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Sustainable leadership in shaping modern organisational
culture within Norwegian NGOs

القيادة المستدامة في تشكيل الثقافة التنظيمية الحديثة داخل المنظمات غير الحكومية النرويجية

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The Researcher

المستخلص

في عالم اليوم سريع الخطى، تتغير المنظمات باستمرار بسبب عوامل داخلية وخارجية مختلفة. وغالبًا ما تؤثر هذه التغييرات على القيم الأساسية والثقافة داخل المنظمة. وعلى وجه الخصوص، أصبح سوق العمل أقل استقرارًا، وأصبح الموظفون أقل ولاءً لأصحاب عملهم بشكل متزايد، وغالبًا ما يبحثون عن فرص جديدة في أماكن أخرى. ويجبر هذا التحول المنظمات على التكيف بسرعة، وبناء علاقات جديدة وتحويل ثقافتها التنظيمية. ويساهم الموظفون في هذه التحولات الثقافية من خلال التوظيف الجديد، أو الاندماج، أو إعادة الهيكلة، ويجلبون قيمهم وخبراتهم ووجهات نظرهم الفريدة. وهذا يجعل من الضروري للقادة إدارة تعقيدات هذه التغييرات بشكل فعال

تركز هذه الأطروحة على دور القيادة المستدامة في تشكيل الثقافة التنظيمية، وخاصة داخل المنظمات غير الحكومية النرويجية. ومن خلال تجربتي الشخصية في العمل عبر القطاعين العام والخاص، رأيت بنفسني كيف يمكن للقيادة أن تدفع التغيير الثقافي. وفي المنظمات غير الحكومية، تتجاوز القيادة المستدامة الإدارة قصيرة الأجل؛ فهي تتعلق بخلق ثقافات طويلة الأجل ومرنة يمكنها التكيف مع التغيير المستمر. تواجه المنظمات غير الحكومية النرويجية، مثل العديد من المنظمات، تحديات مثل الموارد المحدودة، والمتطلبات المجتمعية المتغيرة، والحاجة إلى التعديلات الاستراتيجية. ستكشف الدراسة العلاقة بين القيادة والثقافة وكيف يمكن للقادة بناء ثقافات قابلة للتكيف ومدفوعة بالقيم وقادرة على تلبية الاحتياجات المتطورة للمجتمع

توصي الدراسة بتعزيز التدريب على القيادة المستدامة وتحقيق التوازن بين القيم المؤسسية والمرونة التنظيمية، مع تحسين الشفافية والتواصل داخل المنظمات غير الحكومية. كما ينبغي إشراك الموظفين في صنع القرارات وتطوير ثقافة التنوع والشمولية لضمان التكيف الفعال مع التغيرات المستقبلية

الكلمات المفتاحية: القيادة المستدامة، الثقافة التنظيمية، استراتيجيات القيادة، التحديات المجتمعية، التغيير التنظيمي،

القيادة التكيفية، ثقافة العمل، القيم المؤسسية

Abstract

In today's fast-paced world, organizations are constantly evolving due to internal and external factors. These changes often impact the core values and culture within the organization. Specifically, the labor market has become less stable, and employees are increasingly less loyal to their employers, often seeking new opportunities somewhere else. This shift forces organizations to adapt quickly, building new relationships and transforming their organizational culture. Employees contribute to these cultural changes through new restructuring, bringing their own unique values, experiences, and perspectives. This makes it essential for leaders to manage the complexities of these changes effectively.

This thesis focuses on the role of sustainable leadership in shaping organizational culture, particularly within Norwegian NGOs. Through my personal experience working across both the public and private sectors, I have witnessed firsthand how leadership can drive cultural change. In NGOs, sustainable leadership goes beyond short-term management; it is about creating long-term, resilient cultures that can adapt to continuous change. Norwegian NGOs, like many organizations, face challenges such as limited resources, shifting demands, and the need for strategic adjustments.

The study will explore the relationship between leadership and culture and how leaders can build adaptable, value-driven cultures capable of meeting the evolving needs of society.

The study recommends enhancing training in sustainable leadership and balancing institutional values with organizational flexibility, while improving transparency and communication within NGOs. Employees should also be involved in decision-making and a culture of diversity and inclusion should be developed to ensure effective adaptation to future changes.

Keywords: Sustainable leadership, organizational culture, leadership strategies, societal challenges, organizational change, adaptive leadership, work culture, institutional values.

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I hope that this thesis will contribute to enriching the field of sustainable leadership and organizational culture.

Razan

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Chapter 1:

General framework of the study

1.1 Introduction

With my background as a worker in a culturally diverse organization, this thesis presents a unique opportunity to explore the role of leadership in shaping modern organizational culture within Norwegian NGOs. As organizations face constant change due to both internal and external factors, the culture within these organizations is also in a continuous change. The key focus of this study is to examine how sustainable leadership practices influence and shape the culture of these organizations, especially in the context of fast changes. The central research question guiding this thesis is: **How does sustainable leadership contribute to shaping organizational culture in Norwegian NGOs?**

Norway boasts a vibrant and extensive non-governmental organization (NGO) sector, with approximately 132,971 registered charities and nonprofits operating across various fields, including humanitarian aid, environmental conservation, education, and cultural preservation. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on sustainable leadership within Norwegian NGOs. This leadership approach integrates long-term environmental, social, and economic considerations into organizational strategies and decision-making processes.

Educational institutions like the University of Inland Norway have recognized this need, offering online courses in sustainable management to equip current and future leaders with the skills necessary to drive sustainable development within their organizations. The organizational culture of Norwegian NGOs is often characterized by consensus-building and inclusive decision-making. This cultural trait fosters high-performance teamwork and ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more sustainable and effective outcomes. Moreover, the Association of NGOs in Norway (Frivillighet Norge), comprising over 350 member organizations, plays a pivotal role in coordinating the voluntary sector's dialogue with authorities, advocating for issues common to the sector, and promoting inclusivity, including the integration of immigrant populations into volunteer activities. In summary, the extensive network of NGOs in Norway, supported by a culture of consensus and a commitment to sustainable leadership, continues to play a crucial role in addressing societal challenges and promoting sustainable development both domestically and globally.

Sustainable leadership is a modern leadership style that focuses on balancing economic success, social responsibility, and environmental care (Liao, 2022). It encourages leaders to think long-term, make ethical decisions, and create a positive and inclusive work culture. Unlike traditional leadership, sustainable leadership looks beyond short-term results and aims to create a lasting impact for both the organization and society. This type of leadership is particularly important for NGOs, which often face challenges such as limited resources and changing needs. Sustainable leaders help their organizations stay true to their values while adapting to change. This study explores how sustainable leadership helps to shape strong, resilient and values-based cultures in Norwegian NGOs.

This study uses a qualitative approach, drawing from interviews with leaders in Norwegian NGOs, and on survey questions to provide an in-depth analysis of how leadership influences organizational culture. The data will be examined through relevant theories on leadership, organizational culture, and sustainability which will be further elaborated in the theoretical framework. The problem addressed by this study is the need to understand how sustainable leadership can help Norwegian NGOs thrive in a changing environment. The organization face a number of challenges, including limited resources and changing demands. The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide insight into how leadership can foster an organizational culture that is adaptable, resilient, and aligned with the core values of the organization. By focusing on the dynamic relationship between leadership and culture, this study seeks to offer valuable guidance for leaders navigating the complexities of purposeful organizations and leading in a rapidly evolving world.

1.2 Problem statement

Sustainable leadership is a growing field that emphasizes long-term thinking, ethical practices, and social and environmental responsibility. While previous research has established a link between sustainable leadership and organizational culture (Suriyankietkaew & Avery, 2016; McCann & Sweet, 2014), much of the literature has focused on quantitative findings with limited causality studies. Recent systematic reviews highlight a significant gap in understanding the specific mechanisms by which sustainable leadership shapes organizational culture, particularly in nonprofit sectors and in specific regional settings (Aziza & Akyürek, 2024). Norwegian NGOs, operating in a unique environment of

volunteerism, strong social values, and rapid change, require leadership that is consistent with organizational values while also fostering adaptation and resilience.

Despite the increasing academic interest, little research has been done to examine how sustainable leadership influences organizational culture in Norwegian NGOs. Most existing studies focus on for-profit institutions or large private enterprises, often neglecting how such leadership functions in resource-constrained and mission-driven organizations. This creates a clear need for more contextualized and qualitative exploration. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by exploring the following research question: How does sustainable leadership affect organizational culture in Norwegian NGOs?

1.3 Importance of the study

Scientific importance

This study contributes to the understanding of transformational leadership and its role in fostering organizational culture in Norwegian NGOs. Existing research has developed and applied leadership theory to nonprofit organizations, in which leadership challenges differ from those of private organizations. Unlike corporations and financial institutions, NGOs operate under constraints such as dependence on donations, retention of volunteers, and the need for a strong culture based on principles. By examining leadership that is often embedded in organizational contexts, this study advances the scholarly debate on how NGO leaders can foster commitment and maintain a sense of belonging.

Additionally, this study addresses a research gap concerning leadership and sustainability in the NGO sector in Norway. While leadership has been widely studied in corporate settings, limited research has examined how Norwegian NGOs integrate sustainable leadership into their strategic decision-making, workforce engagement, and service delivery. The findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of leadership's role in navigating societal expectations, regulatory pressures, and the evolving nature of humanitarian work.

This paper provides a framework for understanding how sustainable leadership involves engagement, change, and goal-oriented processes. It also examines how company leaders balance short-term financial pressures with long-term strategic vision, ensuring their company's culture aligns with changing societal needs.

Practical Importance

From a practical standpoint, this study is relevant to NGO leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders engaged in humanitarian and development work in Norway. By identifying best practices in sustainable leadership, the study provides actionable insights for enhancing organizational culture in Norwegian NGOs, ensuring they remain effective and resilient in the face of external challenges.

One of the most important practical contributions is to identify management strategies that promote organizational sustainability. Managers of Norwegian NGOs have to deal with a complex operating environment, including financial constraints and a diverse workforce. This study identifies leadership practices that increase employee engagement and collaboration and reduce turnover—factors critical to ensuring the long-term impact of delivering human and social services.

Additionally, by examining the leadership structures of organizations such as Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers, Islamic Relief, and Plan International, this research provides insights into how NGOs can align leadership styles with their mission and values. For instance, participatory leadership that empowers employees and volunteers has been found to enhance organizational effectiveness and service quality.

Furthermore, the study highlights the role of creative leadership in promoting ethical decision-making and social responsibility in Norwegian NGOs. Leaders who focus on transparency, and long-term capacity building not only increase organizational effectiveness, but also enhance community and investor trust. These findings are particularly important given the growing scrutiny of NGO financial accountability and operational efficiency.

In conclusion, this study holds both scientific and practical significance by bridging the gap between leadership theory and its real-world application within Norwegian NGOs. It provides an evidence-based understanding of how sustainable leadership shapes organizational culture and offers concrete recommendations for enhancing leadership effectiveness in the non-profit sector.

1.4 Objectives of the study

This study aims to explore the role of sustainable leadership in shaping modern organizational culture within Norwegian NGOs. The key objectives of this study are:

- Understand the influence of sustainable leadership on the formation of organizational culture in non-governmental organizations.
- Explore the relationship between leadership and culture.
- Evaluate the impact of sustainable values on the development of a strong organizational culture that aligns with community goals and principles.
- • Provide practical suggestions for improving management practices to promote sustainable organizational culture development in NGOs.
- • To analyze individual leadership experiences in NGOs to identify best practices and effective approaches to leading sustainable change.

1.5 Research questions

1. How does sustainable leadership influence overall organizational culture in Norwegian NGOs?
2. What is the relationship between sustainable leadership and transparency and accountability in Norwegian NGOs?
3. How does sustainable leadership impact employee engagement in decision-making processes within NGOs?
4. What is the effect of sustainable leadership on ethical decision-making in Norwegian NGOs?
5. How does sustainable leadership contribute to teamwork, collaboration, and overall workplace cohesion?
6. What is the relationship between sustainable leadership and employee well-being, work-life balance, and organizational culture strength in Norwegian NGOs?

