manz, Is shared leadership the key to responsible leadership? Acad. Manage Perspect. 28 (3) (2014) 275–288.
[137] L.I.S.A. Jones-Christensen, A. Mackey, D. Whetten, Taking responsibility for corporate social responsibility: the role of leaders in creating, implementing, sustaining, or avoiding socially responsible firm behaviors, Acad. Manage Perspect. 28 (2) (2014) 164–178.
[138] A. Bavik, A systematic review of the servant leadership literature in management and hospitality, Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manag. 32 (1) (2020) 347–382.
[139] T.W. Ng, D.C. Feldman, Ethical leadership: meta-analytic evidence of criterion-related and incremental validity, J. Appl. Psychol. 100 (3) (2015) 948.
[140] R.D. Hackett, G. Wang, Virtues and leadership: an integrating conceptual framework founded in Aristotelian and Confucian perspectives on virtues, Manage Decis. 50 (5) (2012) 868–899.
[141] M. Lavine, Paradoxical leadership and the competing values framework, J. Appl. Behav. Sci. 50 (2) (2014) 189–205.
[142] C.J. Resick, P.J. Hanges, M.W. Dickson, J.K. Mitchelson, A cross-cultural examination of the endorsement of ethical leadership, J. Bus. Ethics 63 (2006) 345–359.

[143] R. Shafer-Landau, Ethical theory: an Anthology, 13, John Wiley & Sons, 2012.
[144] R.L. Lippke, A critique of business ethics, Bus. Ethics Q. 1 (4) (1991) 367–384.
[145] R.M. Kidder, How Good People Make Tough Choices, William Morrow and Company, New York, 1995.
[146] D.M. Mayer, M. Kuenzi, R. Greenbaum, M. Bardes, R.B. Salvador, How low does ethical leadership flow? Test of a trickle-down model, Organ. Behav. Hum. Decis. Process. 108 (1) (2009) 1–13.
[147] C.L. Pearce, C.C. Manz, Leadership centrality and corporate social ir-responsibility (CSIR): the potential ameliorating effects of self and shared leadership on CSIR, J. Bus. Ethics 102 (4) (2011) 563–579.
[148] A. Etzioni, The Moral Dimension, Free Press, New York, 1988.
[149] G.R. Weaver, L.K. Trevino, P.L. Cochran, Corporate ethics programs as control systems: influences of executive commitment and environmental factors, Acad. Manage J. 42 (1) (1999) 41–57.
[150] C. Voegtlin, M. Patzer, A.G. Scherer, Responsible leadership in global business: a new approach to leadership and its multi-level outcomes, J. Bus. Ethics 105 (2012) 1–16.
[151] W.A. Kahn, To be fully there: psychological presence at work, Hum. Relat. 45 (4) (1992) 321–349.
[152] T.M. Jones, Instrumental stakeholder theory: a synthesis of ethics and economics, Acad. Manage Rev. 20 (2) (1995) 404–437.
[153] D.C. North, Structure and Change in Economic History, Norton, New York, 1981.
[154] M.J. Somers, Ethical codes of conduct and organizational context: a study of the relationship between codes of conduct, employee behavior and organizational values, J. Bus. Ethics 30 (2) (2001) 185–195.
[155] D.N. Den Hartog, Ethical leadership, Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav. 2 (1) (2015) 409–434.
[156] T. Galpin, J.L. Whittington, Sustainability leadership: from strategy to results, J. Bus. Strategy 33 (4) (2012) 40–48.
[157] S. Ahmad, T. Islam, M. Sadiq, A. Kaleem, Promoting green behavior through ethical leadership: a model of green human resource management and environmental knowledge, Leadersh. Organ. Dev. J. 42 (4) (2021) 531–547.
[158] J.M. Logsdon, D.J. Wood, Business citizenship: from domestic to global level of analysis. *Business Ethics and strategy*, Volumes I and II, Routledge, 2018, pp. 175–207.
