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عنوان البحث

**Sustainable Leadership in Shaping modern organisational culture within
Norwegian NGOs**

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Modern organizations frequently change due to internal and external factors, leading to accelerated shifts that affect organizational culture. Adjustments are required structurally and in terms of workforce dynamics, as the labour market has become less stable than in the past. Employees today tend to be less loyal to their employers, often seeking new career opportunities. As a result, organizations must adapt to changing conditions and build new relationships. These changes significantly influence existing organizational cultures, as employees contribute their values, experiences, and perspectives through new hires, mergers, or organizational restructuring. This mutual influence highlights the need for leadership to manage these complexities effectively (Jacobsen and Thorsvik, 2009)

Sustainable leadership, in particular, has emerged as a critical factor in shaping the modern organizational culture of Norwegian NGOs. With my extensive experience in both the public and private sectors, I have witnessed firsthand how leadership can drive cultural change within organizations. In NGOs, sustainable leadership goes beyond short-term management; it focuses on building resilient, value-driven cultures that can thrive in the face of continuous change. Norwegian NGOs face numerous challenges such as resource constraints, evolving societal demands, and the need for strategic realignments. In this context, sustainable leadership is essential for fostering a culture that not only supports the NGO's mission but also ensures long-term adaptability and impact.

In shaping the culture of Norwegian NGOs, sustainable leaders must ensure that their organizations remain flexible and open to innovation while staying grounded in their core values and purpose. This requires leaders to foster an inclusive culture where employees feel empowered to contribute to the organization's mission. Furthermore, the development of a sustainable organizational culture also involves aligning organizational goals with the values of both employees and the communities they serve. Effective leadership ensures that these goals are not only relevant but also inspiring to staff, promoting a shared sense of purpose.

This thesis aims to examine the role of sustainable leadership in shaping modern organizational culture within Norwegian NGOs. Through a focus on sustainability, the study will explore how leaders can cultivate organizational cultures that are adaptable, value-driven, and equipped to meet the evolving needs of society. By understanding the interplay between leadership and culture, this research seeks to offer insights into how Norwegian NGOs can thrive in an increasingly complex and fast-changing world.

With my background as a worker in a culturally diverse organization, this thesis presents a unique opportunity to delve deeper into the role of leadership in shaping modern organizational culture within Norwegian NGOs. The focus of this study is to explore how sustainable leadership practices influence and shape the culture of these organizations, particularly in a rapidly changing environment. The central research question guiding this thesis is: **How does sustainable leadership contribute to shaping organizational culture in Norwegian NGOs?**

In this context, the concept of sustainable leadership refers to a leadership approach that emphasizes long-term thinking, ethical decision-making, and a commitment to fostering an inclusive, resilient, and adaptive culture. This research will examine key dimensions of leadership that contribute to this process, including the ability to balance organizational goals with the needs of employees, the management of uncertainty, and the fostering of collaboration across diverse teams. It will also explore how leaders navigate the challenges of maintaining the core values of the organization while adapting to external pressures and societal demands.

Understanding the role of sustainable leadership within NGOs is crucial, as these organizations often operate in complex environments characterized by resource constraints and shifting expectations from stakeholders. The success of these organizations increasingly depends on the ability of leaders to cultivate a strong, values-driven culture that can withstand external changes while staying focused on their mission.

This thesis will utilize a qualitative approach, drawing on organizational case studies and interviews with NGO leaders to provide a comprehensive analysis of how leadership shapes organizational culture. The data will be examined through the lens of relevant theories on leadership, organizational culture, and sustainability, which will be outlined in the theoretical framework.

Through this research, I aim to contribute to the understanding of how sustainable leadership can play a transformative role in the development of modern organizational culture, particularly in the context of Norwegian NGOs. By focusing on the interplay between leadership and culture, this study seeks to offer valuable insights for leaders navigating the challenges of leading purpose-driven organizations in today's fast-evolving world.

أهمية الدراسة:

The importance of this study lies in its focus on how sustainable leadership can shape and develop modern organizational cultures within Norwegian NGOs. As these organizations face increasingly complex challenges, including heightened societal expectations to deliver high-quality services while maintaining inclusive and equitable cultures, leadership plays a pivotal role. Effective leaders are responsible not only for operational success but also for fostering a work environment and organizational culture that align with the demands and goals of the organization. In this context, sustainable leadership becomes critical in building and sustaining a strong organizational culture that reflects the core values of adaptability, inclusivity, and social responsibility. As Norwegian NGOs continue to evolve and adapt to new societal requirements, understanding how leaders can nurture and maintain such cultures is crucial for their long-term success. This study seeks to offer insights into how leadership can effectively promote sustainable, value-driven organizational cultures that meet both internal and external expectation.