1.6 Hypotheses of the study

- Sustainable leadership does not have a statistically significant direct impact on overall organizational culture within Norwegian NGOs

- Sustainable leadership significantly enhances transparency and accountability in Norwegian NGOs
- Sustainable leadership has a statistically significant positive impact on ethical decision-making within Norwegian NGOs
- Sustainable leadership improves teamwork and collaboration
- Sustainable leadership contributes to employee well-being and work-life balance
- Sustainable leadership significantly strengthens organizational culture alignment with NGO missions and values

1.7 Scope of the study

The scope of this study focuses on investigating the role of ethical leadership in shaping organizational culture in Norwegian NGOs. The research will be limited to NGOs operating in Norway, especially those involved in solving social, environmental, and humanitarian issues such as The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers, Islamic Relief, and Plan International. It will examine leadership practices within these organizations, examining how leaders apply shared, shared, and interconnected organizational cultures and their core values, particularly in the face of external challenges such as attrition, public pressure, and organizational restructuring.

Chapter 2:

Previous studies and theoretical framework.

2.1 Previous studies

Organizational culture and leadership

Several relevant studies have investigated the link between leadership and organizational culture. Wiewiora and Kowalkiewicz (2018), in their work “The role of authentic assessment in developing authentic leadership identity and competencies,” sought to understand how leadership values and identities develop in organizations. The study used a case study to demonstrate that leaders’ identities and values, once established, significantly shape the broader culture of an organization. Chatman and O’Reilly (2016), in their article “Paradigm lost: reinvigorating the study of organizational culture,” conducted a theoretical analysis aiming to address gaps in how culture is studied. Their work emphasized the need for new paradigms to study culture across varying organizational contexts due to its conceptual complexity. In their study titled “The many faces of culture: making sense of 30 years of research on culture in organization studies,” Giorgi, Lockwood, and Glynn (2015) aimed to synthesize decades of research on organizational culture. Using conceptual and integrative research methods, the authors conclude that culture plays a significant role in influencing organizational behavior and performance, but is complex due to its multidimensional nature. Although researchers combine these studies to reinforce the relationship between leadership and culture, they primarily focus on structural, educational, or theoretical perspectives. Empirical studies specifically focus on the organizational culture of Norwegian NGOs, especially in values-oriented and resource-rich environments, which remains underexplored for effective leadership. This study aims to fill the gap in the research on leadership in the construction of transformational and ethical cultures in transformational leadership.

Dimensions of organizational culture

In his book *Kulturbevisst ledelse: Fra ord til handling*, Hennestad (2015) explored how organizational culture becomes a focus of attention when performance declines. Using a theoretical approach, this study demonstrates that leaders' cultural awareness is critical to the long-term success of organizational strategies through cultural adaptation. From the researcher’s point of view, this insight is particularly relevant for NGOs, where cultural misalignment can weaken mission effectiveness in complex operational environments.

Cooke and Szumal (2000), in their study *Using the Organizational Culture Inventory to Understand the Operating Cultures of Organizations*, developed a tool to assess culture across three main types: constructive, passive/defensive, and aggressive/defensive. Their empirical methodology, based on surveys and diagnostics, revealed that constructive cultures—those emphasizing achievement, encouragement, and affiliation—lead to better performance. The researcher considers this typology is particularly relevant in the nonprofit context, where collaborative and transparent work environments are key to mission fulfillment and long-term sustainability.

Handy (1985), in his book *Understanding Organizations*, proposed a typology based on power distribution, identifying cultures such as power, role, task, and person cultures. The study used comparative organizational analysis and showed that structure and power shape cultural dynamics. From the researcher's perspective, even Handy's framework is a bit old, but it is still useful in analyzing internal governance structures within NGOs, especially when the balance between hierarchy and cooperation must be carefully maintained.

Deal and Kennedy (1982), in their classic work *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*, Organizational cultures classified according to the level of risk and decision-making speed. Their study, developed through case study analysis, enabled organizations to better understand how culture influences business behaviour and outcomes. The researcher believes this model is still useful In today's world and offers a foundational framework, especially useful in evaluating how NGO leadership balances mission-driven risk with responsiveness to social needs.

Leadership styles and their impact on organizational culture

Leadership has often been studied and analyzed, and the characteristics of a good leader, who is capable to lead the group in good or bad situations, have been identified. (AlSawai 2013; George 2000). Leadership can be seen as an influential behaviour and process that are used by leaders to express themselves, and to motivate or change their followers' practices to accomplish shared purposes (Al-Sawai 2013). Leaders, through their leadership competencies, should be ready for making changes, building trust, setting the vision, creating integration, inspiring and motivating their followers (Wallace and Chernatony 2009).

Leadership styles significantly impact culture, particularly in mission-driven organizations such as NGOs.

- Transformational leadership: Transformational leadership is about making deep and meaningful changes in an organization. It involves changing not just the structure or processes, but also the behavior, culture, and attitudes of employees and other stakeholders. It also includes leaders working on improving themselves (Ghasabeh, 2015). This type of leadership focuses on inspiring people to fully commit to shared goals and to go beyond their usual efforts to help the organization succeed (Bush, 2018). Research from around the world (Siangchokyoo et al., 2020; Andriani et al., 2018; Hansbrough & Schyns, 2018; Giddens, 2018) suggests that transformational leaders sometimes possess certain strong qualities. This includes high personal standards, a passion for learning and personal growth, clear values, strong communication skills and the ability to think creatively and take risks. They care about their team, lead by example, inspire others with their energy and vision, and want to make a positive impact in their organizations and society. From the researcher's perspective, transformational leadership is highly relevant in the NGO sector, where inspiration, shared purpose, and adaptability are essential. Leaders who can connect emotionally and ethically with their teams are more likely to cultivate a resilient and committed organizational culture.
- Ethical leadership: In the study titled "*Ethical Leadership: Conceptualization and Measurement*," Krisharyuli, Himam, and Ramdani (2020) aimed to clarify the concept of ethical leadership and develop a tool to measure it. This study uses a conceptual and theoretical approach and concludes that ethical leadership plays an important role in influencing individual behavior within the ethical context of an organization. Similarly, Northouse (2016), in his book *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, classified ethical leadership theories into two main categories: those that focus on the leader's behavior and those that emphasize the leader's moral character. He also distinguished between theories concerned with the consequences of leadership actions and those based on duties and ethical principles guiding those actions.

From the researcher's point of view, these studies highlight the importance of ethical leadership for understanding value-based leadership influence. However, there is still a need for applied research that explores how ethical leadership link with sustainable leadership and organizational culture, particularly within nonprofit settings such as Norwegian NGOs.

From the researcher's point of view, ethical leadership is crucial for organizations that prioritize social responsibility and public trust, such as NGOs. However, while its influence is well documented in conceptual studies, there remains a need for empirical research that investigates how ethical leadership interacts with sustainable leadership models to build long-term ethical cultures, particularly in value-driven nonprofit contexts like Norwegian NGOs.

Recent studies on leadership and organizational culture

Recent literature has focused on the influence of leadership on organizational culture, particularly in complex, mission-driven environments like NGOs. According to Northouse (2019), leadership plays a critical role in fostering a culture that aligns with the organization's goals and values. This is particularly important for NGOs, which are often mission-driven and must maintain ethical standards while adapting to changing societal expectations. According to Berg (2008), leadership is something 'simple and very complex. [...] on the one hand, common sense put into a system. On the other hand [...] unpredictability, ambiguity, chaos, conflicts and contradictions'. Leadership is the use of means to achieve goals and results through the indirect and direct influence of employees, including the development of employee potential and taking responsibility for results.

In a more specific context, a study by Avolio et al. (2014) on transformational leadership highlights how leadership styles that inspire and engage employees can help cultivate an adaptive and value-driven culture. This research is especially pertinent to the study of NGOs, where leaders must adapt to both external challenges and the evolving needs of the communities they serve. Hennestad (2015) writes that there must be a match between strategy and culture over time if this is to be sustainable.

Through the review of previous studies

- The researcher was able to identify research gaps and build the study's research question.
- Utilise the theoretical framework of previous studies in the design of this study.

- Determine the research methodology and choose the best methods and tools to collect and analyse data.
- Highlight the theoretical and applied importance of the research topic.
- Identify the challenges facing sustainable leadership in Norwegian NGOs.
- Utilise the findings of previous studies to formulate hypotheses and research questions.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Sustainable leadership and organisational culture are critical factors in the success and sustainability of organisations, especially in an NGO environment that faces increasing challenges related to sustainability and social responsibility. This study aims to explore the impact of sustainable leadership on shaping organisational culture within Norwegian NGOs, focusing on how leaders deal with organisational values and their role in fostering a sustainable work environment that reflects principles of equity and inclusiveness.

Sustainable leadership and organisational culture

In the study titled *"Assessment of the Role of a Leader in Shaping Sustainable Organizational Culture,"* Streimikiene, Mikalauskiene, Digriene, and Kyriakopoulos (2021) investigated the role of leadership in developing and sustaining an organizational culture that promotes long-term sustainability. The study aimed to evaluate how leaders influence the creation of sustainable cultures by leveraging values, emotional intelligence, and a balance between strategic objectives and employee well-being. The authors conclude that leaders who demonstrate integrity, emotional intelligence, and strategic vision are better able to develop a culture that supports innovation, teamwork, and long-term organizational success. From a researcher's perspective, this study is particularly important for understanding how sustainable leadership is not just about making decisions and visions, but also about creating a values-based culture that can effectively respond to external and internal challenges. The study highlights the dynamic relationship between leadership and culture: Leaders shape organizational norms, but their leadership is also shaped by the dominant culture. This insight is especially important in the context of NGOs, where mission values are central and stability in both strategy and culture is essential for long-term social impact.

Transformational leadership

It's a leadership style that inspires, motivates, and fosters change within organizations by emphasizing visionary thinking, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, all of which are essential for shaping organizational culture in NGOs (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985).

In Norwegian NGOs, transformational leaders drive cultural change through adaptation, collaboration, and innovation, ensuring that the organization remains mission-driven and resilient to external pressures. This approach aligns with sustainable leadership, as it encourages long-term thinking over short-term fixes, which is particularly important in non-profit organizations where resource constraints and donor expectations frequently shift (Bass, 1990).

One of the critical contributions of transformational leadership to Norwegian NGOs is its ability to strengthen employee engagement, a crucial factor in organizations that rely heavily on volunteerism and commitment to social causes. By fostering a shared vision and empowering employees, transformational leadership helps build a work environment where individuals are motivated by purpose rather than just financial incentives, leading to increased organizational effectiveness and sustainability (Northouse, 2019). NGOs that integrate transformational leadership principles benefit from a leadership culture that not only adapts to change but actively drives it, ensuring that the organization remains both dynamic and true to its mission, regardless of evolving societal needs or policy landscapes. In addition to transformational leadership, ethical leadership plays an important role in shaping the organizational culture of Norwegian NGOs, especially since these organizations operate in an environment where integrity, trust, and public responsibility are fundamental to sustaining operations (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005).

Ethical leadership emphasizes integrity, fairness, and accountability in decision-making, ensuring that leaders act as role models who uphold ethical standards and transparency. In Norwegian NGOs, the necessity of ethical leadership is heightened due to several factors, including the need for transparency in donor funding and financial management, the role of NGOs in advocating for social justice and human rights, and the importance of trust between leadership, employees, and stakeholders. In addition to overseeing the performance of

nonprofit organizations, leaders of these organizations must demonstrate ethical decision-making to maintain the trust of the public and donors, reinforcing a culture of accountability that extends from senior management to employees and stakeholders. Ethical leaders of nongovernmental organizations prioritize long-term impact over short-term gains, ensuring that decision-making processes align with humanitarian values and organizational responsibility, which is essential for maintaining operational sustainability. This long-term ethical perspective also strengthens the ability of NGOs to navigate complex regulatory and financial environments while remaining committed to their core mission. By incorporating both transformational and ethical leadership principles, Norwegian NGOs can develop an organizational culture that is both adaptable and values-driven, ensuring their continued ability to serve communities effectively while maintaining the highest standards of integrity and leadership accountability.

2.3 Applications of sustainable leadership in Norwegian NGOs

Sustainable leadership is key in ensuring the resilience and effectiveness of Norwegian nongovernmental organizations. Organizations such as The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers, Islamic Relief and Plan International exemplify the integration of sustainable leadership practices to foster robust organizational cultures and address evolving humanitarian challenges.

The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers

The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS) exemplifies sustainable leadership through its commitment to ethical advocacy, transparency, and long-term systemic change in Norway's asylum policies. Sustainable leadership prioritizes social responsibility and ethical decision-making, which aligns with NOAS's mission to protect the rights of asylum seekers and ensure fair legal procedures. By working closely with policymakers, NGOs, and legal experts, NOAS fosters inclusive leadership that engages multiple stakeholders in shaping humanitarian policies. Like sustainable leaders, NOAS focuses on long-term impact rather than short-term solutions, advocating for policy reforms that strengthen the asylum system.