[159] R.S. Rubin, E.C. Dierdorff, M.E. Brown, Do ethical leaders get ahead? Exploring ethical leadership and promotability, Bus. Ethics Q. 20 (02) (2010) 215–236.
[160] L.K. Treviño, G.R. Weaver, S.J. Reynolds, Behavioral ethics in organizations: a review, J. Manage 32 (6) (2006) 951–990.
[161] R.N. Kanungo, Ethical values of transactional and transformational leaders, Can. J. Adm. Sci. 18 (2001) 257–265.
[162] M.E. Brown, L.K. Treviño, D. Harrison, Ethical leadership: a social learning perspective for construct development and testing, Organ. Behav. Hum. Decis. Process. 97 (2005) 117–134.
[163] S.B. Craig, S.B. Gustafson, Perceived leader integrity scale: an instrument for assessing employee perceptions of leader integrity, Leadersh. Q. 9 (2) (1998) 127–145.
[164] K.W. Parry, S.B. Proctor-Thomson, Perceived integrity of transformational leaders in organisational settings, J. Bus. Ethics 35 (2) (2002) 75–96.
[165] G. Yukl, R. Mahsud, S. Hassan, G.E. Prussia, An improved measure of ethical leadership, J. Leadersh. Organ. Stud. 20 (1) (2013) 38–48.
[166] S.D. Hansen, B.B. Dunford, A.D. Boss, R.W. Boss, I. Angermeier, Corporate social responsibility and the benefits of employee trust: a cross-disciplinary perspective, J. Bus. Ethics 102 (2011) 29–45.
[167] A.H. De Hoogh, D.N. Den Hartog, Ethical and despotic leadership, relationships with leader's social responsibility, top management team effectiveness and subordinates' optimism: a multi-method study, Leadersh. Q. 19 (3) (2008) 297–311.
[168] K. Kalshoven, D.N. Den Hartog, A.H. De Hoogh, Ethical leadership at work questionnaire (ELW): development and validation of a multidimensional measure, Leadersh. Q. 22 (1) (2011) 51–69.
[169] J.D. Greene, S.A. Morelli, K. Lowenberg, L.E. Nystrom, J.D. Cohen, Cognitive load selectively interferes with utilitarian moral judgment, Cognition 107 (3) (2008) 1144–1154.
[170] R. Cropanzano, J.H. Stein, Organizational justice and behavioural ethics: promises and prospects, Bus. Ethics Q. 19 (2) (2009) 193–233.
[171] D. De Cremer, A.E. Tenbrunsel, Behavioural Business ethics: Shaping an Emerging Field, Routledge, 2012.
[172] D. De Cremer, A.E. Tenbrunsel, M. van Dijke, Regulating ethical failures: insights from psychology, J. Bus. Ethics 95 (1) (2010) 1–6.
[173] D. Vogel, The ethical roots of business ethics, Bus. Ethics Q. 1 (1) (1991) 101–120.
[174] S.H. Park, M.A. Gonzalez-Perez, D. Floriani, The Palgrave handbook of Corporate Sustainability in the Digital Era, Springer International Publishing, 2021.
[175] A. Arslan, L. Haapanen, P. Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, S.Y. Tarba, I. Alon, Climate change, consumer lifestyles and legitimation strategies of sustainability-oriented firms, Eur. Manag. J. 39 (6) (2021) 720–730.
[176] J. Li, Y.M. Wei, L. Liu, X. Li, R. Yan, The carbon footprint and cost of coal-based hydrogen production with and without carbon capture and storage technology in China, J. Clean. Prod. 362 (2022) 132514.
[177] G. Hofstede, Culture's consequences: International differences in Work-Related Values, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, CA, 1980.
[178] G. Hofstede, Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and Organizations Across Nations, 2nd ed., Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2001.
[179] T. Hahn, L. Preuss, J. Pinkse, F. Figge, Cognitive frames in corporate sustainability: managerial sensemaking with paradoxical and business case frames, Acad. Manage Rev. 39 (4) (2014) 463–487.