Here are the objectives of the study regarding "Sustainable Leadership in Shaping Modern Organizational Culture within Norwegian NGOs:

- 1-Understand how sustainable leadership affects the formation of organizational culture in non-governmental organizations
- 2-Explore the Relationship Between Leadership and culture in the diverse contexts of non-governmental organizations.
- 3-Identify the complex challenges faced by leaders in NGOs due to societal pressures and increasing expectations.
- 4-Evaluate how sustainable values influence the development of a strong organizational culture that aligns with community goals and principles.
- 5-Offer suggestions on how to improve leadership practices to enhance sustainable organizational culture.
- 6-Analyze personal leadership experiences in NGOs to identify best practices and effective approaches.

What role does leadership play in shaping organizational culture?

-Focus on how leaders influence vision, emotional tone, and behavioral norms

How does leadership contribute to organizational success?

In what ways do leaders ensure alignment between organizational cultural values and the employee experience?

What specific elements of an organization are influenced by leadership beyond profitability and employee engagement?

How do leaders create a purpose-driven work environment that supports employees in achieving organizational goals?

What are the key behaviours that leaders model to cultivate a strong organizational culture?

Why is emotional intelligence considered essential in leadership for shaping organizational culture?

How do leaders foster open communication and empower employees within an organization?

Based on what will be presented in the theoretical framework, the following hypotheses can be identified for the study:

Hypotheses related to sustainable leadership

Sustainable leadership is expected to be an influential factor in improving organizational culture within Norwegian NGOs.

Sustainable leadership practices are likely to foster engagement and commitment among employees and enhance their sense of responsibility towards organizational values.

Organizational Culture Hypotheses

NGOs that adopt sustainable leadership practices are hypothesized to be able to develop an organizational culture that is able to adapt to external changes and challenges.

An organizational culture built on sustainable foundations is likely to increase the continuity of performance and the achievement of the organisation's strategic goals.

Hypotheses related to the interaction between leadership and organizational culture

It is expected that there will be a positive interaction between sustainable leadership and organizational culture, such that they mutually influence each other.

It is hypothesized that sustainability-focused leaders will directly influence the direction of policies and values that promote collaboration and transparency within the organization.

By Schein (1992) organizational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and integral integration. Trice and Beyer (1993) have also connected culture with the environment, seeing organizational culture as a collective response to uncertainty and chaos. This type of leadership involves managing through others and overseeing the entire organization rather than focusing on a single functional area. In the increasingly complex and globalized landscape of the 21st century, strategic leaders must navigate constant change while effectively influencing human behavior, often in uncertain environments. Through communication, personal example, and their ability to foresee future opportunities, successful strategic leaders inspire the behaviors, thoughts, and emotions of those they lead (Green, Hassan, Marks, & Meiland, 2003)

The literature on organizational culture highlights its complex nature and multiple definitions, originating from anthropology and extending into organizational theory (Struwig & Smith, 2002; Barney, 1996). Organizational culture has been described as a system of shared meanings and distinct norms, values, and practices that shape organizational behavior (Martins & Martins, 2009; Arnold, 2005). Schein (1985) emphasizes that culture is a pattern of basic assumptions developed by groups to address challenges of external adaptation and internal integration, which are then passed on to new members.

Different typologies of organizational culture exist, such as those presented by Deal and Kennedy (1982), Handy (1985), and Schein (1985), each offering frameworks for understanding culture through elements like values, beliefs, and underlying assumptions. Cooke and Szumal (2000) propose three types of organizational culture—constructive, passive/defensive, and aggressive/defensive—each with distinct behavioral norms that influence how employees interact and perform tasks. This distinction is critical for understanding organizational dynamics in public service environments, where culture influences leadership, decision-making, and employee behaviour.

In this section, I will present the theoretical framework and explain the rationale behind its selection. The problem statement and the purpose of the study largely guide the choice of direction and theory, but my interest has also influenced the selection process. Additionally, my prior knowledge of the sector, the organizations involved, and the internal processes within NGOs has played a role in shaping this choice. Gjønnnes and Tangnes (2012) state that the purpose of studying organizations is to examine and explain a phenomenon, but a thorough description is needed to do so effectively. This is achieved through theoretical frameworks and systematic analysis. By employing theory, one can view the phenomenon from a new perspective, different from the initial viewpoint.