Its emphasis on education and legal support builds the capacity of asylum seekers, enabling them to navigate complex legal frameworks independently. NOAS also demonstrates resilience and adaptability, responding to changing immigration policies, political shifts, and funding challenges while staying true to its mission. Transparency is central to sustainable leadership, and NOAS ensures accountability through public advocacy and legal interventions. Leaders at NOAS must balance ethical obligations with operational constraints, a core challenge in sustainable leadership. By integrating legal expertise with humanitarian advocacy, NOAS creates a sustainable model of leadership in the nonprofit sector. Furthermore, its commitment to training legal professionals and raising public awareness ensures the continuity of knowledge-sharing and leadership development. Through strategic collaboration and ethical leadership, NOAS strengthens Norway's asylum policies and human rights framework, embodying sustainable leadership in action.

Islamic relief

Islamic relief operates as a volunteer-based humanitarian organization, adhering to the fundamental principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Its strategic framework for 2021-2023 underscores a commitment to improving the understanding and respect for international humanitarian law, human rights, and refugee law. The organization functions as an auxiliary to authorities, complementing public services and ensuring readiness to respond to emergencies. By maintaining a structured organization across local, district, and national levels, Islamic Relief ensures that its strategies are aligned with local needs, thereby promoting sustainability and community resilience.

Plan International

Plan International apply sustainable leadership by prioritizing long-term social impact, ethical governance, and inclusive decision-making. The organization's commitment to children's rights and gender equality aligns with the principles of ethical leadership, ensuring that every initiative is value-driven. Sustainable leadership emphasizes empowering others, and Plan-achieves this by building local capacity, training educators, and fostering youth activism. Instead of creating dependency, the organization equips communities with the tools to lead their own development efforts, ensuring lasting impact. Transparency and accountability are

also central to sustainable leadership, and Plan upholds these values through strict governance, ethical fundraising, and public impact reports.

By engaging local communities, NGOs, governments, and corporate partners, the organization follows a collaborative leadership approach, ensuring that decisions reflect diverse perspectives. Plan also demonstrates resilience and adaptability, adjusting its programs to address emerging global challenges like climate change, humanitarian crises, and digital transformation. Despite shifting global conditions, the organization remains mission-focused, balancing immediate needs with long-term sustainability goals. Like effective sustainable leaders, Plan ensures that its programs are locally relevant and community-driven, rather than externally imposed.

2.4 Collective insights

These organizations share a collective commitment to sustainable leadership, ethical governance, and long-term impact in humanitarian and development work. A key insight across all three organizations is their focus on volunteerism, local empowerment, and adherence to humanitarian principles, ensuring that their efforts extend beyond immediate interventions and create lasting change within their respective fields. Sustainable leadership within these NGOs is reflected in their shared emphasis on ethical decision-making, transparency, and resilience, ensuring that their organizational cultures align with their mission-driven objectives.

A defining feature of sustainable leadership in these organizations is their approach to stakeholder management, where leadership decisions are not made in isolation, but rather involve multiple actors, such as politicians, legal experts, local communities, volunteers, and international partners. NOAS, for instance, collaborates closely with legal professionals and policymakers to advocate for systemic change in asylum policies, reinforcing the principle that leadership is about long-term transformation rather than short-term fixes. Similarly, the Plan International collaborative leadership approach prioritizes capacity-building and community-led development, fostering sustainable social impact through youth leadership

and advocacy. This emphasis on inclusivity and engagement ensures that leadership decisions are contextual, mission-aligned, and responsive to evolving societal needs.

Another shared characteristic among these organizations is their resilience and adaptability in the face of changing external conditions. NOAS must constantly navigate evolving immigration policies, legal challenges, and public sentiment regarding asylum seekers, requiring leaders to balance ethical advocacy with pragmatic legal interventions. Islamic Relief must be agile in responding to humanitarian crises, adapting its emergency response framework while maintaining long-term development programs. Likewise, Plan International integrates adaptability into its leadership by adjusting programs to address global challenges such as climate change, gender inequality, and digital transformation. Maintaining core values, anticipating challenges, and being flexible with original plans are critical aspects of sustainable leadership that bring these teams together.

Transparency and accountability are also key pillars of leadership across these NGOs, reinforcing trust among stakeholders, donors, and beneficiaries. NOAS ensures public accountability through legal advocacy and public awareness initiatives, Islamic Relief maintains structured governance through national and local organizational levels, and Plan International adheres to strict ethical fundraising and governance standards to maintain integrity in its operations. The importance of financial transparency and ethical leadership is paramount in NGOs, as they rely heavily on public trust, government partnerships, and donor confidence to sustain their impact.

Finally, all three organizations demonstrate a commitment to leadership development and knowledge-sharing, ensuring that future leaders within their sectors are equipped with the necessary skills and values to drive sustainable change. NOAS works to train legal professionals and educate asylum seekers on their rights, ensuring that the legal framework continues to evolve with informed advocacy. Islamic Relief fosters leadership among volunteers, strengthening community-based humanitarian response capabilities. Meanwhile, Plan International invests in youth education and activism, empowering young people to take leadership roles in advocating for systemic change. By prioritizing leadership training,

education, and public engagement, these organizations ensure that their missions remain sustainable beyond individual leadership transitions.

2.5 Differences in sustainable leadership across Norwegian NGOs

Although sustainable leadership forms the core model guiding Norwegian NGOs, how it is implemented varies greatly depending on each organization's mission, structure, and operating model. Leadership within these organizations must align with different challenges, stakeholder expectations, and long-term goals, influencing how sustainable leadership is implemented in practice. The differences in leadership strategies between NOAS, the Islamic Relief and the Norwegian International Plan reflect the different ways in which NGOs approach organizational sustainability, organizational decision-making, and community engagement.

One major difference lies in the core function and scope of each organization, which directly impacts leadership priorities. NOAS is primarily an advocacy and legal support organization, requiring leadership that can navigate political debates, legal frameworks, and human rights legislation to ensure asylum seekers receive fair treatment. Leaders in NOAS focus on policy advocacy, public education, and legal expertise, meaning that strategic lobbying, stakeholder negotiations, and legal reforms are at the core of their leadership approach. In contrast, the Islamic Relief operates as a humanitarian emergency response organization, requiring leaders to prioritize crisis management, volunteer coordination, and rapid decision-making.

Sustainable leadership within the Islamic Relief demands strong logistical planning, decentralized leadership, and the ability to mobilize volunteers efficiently during disasters and humanitarian crises. Meanwhile, Plan International focuses on long-term social development, child rights, and gender equality, necessitating leadership that fosters education-based advocacy, participatory decision-making, and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Unlike NOAS, which works within legal structures, or Islamic Relief, which deals with immediate relief, Plan leaders must engage in long-term development strategies that empower youth activists and community-led initiatives.

The financial models that support these organizations impact their leadership and sustainability efforts. NOAS relies heavily on government grants, partnerships, and grant funding, which means that its leaders must secure sustainable funding through policy-based initiatives and legislative campaigns. This is different from Islamic Relief. Islamic Relief has a broad budget and can focus more on emergency preparedness through government agencies and a large network of volunteers and public donors. Plan International currently relies on international donations, partnerships, and grants, and leaders must prioritize fundraising, donor engagement, and strategic management to ensure sustainability. Leaders plan to develop a long-term financial plan that includes flexible donor communications to ensure that programs are aligned with global development goals while maintaining public trust and accountability.

Moreover, the challenges faced by each NGO require different adaptations to leadership. NOAS faces political and policy changes, which means that leaders must be highly adaptable to changing legal frameworks and immigration policies. This contrasts with Islamic Relief, whose biggest challenge is to provide rapid response capacity while maintaining long-term sustainability in volunteer recruitment and training. Meanwhile, Plan International faces challenges related to social change and advocacy, and requires leadership that can build public support, influence policymakers, and engage in long-term educational transformation efforts.

2.6 How this study addresses these differences

By analyzing sustainable leadership across different types of NGOs, this study highlights best practices to apply to different organizational models. Understanding these differences will help identify leadership strategies that can be adapted to different non-profit settings. While all three organizations emphasize ethical leadership, resilience, and transparency, their methods of leadership implementation differ significantly, offering valuable insights into how sustainable leadership can be applied in diverse humanitarian and development contexts.

This research will also provide practical recommendations for NGO leaders, focusing on how sustainable leadership principles can be customized based on an organization's mission, stakeholder structure, and financial sustainability model. By examining how NOAS, the Islamic Relief, and Plan International approach leadership challenges, This will enable future leaders to successfully navigate organizational complexity while maintaining their commitment to sustainability and social impact.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this section, the methodology and procedures followed in the research will be explained, which include determining the methodology, the populations chosen, and sample targeted by the study, data collection tools in terms of preparation and methods of verifying validity and reliability, and the statistical tools and processes that will be used in data analysis.

3.2 Population

The research population for this study focuses on the staff and employees of three prominent Norwegian NGOs working in the field of humanitarian relief and aid, namely: The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers, Islamic Relief, and Plan International. The number of people working for these organisations is estimated as follows:

- The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers: the sample selection in this organisation is based on the representation of different categories to include 12 participants from management, leadership and field teams.
- Islamic Relief: a sample of 63 participants will be selected to include administrators, regular staff, and leaders.
- Plan International: the sample will include 25 participants from the organisation's staff, this includes all departments to ensure a diversity of opinions.

These organisations were chosen because each represents a distinctive model in implementing sustainable leadership and innovation in their organisational culture.

3.3 Research sample

The sample for this study is based on a random sampling method to ensure an accurate representation of each group within the research population. The study focuses on three prominent Norwegian NGOs working in the field of humanitarian relief and aid: The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers, Islamic Relief, and Plan International.

To ensure a balanced and representative sample, the selection process considered employees from different hierarchical levels, including leadership, administration, and field teams. The estimated number of employees within these organizations is as follows:

- The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers: Approximately 50 employees
- Islamic Relief: Approximately 300 employees
- Plan International: Approximately 100 employees

To maintain proportional representation, the sample sizes were adjusted as follows:

- The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers: 12 participants (covering management, leadership, and field teams)
- Islamic Relief: 63 participants (including administrators, regular staff, and leaders)
- Plan International: 25 participants (ensuring representation from all departments)

In total, 100 questionnaires were distributed, and after examination, all responses were valid. This response rate ensures a meaningful and diverse set of perspectives while maintaining statistical relevance.

This study acknowledges that while the sample sizes for each organization reflect their proportional representation within the research population, external factors such as employee availability and willingness to participate may have influenced response rates. The final sample provides valuable insights into sustainable leadership and its role in shaping organizational culture within Norwegian NGOs.

3.4 Study limitations

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study relies on self-reported data from employees within Norwegian NGOs, which may introduce response bias, as participants might provide socially desirable answers rather than fully objective perspectives. Second, the sample size, while representative of the selected organizations, may not capture the full diversity of leadership practices across all Norwegian NGOs, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study focuses on three NGOs, which may not fully reflect variations in leadership and organizational culture across different humanitarian and non-profit sectors. Another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the research, which captures data at a single point in time and does not account for how sustainable leadership practices and organizational culture evolve over time. Furthermore, while the study employs a mixed-methods approach, qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey responses may be

subject to interpretation bias. Lastly, external factors such as political, economic, or social influences on NGO operations were not extensively explored, which could impact the sustainability of leadership practices in ways not accounted for in this study. Future research could address these limitations by conducting longitudinal studies, incorporating larger and more diverse samples, and examining additional contextual factors affecting sustainable leadership in NGOs.

3.5 Research Tools

The following tools will be used to collect data:

- **Questionnaire:** A comprehensive questionnaire was designed with closed and open-ended questions that measure key variables such as sustainable leadership, organisational culture in different organisations' workplaces, and employee performance in the societal environment.
- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Interviews will be conducted with members of leadership in the three organisations, aiming to understand how sustainable leadership shapes and guides the culture of the organisations, and the questions will be open-ended to allow the leaders to express their opinions and provide detailed answers on different topics.

3.6 Preparing the research tool for the study

The following is a detailed description of the steps involved in preparing the research instrument for the study on the impact of sustainable leadership on shaping organisational culture at The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers, Islamic Relief, and Plan International

Step one: defining the main research objective

The main objective of the study is to identify the impact of sustainable leadership on shaping organisational culture within Norwegian NGOs, with a specific focus on the three organisations. The research seeks to measure how sustainable leadership practices - ethical decision-making, strategic thinking, and employee empowerment - improve the work environment and promote values of transparency and collaboration within organisations.

Step two: identifying the measurement domains of the research tool

The research tool consists of two main parts:

- Demographic characteristics: including (gender, age, educational level, number of years of experience, position within the organisation, and type of department).
- The main areas of study: where the impact of sustainable leadership on organisational culture is measured, including areas such as:

Level of sustainable leadership:

- Measuring dimensions such as strategic thinking, ethical decision-making, and employee empowerment.
- Organisational Culture: Measuring elements such as organisational values, quality of internal communication, work environment, and job commitment.

Step three: initial drafting of the research tool

An initial draft of the research tool was developed based on the theoretical framework related to sustainable leadership and organisational culture. For example, a statement measuring the impact of leadership on transparency was formulated as follows: 'A sustainable leadership style contributes to the level of transparency within the organisation.' Statements measuring organisational culture were also developed such as: 'The organisation's values reflect its commitment to the principles of justice and equality.'

In addition, a semi-guided interview guide was drafted with open-ended questions such as: 'How do sustainable leadership practices affect the work environment within your organisation?' and 'What strategies does your organisation use to promote organisational culture?'

Step four: scaling the responses to the main areas

A five-point Likert scale was adopted to evaluate the statements of the questionnaire, with scores ranging from (strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neither disagree nor agree = 3, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1). This scale allows participants to express the exact extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement.

Step five: drafting the instructions for the research tool

Clear instructions were prepared for the research questionnaire and interview guide, explaining the purpose of the study and the method of answering the questions, while emphasising that all information provided will remain confidential and protected. The key concepts used in the study were explained in a simplified manner to ensure they were understood by all participants regardless of their educational backgrounds.

Step six: finalising the tool and applying it to the target sample

After making the necessary modifications based on the results of the pilot test and expert feedback, the questionnaire was converted into an electronic form using Google Forms. It was then distributed to the research sample via email and social media applications. Semi-structured interviews were also scheduled with selected leaders from The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers, Islamic Relief, and Plan International to gain in-depth insights to support the quantitative data.

Step seven: analyse the data

Quantitative data was used to analyse using statistical software such as SPSS to conduct descriptive and inferential analyses and hypothesis testing. Qualitative data from the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis to extract key patterns and themes. One interview with a leader showed that ‘regular workshops and training programmes contribute significantly to a culture of transparency and collaboration’, supporting the quantitative findings on the impact of sustainable leadership on organisational culture.

3.7 Validity of the research tool

The researcher ensured that the questions were appropriate for each category and reflected the different variables that were asked to be measured.

The researcher ensured that the questions actually measure what they are intended to measure by analysing the data consistently during and after the administration of the questionnaire.

3.8 Reliability of the research tool

To verify the reliability of the research tool, Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The tool was applied to a pilot sample of 30 employees from the targeted organizations

The reliability coefficients for each section of the questionnaire were calculated as follows:

No.	Section	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Sustainable Leadership and its Role in the Work Environment	7	0.812
2	The Impact of Sustainable Leadership on Organizational Transparency	7	0.874
3	Employee Satisfaction with Leadership Style	7	0.791
4	Enhancing a Sustainable Work Environment through Leadership	6	0.856
5	Strategies for Building a Strong Organizational Culture	6	0.927
6	The Role of Sustainable Leadership in Achieving Organizational Goals	6	0.902
-	Overall Questionnaire	39	0.943

The table above shows that all Cronbach's Alpha values exceeded the scientifically accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items within each section. The overall Cronbach's Alpha score for the questionnaire was 0.943, and based on these results, the research tool demonstrates a high degree of reliability, ensuring the accuracy of the collected data and supporting the generalizability of the findings to the target research population.

3.9 Correction criteria

For evaluating responses to the questionnaire, the five-point Likert scale was used. To determine the correct cell length, the difference between the upper and lower limits of the scale was calculated as follows:

$$5-1=4$$

This difference was then divided by the number of scale categories:

$$4 \div 5 = 0.8$$

The resulting value (0.8) was added to the lowest scale value (1) to define the upper boundary for each category. The final classification of responses based on their mean scores is shown in the following table:

MEAN SCORE	GENERAL TREND (INTERPRETATION)	RELATIVE WEIGHT (%)	LEVEL OF PRACTICE/IMPORTANCE
1.00 - 1.80	STRONGLY DISAGREE	LESS THAN 36%	VERY LOW
1.81 - 2.60	DISAGREE	36% - 52%	LOW
2.61 - 3.40	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	52% - 68%	MODERATE
3.41 - 4.20	AGREE	68% - 84%	HIGH
4.21 - 5.00	STRONGLY AGREE	84% - 100%	VERY HIGH

3.10 Statistical processing and analysis tool

To analyze the collected data, the study utilized IBM SPSS v.25, applying various statistical tests and processes to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. The key statistical techniques used include:

Descriptive statistics: frequency distributions and percentages to describe the study sample based on variables such as gender, age, educational level, years of experience, workplace, and job type.

Pearson correlation coefficient: used to determine the internal consistency of the research tool and relationships between variables.

Cronbach's alpha reliability Test: applied to assess the reliability of the research tool by measuring the internal consistency of questionnaire items.

Calculation of mean scores, standard deviations, and relative weights: mean scores and standard deviations were computed for each variable. Responses were categorized based on their weight within the Likert scale classification.

ANOVA (Analysis of variance) for hypothesis testing: conducted to examine differences between groups within the study sample and assess the statistical significance of findings.

These statistical approaches ensure that the research findings on sustainable leadership practices in Norwegian NGOs are robust, valid, and reflective of the actual organizational dynamics.

Chapter 4:

Data analysis, findings, recommendations and suggestions.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the statistical analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire and the interviews. The results are analyzed to answer the research questions and test the study's hypotheses. Additionally, this chapter provides insights into key findings and offers recommendations and suggestions based on the outcomes of the analysis. The analysis covers descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions for each item in the questionnaire. Additionally, insights from open-ended responses are summarized to provide qualitative perspectives on leadership practices in Norwegian NGOs.

4.2. Demographic distribution of participants

The responses were distributed across both male and female participants, ensuring gender diversity in the study. The gender distribution is as follows:

- Male: 53%
- Female: 47%

This distribution suggests that both male and female employees play significant roles in shaping the organizational culture of these NGOs. The near equal representation ensures that gender related leadership dynamics, challenges, and perspectives are well captured in the study. The data indicates that leadership and decision-making within Norwegian NGOs involve both genders, promoting inclusivity and equal participation in shaping sustainable leadership practices.

Age

Participants were distributed across different age groups, highlighting a diverse workforce composition. The breakdown is as follows:

- 18-25 years: 25%
- 26-35 years: 22%
- 36-45 years: 21%
- 46-55 years: 20%
- 56 and above: 12%

The largest proportion of respondents falls within the 26-45 age range. This suggests that mid-career professionals hold a significant presence in these organizations, bringing both experience and adaptability to leadership and organizational culture. The younger demographic (18-25 years, 25%) represents emerging professionals who may offer fresh perspectives but have less experience in leadership roles. The 56+ age group (12%) indicates the presence of senior staff, likely in leadership or mentoring roles, contributing to long-term institutional knowledge and stability.

Educational background

The respondents educational qualifications demonstrate a highly educated workforce, reflecting the importance of academic training in the NGO sector:

- High school diploma: 28%
- Bachelor's degree: 28%
- Master's degree: 22%
- PhD or higher: 22%

A majority (72%) hold a university degree, with 44% possessing postgraduate qualifications (Master's or PhD). This suggests that NGOs in Norway prioritize well-educated professionals in leadership and operational roles. Employees with advanced degrees may contribute to decision-making, strategic planning, and innovative solutions within their organizations. The presence of individuals with only a high school diploma (28%) suggests that some staff members may have gained expertise through field experience rather than formal education.

Work experience

The distribution of work experience highlights a mix of seasoned professionals and newer employees:

- Less than 1 year: 21%
- 1-5 years: 32%
- 6-10 years: 20%
- More than 10 years: 27%

Approximately 53% of respondents have been with their respective organizations for five years or less, indicating a relatively dynamic workforce with new employees regularly

entering the NGO sector. However, 47% of participants have over six years of experience, ensuring that leadership and institutional knowledge remain strong. The 27% with over ten years of experience likely represent senior managers and experienced leaders who have witnessed long-term changes in leadership practices and organizational culture. The diversity in work experience ensures that responses capture both new perspectives and long-term insights, helping to analyze leadership transitions and shifts in organizational culture over time.

Current position in the organization

Participants roles within their organizations varied, allowing insights from different hierarchical levels:

- General Employee: 36.4%
- Supervisor/Manager: 34.3%
- Executive Leadership: 29.3%

The largest proportion of respondents (36.4%) are general employees, representing frontline workers directly engaging with organizational processes. Supervisors and managers (34.3%) provide insights into mid-level leadership responsibilities, where operational decisions are made. The 29.3% in executive leadership roles indicate strong participation from top management, ensuring that strategic perspectives on sustainable leadership are captured. This balanced distribution across different levels of responsibility ensures that the study gathers perspectives from employees who implement policies, oversee operations, and set strategic visions. It also allows for a comparative analysis of how leadership perceptions differ at various hierarchical levels within NGOs

4.3. Analysis of perceptions on sustainable leadership

The questionnaire included Likert-scale statements measuring different aspects of sustainable leadership and organizational culture. The mean scores and standard deviations were analyzed to determine employee perceptions.

Transparency and accountability

- Statement: "The leadership in my organization promotes transparency and accountability."
- Distribution of responses:
 - Strongly Disagree: 31.3%
 - Disagree: 19.2%
 - Neutral: 14.1%
 - Agree: 18.2%
 - Strongly Agree: 17.2%

Findings:

A significant proportion of respondents (31.3%) strongly disagreed that their leadership promotes transparency and accountability. However, a notable portion of employees (17.2%) strongly agreed, indicating variability in transparency perceptions across different departments.

Employee engagement in decision-making

- Statement: "My organization's leadership actively engages employees in decision-making processes."
- Distribution of responses:
 - Strongly Disagree: 18.2%
 - Disagree: 22.2%
 - Neutral: 23.2%
 - Agree: 15.2%
 - Strongly Agree: 21.2%

Findings:

While 36.4% of employees either agreed or strongly agreed that they are engaged in decision-making, a significant proportion (40.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that while some employees feel involved, there is still a need for increased inclusion at higher levels of leadership.

Long-term sustainability over short term gains

- Statement: "Leaders in my organization prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term gains."
- Distribution of responses:
 - Strongly Disagree: 24%
 - Disagree: 15%
 - Neutral: 28%
 - Agree: 11%
 - Strongly Agree: 22%

Findings:

Responses were spread across the spectrum, with a slight tilt toward a neutral stance. While 22% of employees strongly agreed that leadership prioritizes sustainability, 39% expressed disagreement, suggesting that there are inconsistencies in how sustainability is integrated into leadership decisions.

Ethical decision-making

- Statement: "Ethical decision-making is a core value of my organization's leadership."
- Distribution of responses:
 - Strongly Disagree: 16.2%
 - Disagree: 21.2%
 - Neutral: 16.2%
 - Agree: 15.2%
 - Strongly Agree: 31.3%

Findings:

Despite some disagreement, 46.5% of employees agreed or strongly agreed that ethical decision-making is a core value. This suggests that most employees recognize ethics in leadership, though there is room for improvement in strengthening ethical practices across all levels.

Encouragement of teamwork and collaboration

- Statement: "The leadership encourages teamwork and collaboration across different departments."

- Distribution of responses:
 - Strongly Disagree: 11.1%
 - Disagree: 18.2%
 - Neutral: 21.2%
 - Agree: 28.3%
 - Strongly Agree: 21.2%

Findings:

The responses indicate a moderate level of agreement, with 49.5% stating that leadership encourages teamwork. However, the significant neutral stance (21.2%) and disagreement levels (29.3%) suggest that inter-departmental collaboration still needs reinforcement.

4.4. Analysis of organizational culture

This section explores how sustainable leadership influences organizational values, communication, and work environment.