The sequence of topics is intentionally structured. I will first address the fundamental concepts of organization and culture, followed by a discussion on organizational culture, and finally, I will link organizational culture to leadership to provide a comprehensive understanding.

Organizational Culture and Strategy

Hennestad (2015) highlights that when organizations deliver poor results, attention often turns to whether the organizational culture is aligned with desired qualities. Culture is not only seen as a problem but also as part of the solution. Peter Drucker, the founder of modern management, emphasized this point, noting that failing to understand culture could threaten an organization's existence and undermine new strategies (Cameron & Quinn, 2013). Drucker's well-known quote, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast" (Hennestad, 2015), underscores that culture is a critical determinant of whether a strategy succeeds or fails. Without embedding strategy in the organizational culture, even the most effective strategies risk failure. Moreover, organizational culture evolves through collaboration as employees work together to solve problems in the workplace. Leaders play a role, in shaping culture through their actions (Hennestad, 2015). As such, the relationship between culture and strategy is dynamic and interconnected, creating challenges for leaders as they strive to balance both aspects.

Leadership and Culture

Modern organizations face a range of internal and external changes driven by socio-economic developments. To effectively lead, it is crucial to understand the various elements and perspectives within the leadership field (Thomson, 1995). In public sector organizations, the emphasis on value-based leadership has grown as a means to achieve goals and results, contrasting with the instrumental, task-oriented approach. Leadership, particularly when viewed through the lens of culture, is seen as a complex, interpersonal, and process-oriented phenomenon (Christensen et al., 2010). Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2009) suggest that leadership influences employee behavior through both formal structures and informal cultural norms. This perspective emphasizes that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin, with leadership influencing culture through both conscious and unconscious actions (Schein, 1998).

Value-Based and Transformational Leadership

In value-based leadership, shared values take centre stage in guiding organizational practices, where leaders act as role models, embodying the organization's vision and values. Value-based leadership is closely related to transformational leadership, which focuses on inspiring and motivating employees to achieve collective goals. Transformational leaders foster a sense of shared purpose and create an environment that encourages intellectual stimulation and personal growth (Christensen et al., 2010). By aligning individual and organizational values, leaders can create a unified and purpose-driven culture, which in turn supports organizational sustainability and effectiveness.

Research design is a strategy employed by the researcher to solve the main research problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2002)

An interpretivist research paradigm is suitable for this study as it emphasizes understanding subjective human experiences, particularly how individuals within an organization perceive and interpret culture and leadership. This aligns well with a qualitative research approach, ideal for exploring the complex, context-dependent nature of organizational culture and leadership, allowing for rich, descriptive data. An exploratory approach further supports flexibility in uncovering unique organizational aspects and potential new theories. Semi-structured interviews with key organizational members, focus groups with employee groups, and observation of workplace practices will be employed to collect data, offering deep insights into cultural and leadership dynamics. Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, which enables the identification and interpretation of key patterns and themes related to leadership behaviors, organizational values, and norms, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research focus.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are an effective tool for collecting data from leaders, managers and employees, where open-ended questions are asked that allow participants to express their opinions and experiences in detail about organizational culture and leadership roles within the organization.

Observation

Observation is used to observe employee behaviors and interactions within the work environment. This tool provides direct data on how leadership and organizational culture are applied in practice and reveals unspoken or implicit behaviors.

Document Analysis

Studying formal documents such as internal policies, annual reports, and organizational manuals can provide a deeper understanding of the stated values and norms that shape organizational culture.

حدود الدراسة:

Study limitations relate to factors that may affect the results or generalisations drawn. These include limited sample size, as the study may focus on a small group of employees and leaders within a particular organisation, making it difficult to generalise the findings to other organisations. The subjective bias of the participants may also affect, as opinions from qualitative interviews and focus groups may only reflect their personal experiences. Relying on a qualitative approach may lack quantitative rigour and limit the ability to generalise. Also, the findings only reflect the current situation, which may render them invalid if significant changes occur in the future. In addition, the researcher's interpretation may influence the results, adding a subjective dimension. Finally, results may not be generalisable across different sectors, .especially if external factors such as laws or economic conditions are not sufficiently considered

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