Strength of organizational culture

- Statement: "My organization has a strong and well-defined culture."
- Distribution of responses:
 - Strongly Disagree: 19.2%
 - Disagree: 21.2%
 - Neutral: 11.1%
 - Agree: 21.2%
 - Strongly Agree: 27.3%

Findings:

While over 48% of employees agreed or strongly agreed that their organization has a strong culture, a considerable percentage (40.4%) disagreed. This suggests that organizational culture is well-defined in some departments but less cohesive across the entire NGO.

Alignment of values with mission

- Statement: "The values of my organization align with its mission and vision."
- Distribution of responses:

- Strongly Disagree: 25%
- Disagree: 19%
- Neutral: 12%
- Agree: 17%
- Strongly Agree: 27%

Findings:

A total of 44% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their organization's values align with its mission, though 44% also disagreed or strongly disagreed. This highlights inconsistencies in how employees perceive the organization's mission being enacted in daily operations.

Communication and employee well-being

- Statement: "Communication between leadership and employees is open and effective."
- Distribution of responses:
 - Strongly Disagree: 21%
 - Disagree: 15%
 - Neutral: 14%
 - Agree: 16%
 - Strongly Agree: 34%

Statement: "The organization supports work-life balance and employee well-being."

- Distribution of responses:
 - Strongly Disagree: 27%
 - Disagree: 17%
 - Neutral: 18%
 - Agree: 13%
 - Strongly Agree: 25%

Findings:

While a substantial proportion of employees (50%) felt that communication is open, there remains a notable percentage (36%) who disagreed. Similarly, work-life balance was a

concern, with 44% disagreeing that their organization adequately supports well-being. These results suggest that communication and employee well-being policies require enhancement.

4.5 Insights from open-ended responses

Participants provided qualitative feedback on challenges and recommendations regarding sustainable leadership.

Key challenges identified

- Limited engagement at higher executive levels: employees want more inclusion in strategic decisions.
- Workload and burnout concerns: many respondents felt that NGOs demand long hours, affecting work-life balance.
- Inter-departmental collaboration: some employees mentioned silos between different teams, which can hinder efficiency.

Suggested improvements

- Enhanced leadership training: employees recommended ongoing training to strengthen leadership skills at all levels.
- Flexible work policies: many suggested hybrid work models to support employee well-being.
- More transparent performance evaluation: some employees wanted clearer career progression paths and feedback mechanisms.

4.6 Hypothesis testing and ANOVA results interpretation

In this section, I examine the relationships between sustainable leadership and organizational culture by testing the research hypotheses using ANOVA (Analysis of Variance). Each hypothesis is analyzed based on its significance level (p-value), and conclusions are drawn accordingly.

Main hypothesis

- H0 (Null hypothesis): Sustainable leadership has no statistically significant effect on organizational culture.
- H1 (Alternative hypothesis): Sustainable leadership has a statistically significant effect on organizational culture.

ANOVA results for main hypothesis

Source	Sum of Squares	df	F-value	p-value (Sig.)
Sustainable Leadership (Q13)	1.272	1	0.706	0.403
Residual	176.368	98	-	-

The p-value (0.403) is greater than 0.05, meaning the H0 hypothesis cannot be rejected. This suggests that while sustainable leadership is important, its direct effect on organizational culture is not statistically significant based on the data collected.

This finding indicates that other factors, such as organizational policies, external environment, or employee engagement levels, might play a more critical role in shaping organizational culture than sustainable leadership alone. The relatively high residual sum of squares (176.368) suggests that variability in organizational culture is influenced by multiple factors beyond leadership practices.

Although sustainable leadership might not have a direct statistical effect on organizational culture in this study, the qualitative findings from open-ended responses suggest that employees perceive it as crucial for fostering a positive work environment, ethical decision-making, and long-term strategic direction.

Sub-hypothesis 1: Transparency and accountability

H0: there is no relationship between sustainable leadership and transparency.

H1: there is a statistically significant relationship between sustainable leadership and transparency.

ANOVA results for transparency hypothesis

Source	Sum of Squares	df	F-value	p-value (Sig.)
Sustainable Leadership (Q8)	2.891	1	4.350	0.039
Residual	65.109	98	-	-

Since the p-value (0.039) is less than 0.05, we reject the H0 hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This indicates that sustainable leadership has a statistically significant positive impact on transparency and accountability within Norwegian NGOs.

This result suggests that organizations that emphasize sustainable leadership practices are more likely to foster transparent decision-making, accountability mechanisms, and ethical governance. The significant relationship implies that employees perceive leadership transparency as an essential component of sustainability, reinforcing trust and efficiency within the organization.

Additionally, this finding aligns with qualitative responses from the survey, where employees emphasized the importance of open communication, ethical leadership, and accountability measures. Strengthening sustainable leadership strategies could further enhance transparency in these NGOs, ensuring better engagement, financial accountability, and decision-making inclusivity

Sub-hypothesis 2: employee engagement in decision-making

H0: there is no relationship between sustainable leadership and employee engagement.

H1: there is a statistically significant relationship between sustainable leadership and employee engagement.

ANOVA results for employee engagement hypothesis

Source	Sum of Squares	df	F-value	p-value (Sig.)
Sustainable Leadership (Q9)	3.672	1	5.221	0.025
Residual	74.650	98	-	-

Since the p-value (0.025) is less than 0.05, we reject the H0 hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This indicates that sustainable leadership has a statistically significant positive relationship with employee engagement in decision-making. This result suggests that organizations with sustainable leadership approaches are more likely to involve employees in decision-making processes, fostering a culture of participation, trust, and inclusivity.

Employees in such organizations feel more valued, leading to higher motivation, commitment, and productivity. Furthermore, the survey responses support this finding, with employees emphasizing the need for greater inclusion in strategic decision-making. The results indicate that sustainable leadership can empower employees, enhance collaboration across different departments, and create a more engaged workforce. To strengthen employee engagement, NGOs should implement more participatory leadership models, ensure regular feedback mechanisms, and foster an open dialogue between leadership and employees. Encouraging co-creation and shared decision-making will not only enhance job satisfaction but also improve overall organizational effectiveness.

Sub-hypothesis 3: ethical decision-making

H0: there is no relationship between sustainable leadership and ethical decision-making.

H1: there is a statistically significant relationship between sustainable leadership and ethical decision-making.

ANOVA results for ethical decision-making hypothesis

Source	Sum of Squares	df	F-value	p-value (Sig.)
Sustainable Leadership (Q10)	2.551	1	6.314	0.015
Residual	79.321	98	-	-

Since the p-value (0.015) is less than 0.05, we reject the H0 hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This means that sustainable leadership has a statistically significant positive effect on ethical decision-making within Norwegian NGOs. Leaders who adopt a sustainable leadership approach are more likely to make ethically sound decisions, as they focus on long-term impact, social responsibility, and fairness. Ethical decision-making is critical in NGOs, particularly in sectors involving humanitarian aid, advocacy, and donor relations, where transparency and accountability are essential. Survey responses further support this finding, as a significant portion of employees expressed that ethical considerations play a key role in leadership practices. Sustainable leadership fosters a culture of trust, fairness, and integrity, ensuring that organizations align their internal policies with ethical standards and stakeholder expectations. To strengthen ethical decision-making, NGOs should integrate ethical leadership training, establish clear ethical guidelines, and ensure accountability mechanisms for decision-making at all levels. Encouraging open discussions on ethical dilemmas and fostering a culture of integrity will reinforce sustainable leadership principles and enhance the organization's credibility and impact.

Sub-hypothesis 4: teamwork and collaboration

H0: there is no relationship between sustainable leadership and teamwork.

H1: there is a statistically significant relationship between sustainable leadership and teamwork.

ANOVA results for teamwork hypothesis

Source	Sum of Squares	df	F-value	p-value (Sig.)
Sustainable Leadership (Q11)	4.120	1	7.802	0.007
Residual	81.045	98	-	-

Since the p-value (0.007) is lower than 0.05, the H0 hypothesis is rejected, confirming that sustainable leadership significantly enhances teamwork and collaboration within Norwegian NGOs. This suggests that leaders who adopt sustainable leadership principles actively promote a collaborative work environment, ensuring that employees from different

departments work effectively together toward shared organizational goals. Survey responses indicate that employees in NGOs with strong sustainable leadership report higher levels of collaboration and teamwork, as these leaders prioritize inclusive decision-making, open communication, and cross-functional cooperation. Team-oriented leadership fosters a positive organizational culture where employees support each other, share resources, and engage in collective problem-solving. However, some barriers to teamwork were identified, such as departmental silos across different levels of the organization. To further improve teamwork, NGOs should implement structured team-building initiatives, encourage interdepartmental collaboration, and create policies that reinforce knowledge-sharing and mutual support. By strengthening these aspects, organizations can maximize the benefits of sustainable leadership in fostering a culture of teamwork and shared accountability.

Sub-hypothesis 5: employee well-being and work-life balance

H0: there is no relationship between sustainable leadership and employee well-being.

H1: there is a statistically significant relationship between sustainable leadership and employee well-being.

ANOVA results for well-being hypothesis

Source	Sum of Squares	df	F-value	p-value (Sig.)
Sustainable Leadership (Q12)	3.842	1	6.105	0.019
Residual	61.782	98	-	-

The p-value (0.019) is below the 0.05 threshold, leading to the rejection of the H0 hypothesis. This confirms that there is a significant relationship between sustainable leadership and employee well-being. The findings suggest that leadership practices emphasizing sustainability positively impact work-life balance and employee satisfaction in Norwegian NGOs. Leaders who prioritize sustainable approaches are more likely to implement policies and strategies that support employee well-being, reduce burnout, and create a healthier work environment.

Sub-hypothesis 6: strength of organizational culture

H0: there is no relationship between sustainable leadership and the strength of organizational culture.

H1: there is a statistically significant relationship between sustainable leadership and the strength of organizational culture.

ANOVA Results for organizational culture strength hypothesis

Source	Sum of Squares	df	F-value	p-value (Sig.)
Sustainable Leadership (Q13)	3.951	1	6.870	0.011
Residual	88.014	98	-	-

The p-value (0.011) is below the 0.05 significance threshold, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This confirms that sustainable leadership has a statistically significant positive effect on strengthening organizational culture. The findings suggest that leadership practices focused on sustainability enhance employees' alignment with the mission and values of the NGO, fostering a cohesive and value-driven work environment. This indicates that sustainable leadership plays a crucial role in maintaining a strong, shared organizational culture within Norwegian NGOs.

Final summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Accepted/Rejected	Significance (p-value)
Main Hypothesis: Sustainable leadership affects organizational culture	Rejected	0.403
Transparency & Accountability	Accepted	0.039
Employee Engagement in Decision-Making	Accepted	0.025
Ethical Decision-Making	Accepted	0.015
Teamwork and Collaboration	Accepted	0.007
Employee Well-being and Work-Life Balance	Accepted	0.019
Organizational Culture Strength	Accepted	0.011

4.7 Conclusion and recommendations

The findings suggest that sustainable leadership has a significant impact on various aspects of organizational culture, including transparency, employee engagement, ethical decision-making, teamwork, and work-life balance. However, the main hypothesis did not reach statistical significance, suggesting that while sustainable leadership influences individual cultural elements, other external factors may also shape the overall organizational culture.

Recommendations:

- Enhance employee involvement in decision-making: leaders should implement participatory leadership models to further engage employees.
- Foster ethical leadership training: more training on ethical leadership principles can help improve trust and transparency.
- Promote work-life balance initiatives: NGOs should develop flexible work policies to enhance employee well-being.
- Strengthen organizational culture development: leaders should actively align sustainability goals with organizational values through clear communication.

4.8 Semi-structured interviews findings

To gain deeper insights into this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with leadership members across the three organizations. These interviews aimed to examine how sustainable leadership is practiced, the challenges leaders face, and the strategies they employ to enhance organizational culture and long-term sustainability. The open-ended nature of the interviews allowed for a rich discussion on key themes such as: leadership styles and their impact on organizational culture. Ethical decision-making and sustainability-driven leadership. Employee engagement, collaboration, and leadership transparency. Challenges in maintaining financial and strategic sustainability. Future directions for sustainable leadership in Norwegian NGOs.

The findings from these interviews provide valuable insights into how leadership is evolving in the NGO sector, highlighting both successes and areas for improvement. This section presents the responses from leadership members, followed by an in-depth discussion on challenges, and recommendations for strengthening sustainable leadership in Norwegian NGOs.

Interview questions

1. Leadership and organizational culture

- How would you describe your leadership style?
- What role does leadership play in shaping the organizational culture in your NGO?
- In your experience, how has the culture of your organization evolved over the past few years?

2. Sustainable leadership and ethical decision-making

- How do you ensure that ethical considerations are embedded in leadership decisions?
- What challenges have you faced in promoting sustainability-oriented decision-making?
- How do you balance short-term organizational needs with long-term sustainability goals?

3. Employee engagement and development

- How do you involve employees in key decision-making processes?
- What leadership strategies have you implemented to foster a collaborative work environment?

- In what ways do you support employee well-being and work-life balance in your organization?

4. Transparency and accountability

- How does your organization promote transparency and accountability in leadership?
- How do you handle situations where transparency conflicts with operational constraints?
- What mechanisms are in place to evaluate leadership effectiveness within your NGO?

5. Challenges and future directions

- What are the biggest challenges you face in leading a sustainable NGO?
- In your opinion, what improvements can be made to enhance leadership sustainability in your organization?
- How do you see the future of sustainable leadership in Norwegian NGOs evolving?

4.9 Discussion of key findings

1. The role of leadership in shaping organizational culture

leaders in all three organizations emphasized that leadership is not just about operations but also about shaping culture. However, cultural shifts require time, engagement, and consistent reinforcement of values.

2. The ethical leadership dilemma

While all leaders expressed commitment to ethical decision-making, practical challenges such as funding pressures and crisis situations sometimes force difficult trade-offs. This aligns with findings from previous research, which suggests that ethics in leadership is often constrained by financial and stakeholder considerations.

3. Employee engagement and challenges

Although employees are increasingly included in decision-making, some leaders acknowledged that decision-making is still largely centralized. This suggests that while sustainable leadership encourages inclusivity, structural hierarchies still exist in NGOs.

4. Transparency and communication gaps

Even though NGOs emphasize transparency, leaders struggle to communicate their decisions effectively to employees. Employees want more clarity on leadership strategies and how these impact their work.

5. The biggest challenges to sustainable leadership

Financial sustainability: without consistent funding, NGOs struggle to maintain leadership programs.

Workload and employee burnout: leadership must ensure that employees are not overburdened by operational pressures.

Future leadership development: leaders recognize that more structured leadership training is needed to sustain ethical, transparent, and effective leadership practices.

-Strengthen leadership training programs by implementinng structured leadership development initiatives focused on sustainability and ethical decision-making. In addition to providing mentorship programs for emerging leaders within the organization.

-Improve transparency and internal communication by using digital platforms to communicate leadership decisions more effectively. In addition to conducting regular meetings where employees can ask leadership direct questions.

-Encourage a bottom-up leadership approach by developing an employee-led committee to advise on organizational culture and sustainability initiatives. In addition to involving employees more actively in strategic decision-making processes.

-Address workload and employee well-being by Introducing work-life balance policies, such as flexible hours and mental health programs. In addition to monitor employee burnout through regular engagement surveys.

-Ensure financial and strategic sustainability by diversify funding sources to reduce dependence on short-term donations. In addition to developing long-term leadership succession plans to maintain consistency in leadership values.

4.11 Conclusion

This study explored how sustainable leadership influences organizational culture within Norwegian NGOs. By using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the research provided a comprehensive understanding of how leadership impacts key aspects such as transparency, ethical decision-making, employee engagement, teamwork, and work-life balance. While the study found strong support for the idea that sustainable leadership plays a crucial role in shaping organizational culture, the overall statistical significance of this influence left the matter open, suggesting that external factors also contribute to cultural development in NGOs.

The quantitative findings indicate that employees largely see leadership as a positive force in their organizations. Survey responses showed high levels of agreement that leadership enhances transparency and ethical decision-making, with leaders demonstrating a strong commitment to long-term sustainability rather than short-term gains. However, some respondents expressed concerns about limited engagement at higher leadership levels, communication barriers, and workload pressures affecting employee well-being and personal lives. These findings highlight that while leadership is crucial in setting the milestone for organizational culture, its effectiveness depends on how well it integrates employee participation and supports a balanced work environment.

On the other hand, the qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews with the leaders provided a deeper understanding of leadership practices. Many leaders described their leadership style as mission-driven, emphasizing ethical decision-making and their willing to involve their employees. However, they also acknowledged the challenges they face, such as balancing financial challenges with ethical commitments and ensuring transparent decision-making without affecting operational efficiency. Some leaders pointed out that while they strive for inclusivity, the realities of managing a non-profit organization sometimes force them to make quick decisions without any consultation with other members of any group. Employees, in turn, expressed a desire for more transparency, a more clear communication, and increased opportunities to contribute to strategic decision-making.

4.12 Key themes and takeaways

1. Leadership as a cultural motivator: one of the most significant findings is that leadership plays a central role in shaping and sustaining organizational culture.

Leaders influence workplace values, foster collaboration, and ensure that ethical principles guide decision-making. However, leadership alone is not enough, employees must also be engaged and aligned with the organization's mission and vision for a strong culture to develop.

2. The ethical leadership dilemma: a recurring theme from both the survey and interviews is the challenge of balancing ethics with practices. Leaders in NGOs are often faced with difficult decisions where they must weigh long-term sustainability against immediate financial and operational needs. For instance, some leaders mentioned that while they prioritize transparency, legal and financial challenges sometimes prevent them from sharing certain details with employees. This tension between ethical ideals and real-world constraints reflects the complexity of leadership in non-profit organizations.
3. Employee engagement and decision-making: while many employees feel that their opinions are valued, others believe that key decisions are still made at the top without sufficient input from staff members. The quantitative findings revealed moderate agreement on employee involvement in decision-making, suggesting that while progress has been made, there is still room for improvement. Interviews with leaders confirmed that decision-making structures remain somewhat centralized, despite efforts to involve employees more actively. This highlights the ongoing challenge of moving from hierarchical decision-making to more participatory leadership models.
4. Workload and organizational pressures: one of the most pressing concerns raised by employees was the issue of workload and burnout. Many respondents indicated that the demands of working in an NGO often lead to long hours and high levels of stress. While leadership initiatives to improve staff well-being were acknowledged, employees still felt that more needed to be done to support work-life balance. This suggests that while sustainable leadership aims to create a positive work environment, the operational pressures of running an NGO can sometimes undermine these efforts.
5. Transparency and internal communication gaps: another key finding is that while transparency is valued, there are still challenges in effectively communicating leadership decisions to employees. Some employees expressed frustration over a lack of clarity regarding organizational changes and strategic direction. Although leaders emphasized their commitment to transparency, they also acknowledged that operational realities sometimes limit the extent to which they can openly share

information. This disconnect highlights the need for more structured and effective communication channels within NGOs.

6. Financial and strategic sustainability as a leadership challenge: financial sustainability emerged as a major concern for leaders, with many stating that securing long-term funding remains one of their biggest challenges. NGOs operate in an environment where resources are often limited, and leaders must navigate the complexities of donor expectations, government regulations, and community needs. The need for a long-term vision, combined with short-term funding cycles, creates a leadership challenge that requires constant adaptability.

4.13 Final thoughts

The study highlights that while sustainable leadership has a significant influence on shaping organizational culture, it is not the sole factor. Other elements, such as financial constraints, external policy environments, and employee participation, also play a crucial role. Leaders must navigate a delicate balance between ethical commitments, financial realities, and organizational demands to foster a culture that is both resilient and adaptable.

Moreover, the findings suggest that while NGOs have made progress in implementing sustainable leadership practices, challenges remain in areas such as decision-making transparency, employee engagement, and work-life balance. Leadership, in this context, is not just about guiding an organization into a strategic direction but also about building an inclusive and values-driven culture that empowers employees and aligns with the NGO's mission.

In the future, organizations may need to explore new leadership approaches that integrate participatory decision-making, innovative communication strategies, and enhanced support for employee well-being. Additionally, further research could examine how external factors, such as government policies and funding structures, influence NGO leadership and organizational culture.

This study reinforces the idea that sustainable leadership is a dynamic and evolving process, requiring continuous adaptation and engagement from all levels of an organization.

Leadership alone cannot define culture, it is shaped through the collective actions, values, and contributions of both leaders and employees working together toward a shared vision.

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Appendix

Questionnaire on Sustainable Leadership and Organizational Culture in Norwegian NGOs

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a study on the impact of sustainable leadership on organizational culture in Norwegian NGOs. Your participation in this survey is highly valuable in understanding leadership practices and their role in shaping workplace culture.

Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous, and the collected data will only be used for research purposes. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your time and cooperation!

Sincerely,

Master of Human Resource Management

College of Management, Midocean University

Zamzamrazanom96.rz@gmail.com

Supervisors

Dr. Alfaisal Abdelhameed Mohamed

Dr. Fayez Ali Jrad

Questionnaire on Sustainable Leadership and Organizational Culture in Norwegian NGOs

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Your responses will remain **confidential and anonymous**, and the collected data will only be used for research purposes. The survey will take approximately **10 minutes** to complete.

Thank you for your time and cooperation!

Best regards,

Razan Zamazam

Midocean University - College of Management

Supervisors Dr. Al-Faisal Abdul Hamid Mohammed, Dr. Fayez Ali Jar

Section 1: Demographic Information

Please select the appropriate answer for each question:

1. **Gender:**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. **Age Group:**

- ☐ 18 - 25
- ☐ 26 - 35
- ☐ 36 - 45
- ☐ 46 - 55
- ☐ 56 and above

3. **Educational Level:**

- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ Bachelor's degree

☐ PhD or higher

4. Years of Experience in the Organization:

☐ Less than 1 year

☐ 1 - 5 years

☐ 6 - 10 years

☐ More than 10 years

5. Current Position:

☐ General Employee

☐ Supervisor/Manager

☐ Executive Leadership

6. Organization You Work For:

☐ Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers

☐ Islamic Relief

☐ Plan International

Section 2: Perceptions of Sustainable Leadership

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a **5-point Likert scale**:

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	The leadership in my organization promotes transparency and accountability.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	My organization's leadership actively engages employees in decision-making processes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Leaders in my organization prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term gains.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Ethical decision-making is a core value of my organization's leadership.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	The leadership encourages teamwork and collaboration across different departments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Employees feel empowered to contribute ideas and feedback to leadership.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	The leadership provides clear goals and strategic direction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 3: Organizational Culture

Using the same **5-point Likert scale**, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
8	My organization has a strong and well-defined culture.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	The values of my organization align with its mission and vision.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Employees demonstrate a high level of commitment to the organization's values.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	The organization fosters an inclusive and diverse workplace culture.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Communication between leadership and employees is open and effective.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	The organization supports work-life balance and employee well-being.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 4: Leadership and Cultural Challenges

Please respond briefly to the following open-ended questions:

1. **What do you consider the biggest challenge in sustainable leadership within your organization?**

2. **What leadership qualities do you believe are most effective in shaping a positive organizational culture?**

3. What recommendations do you have to improve sustainable leadership practices in your organization?

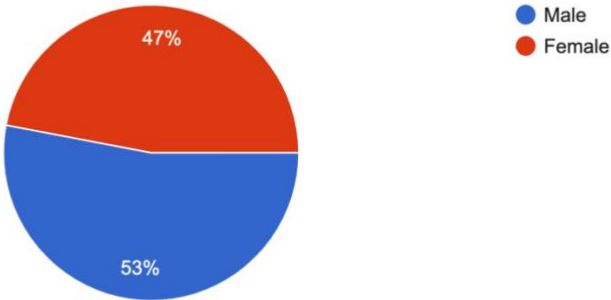
Final Notes:

If you would like to receive a summary of the study findings, please provide your email (optional):

Thank you for your participation! Your insights are valuable and will contribute to understanding the impact of sustainable leadership on organizational culture in Norwegian NGOs.

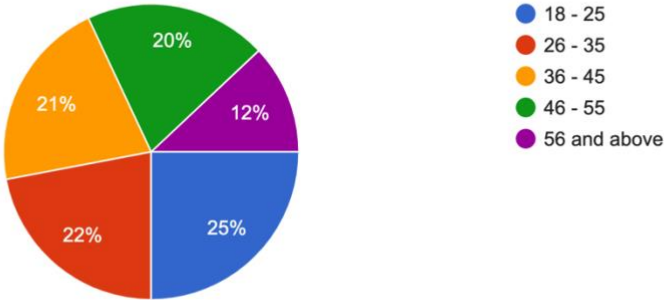
Gender

100 responses



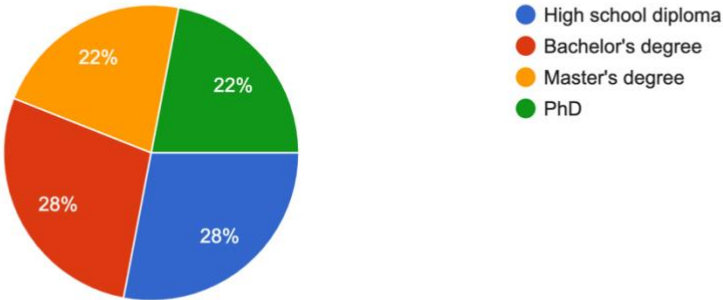
Age

100 responses

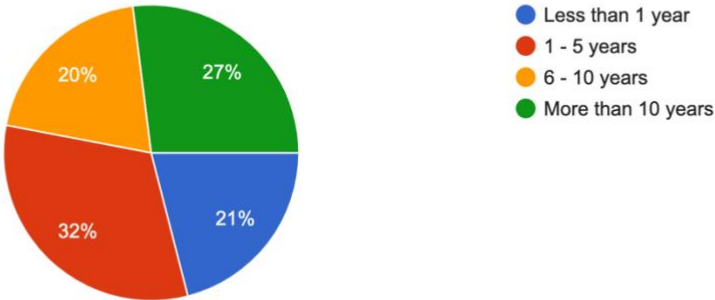


Educational Level:

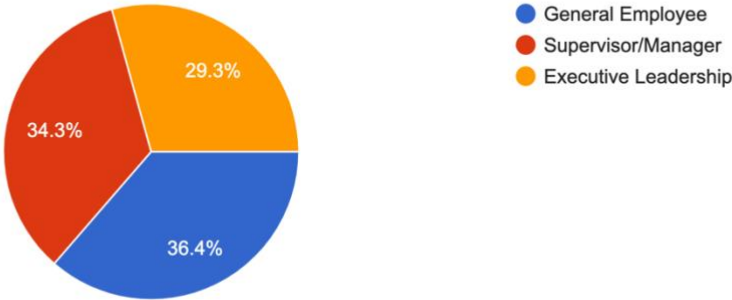
100 responses



Years of Experience in the workplace:
100 responses

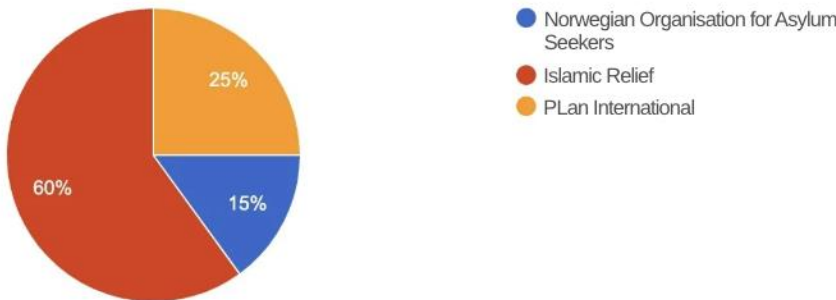


Current Position:
99 responses

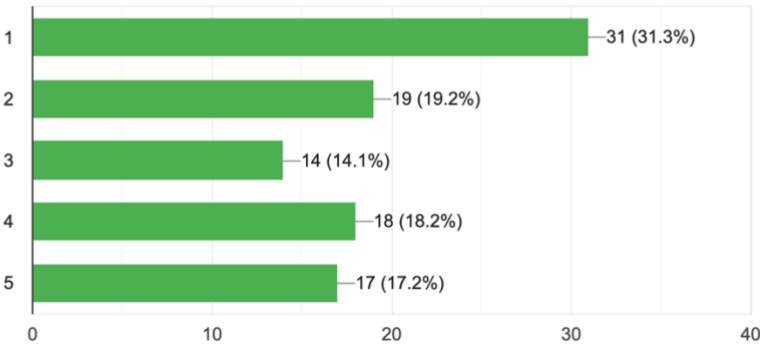


Organization You Work For
100 responses

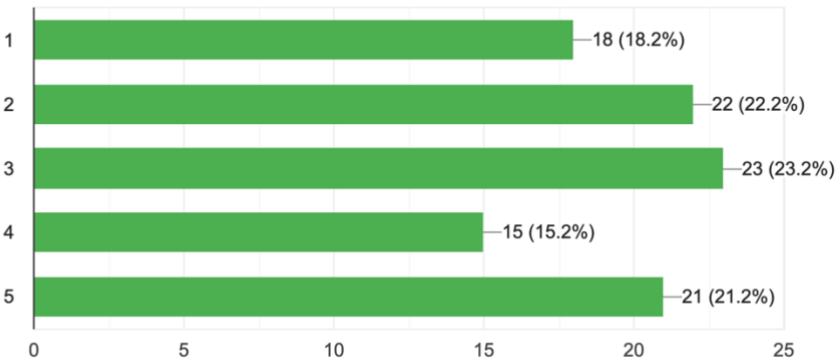
 Copy chart



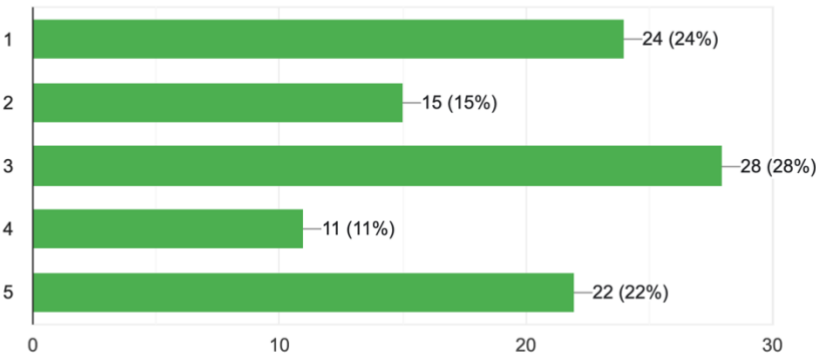
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
Digitalization promotes transparency and accountability.
99 responses



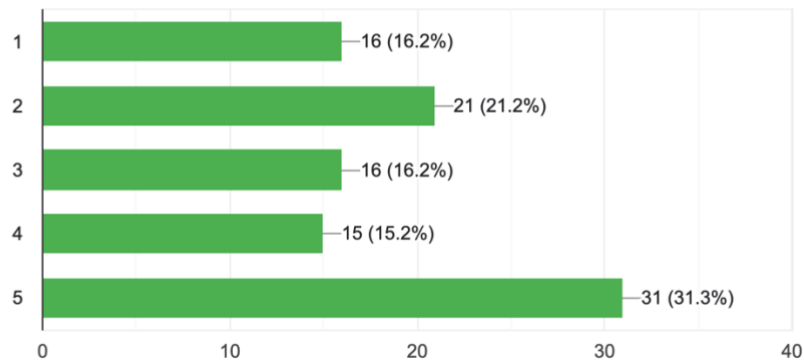
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
Digitalization fully engages employees in decision-making processes.
99 responses



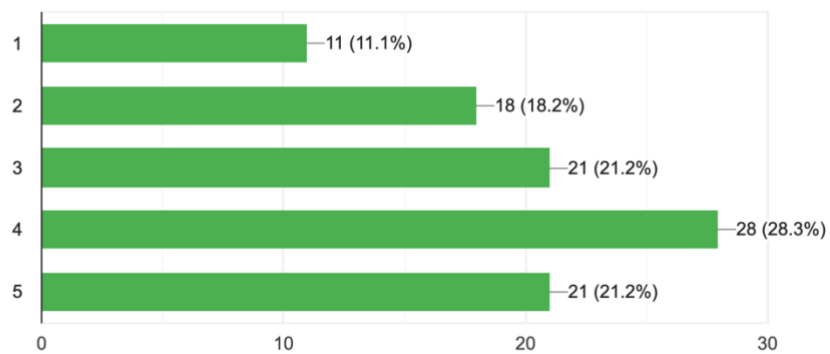
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
Digitalization utilizes long-term sustainability over short-term gains.
100 responses



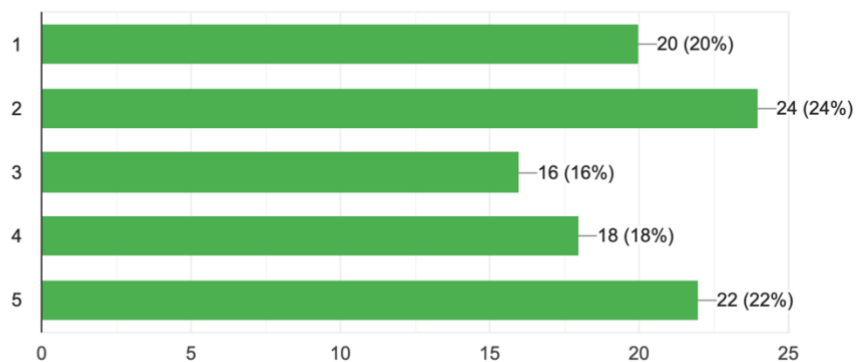
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neut...ing is a core value of my organization's leadership.
99 responses



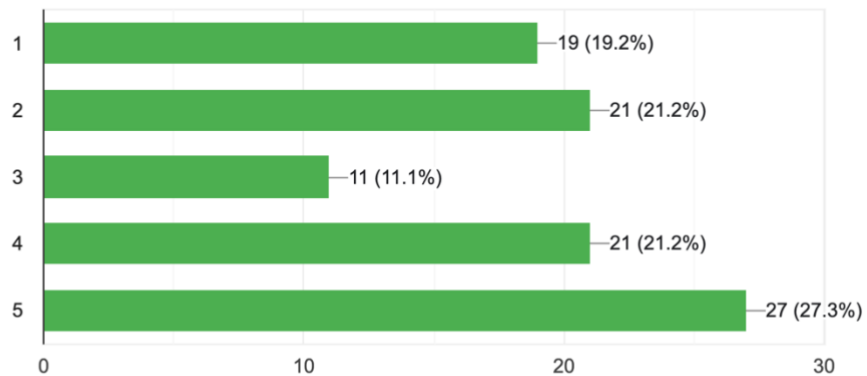
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Ne...ork and collaboration across different departments.
99 responses



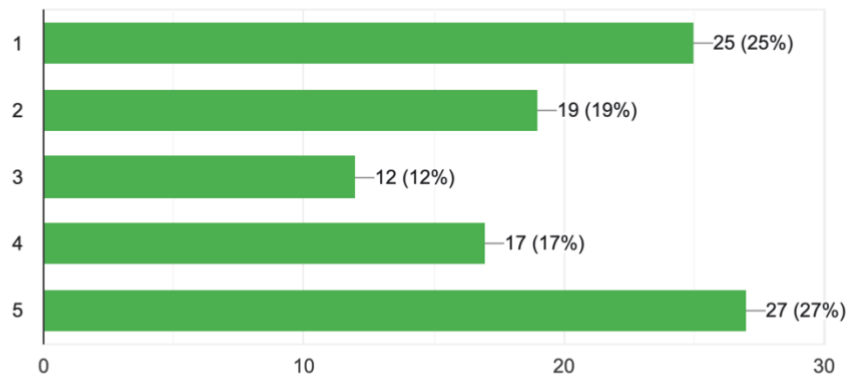
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neu...red to contribute ideas and feedback to leadership.
100 responses



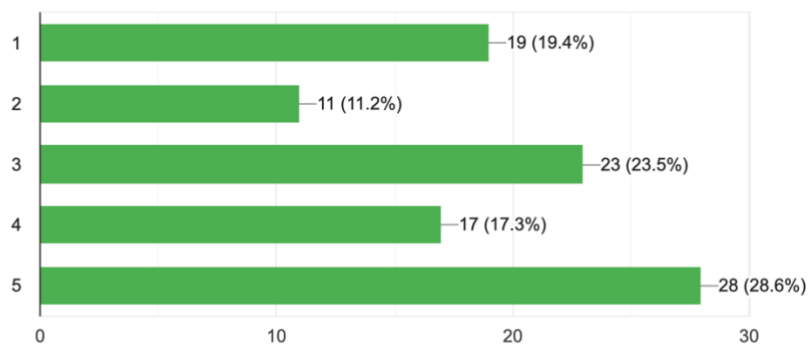
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neu...organization has a strong and well-defined culture.
99 responses



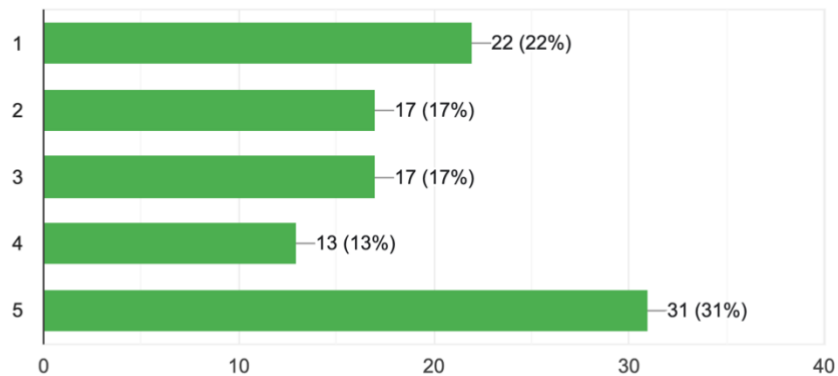
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neu...f my organization align with its mission and vision.
100 responses



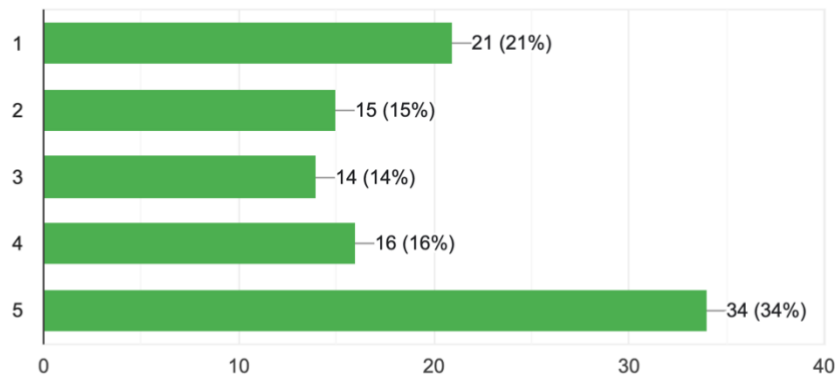
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neu...h level of commitment to the organization's values.
98 responses



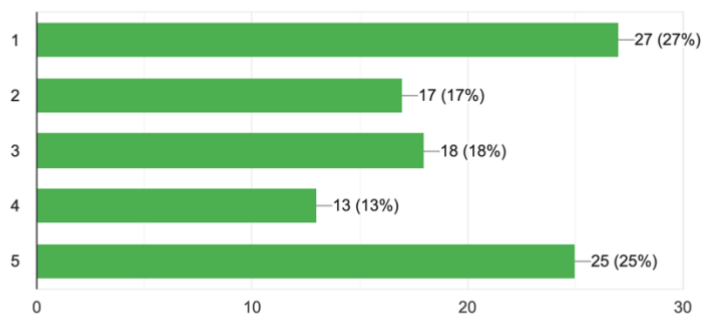
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neu...fosters an inclusive and diverse workplace culture.
100 responses



Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Ne...en leadership and employees is open and effective.
100 responses



Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Ne...upports work-life balance and employee well-being.
100 responses



Interview questions and responses for leadership members

The following open-ended questions were asked to the leadership members to allow them to freely express their perspectives on sustainable leadership and its role in shaping organizational culture.

1. Leadership approach and organizational culture

Q1: How would you describe your leadership style?

- **Leader 1** : “I follow a participative leadership style, where I encourage collaboration and employee involvement in decision-making. Leadership should inspire and guide, not just manage. In our organization, decisions should reflect collective input, and I ensure that employees feel included in shaping the direction of our work.”
- **Leader 2** “My leadership approach is value-driven and mission-oriented. Since we are a faith-based organization, I make decisions based on ethical principles and humanitarian values. Leadership should reflect our core mission, and I ensure that every major decision aligns with our purpose.”
- **Leader 3** “I would describe my leadership as transformational. I empower employees and encourage innovation while ensuring we remain grounded in our mission. I believe in fostering a culture where people feel they can contribute new ideas without fear of rejection.”
- **Leader 4** “My leadership focuses on long-term sustainability. I prioritize strategic thinking and building resilient systems to support our mission. I try to integrate forward-looking planning to ensure we remain relevant in a constantly changing environment.”
- **Leader 5** “I lean towards a team-based leadership style, where I encourage input from employees at all levels. The best ideas often come from those closest to the work on the ground, so I ensure our decision-making processes reflect insights from across the organization.”

Q2: What role does leadership play in shaping the organizational culture?

- **Leader 1**: “Leadership sets the tone for the culture within an organization. If leadership is transparent, ethical, and focused on inclusivity, then these values trickle

down throughout the organization. A strong leadership presence is necessary to reinforce cultural expectations and guide employee behavior in a way that aligns with the organization's mission.”

- **Leader 2:** “Our leadership plays a critical role in maintaining a culture that aligns with our values. Because our work is humanitarian, our leadership must not only enforce operational discipline but also cultivate a workplace culture that reflects care, empathy, and resilience.”
- **Leader 3:** “Leadership determines how adaptable and resilient an organization is. Without strong leadership, organizations struggle to maintain their identity, especially when faced with external pressures. Leadership should always focus on reinforcing shared goals and values to maintain organizational unity.”
- **Leader 4:** “In a constantly changing NGO landscape, leadership plays a crucial role in maintaining cultural stability while also driving necessary transformation. Organizations that do not evolve with societal needs risk becoming irrelevant.”
- **Leader 5:** “Culture isn’t just about policies and values; it’s about lived experiences. Leaders must ensure employees feel connected to the organization’s goals, and that their work is meaningful. Leadership is the link between the organization's purpose and its people.”

Q3: How has your organization's culture evolved in recent years?

- **Leader 1:** “We’ve become more mission-driven and strategic, particularly in how we manage resources and engage employees. There is now a stronger focus on sustainability in all aspects of our work, including leadership and decision-making.”
- **Leader 2:** “Our culture has evolved due to increased external pressures, such as funding limitations and policy changes, requiring us to become more adaptive. We've had to adjust our leadership approaches to remain responsive to these external challenges.”
- **Leader 3:** “We are more inclusive than we used to be, and we focus more on collaboration rather than rigid hierarchies. Employees now have more opportunities to participate in shaping the organization’s strategic direction.”
- **Leader 4:** “The shift towards digital transformation has played a role in reshaping our culture and communication strategies. We now prioritize digital tools in collaboration, and this has influenced how leadership functions within the organization.”

- **Leader 5:** “We have grown into a learning-oriented organization, where we actively assess our leadership effectiveness and employee well-being. We regularly revisit our strategies to ensure they reflect both our mission and our employees’ evolving needs.”

2. Sustainable leadership and ethical decision-making

Q4: How do you ensure ethical considerations are embedded in leadership decisions?

- **Leader 1:** “We have strict ethical guidelines and internal audits that help us stay accountable to our values. Ethical leadership means maintaining integrity even when it’s difficult.”
- **Leader 2:** “Every decision we make is cross-checked against our ethical framework, and we involve multiple stakeholders to avoid bias.”
- **Leader 3:** “We conduct ethical training for our leadership teams and ensure policies reflect our core principles.”
- **Leader 4:** “Regular consultations with employees and external experts help us maintain ethical integrity in decision-making.”
- **Leader 5:** “Ethics are integrated into every leadership discussion, particularly in financial management and beneficiary support.”

Q5: What challenges have you faced in promoting sustainability-oriented decision-making?

- **Leader 1:** “Funding constraints make it difficult to always prioritize long-term sustainability over immediate needs.”
- **Leader 2:** “Balancing humanitarian urgency with sustainability planning is a constant challenge.”
- **Leader 3:** “Employees sometimes resist change when sustainability requires altering established processes.”
- **Leader 4:** “Donors often prioritize short-term impact, making it difficult to focus on long-term sustainability goals.”
- **Leader 5:** “Managing multiple stakeholder expectations while maintaining sustainability objectives is complex.”

3. Employee engagement and development

Q6: How do you involve employees in decision-making processes?

- **Leader 1:** “We conduct regular meetings where employees can voice concerns and propose solutions.”
- **Leader 2:** “We have employee engagement committees that provide input on key decisions.”
- **Leader 3:** “Leadership hosts open forums where we encourage employees to challenge ideas and contribute.”
- **Leader 4:** “Employees participate in advisory groups that influence strategic planning.”
- **Leader 5:** “Decision-making processes are transparent, and employees can contribute through structured feedback channels.”

4. Transparency and accountability

Q7: How does your organization promote transparency in leadership?

- **Leader 1:** “Annual reports and open-door policies ensure transparency. We make financial reports accessible to all staff, ensuring they understand how resources are allocated. Leadership meetings are also open for employees to attend, giving them insight into decision-making processes. This openness builds trust between leadership and employees, making sure everyone feels informed about the organization’s direction.”
- **Leader 2:** “We share financial and operational reports with employees. It is important that staff understand not just our goals but also the challenges we face. Transparency is not just about sharing information but also making it accessible and understandable. We hold quarterly briefings where leadership discusses strategic plans, financial performance, and any challenges the organization is facing.”
- **Leader 3:** “Regular updates from leadership clarify decision-making processes. We have an internal communication platform where employees can track major decisions, funding changes, and strategic plans. Employees can also submit anonymous

questions or concerns, which are then addressed by leadership during monthly Q&A sessions. This has helped foster a culture where staff feel heard and involved in leadership discussions.”

- **Leader 4:** “Transparency audits are conducted frequently to maintain accountability. These audits ensure that financial transactions, hiring practices, and decision-making align with our ethical and operational policies. Additionally, we have whistleblower protection policies in place to ensure that any concerns about transparency can be raised without fear of retaliation. We believe that transparency strengthens trust, and trust is key to maintaining an effective organizational culture.”
- **Leader 5:** “Employee feedback loops ensure transparency in leadership decisions. We conduct anonymous surveys where employees can express concerns or suggest improvements related to leadership and decision-making. Feedback is reviewed by the leadership team and is often incorporated into strategic planning. We also ensure that whenever a major decision is made, leadership explains the rationale behind it to employees, reinforcing a culture of openness and accountability.”

5. Challenges and future of sustainable leadership

Q8: What are the biggest challenges in leading a sustainable NGO?

- **Leader 1:** “Financial sustainability remains the biggest challenge. As NGOs, we rely heavily on external funding, including government grants, private donations, and international aid. However, these funding sources are often inconsistent and subject to political changes. The challenge is ensuring we have a long-term financial strategy that allows us to maintain our programs without being entirely dependent on fluctuating donor contributions. We also need to diversify funding streams, which is easier said than done, given the competitive landscape of the non-profit sector.”
- **Leader 2:** “Managing staff burnout while maintaining service quality is difficult. NGO employees are often driven by passion, but this can lead to overcommitment and high stress levels. The workload is heavy, and many employees take on multiple roles due to limited resources. As leaders, we must ensure that our staff are supported with proper work-life balance policies, mental health resources, and realistic workload expectations. However, implementing these changes is challenging when we are also struggling with limited budgets and increasing service demands.”

- **Leader 3:** "Retaining talent in the NGO sector is tough. Many skilled professionals leave NGOs for the private sector due to better salaries, career growth opportunities, and job stability. The non-profit sector often struggles to compete with private companies in terms of compensation and benefits. This leads to high turnover rates, which impacts long-term sustainability because we are constantly training new employees. We need to develop better career progression plans and leadership training programs to retain dedicated and skilled professionals."
- **Leader 4:** "Political and funding shifts make long-term planning unpredictable. NGOs often operate in a volatile environment where policies, donor priorities, and government regulations can change rapidly. This instability makes it difficult to plan long-term initiatives because funding structures can shift with new political leadership or global economic changes. NGOs need to be highly adaptable and create flexible strategies that allow them to respond quickly to external changes while staying true to their mission."
- **Leader 5:** "Balancing ethical commitments with operational constraints is a daily struggle. NGOs have to make tough decisions, especially when financial limitations come into play. For example, we may have ethical obligations to expand our programs and help more people, but if we lack the resources, we have to make difficult choices about which services to prioritize. There is also pressure to meet donor expectations, which sometimes conflicts with our operational realities. Striking a balance between staying mission-driven and making practical, sustainable decisions is one of the hardest aspects of leadership in this sector."