Human Capital Sustainability Leadership Driving Job Performance through Work Behaviors

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This systematic literature review examines how Human Capital Sustainability Leadership (HCSL) influences job performance through key work behaviors. The study aims to establish a comprehensive theoretical foundation by analyzing the relationships between HCSL components (ethical, sustainable, mindful, and servant leadership) and job performance, with innovative work behavior, knowledge sharing behavior, and employee work engagement as potential mediators.

Methodology: A systematic literature review was conducted to analyze and synthesize conceptual frameworks and empirical findings from existing scholarly literature. The review examined definitions, measurement scales, and empirical evidence concerning the interrelationships among HCSL, work behaviors, and job performance.

Finding: The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that HCSL components positively and significantly influence innovative work behavior, knowledge sharing behavior, and employee work engagement. These three work behaviors, in turn, serve as positive predictors of job performance. Various theoretical perspectives support these observed linkages across multiple empirical studies.

Conclusion: This review consolidates evidence establishing HCSL as a crucial driver of job performance, with innovative work behavior, knowledge sharing behavior, and employee work engagement acting as significant intervening variables. The findings provide a robust theoretical foundation for future empirical research on integrated models of sustainable leadership and organizational performance.

Keywords: Human Capital Sustainability Leadership; Job Performance; Innovative Work Behavior; Knowledge Sharing Behavior; Employee Work Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary organizational landscape, enhancing job performance (JP) has become paramount for achieving sustained competitive advantage and operational excellence (Gaur et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024; Rai & Verma, 2022). Central to this endeavor is the effective

management and development of human capital, wherein leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping employee attitudes, behaviors, and ultimately, organizational outcomes. Emerging from this discourse is the concept of Human Capital Sustainability Leadership (HCSL), a holistic leadership approach centered on nurturing healthy, flourishing, and resilient workers within thriving organizational environments to ensure long-term well-being and performance (Di Fabio et al., 2023). HCSL integrates ethical, sustainable, mindful, and servant leadership dimensions, proposing a more comprehensive framework for understanding leadership effectiveness in the 21st century.

The significance of investigating HCSL lies in its potential to unlock superior job performance through its influence on critical employee-driven outcomes. These include Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) (Zahari et al., 2024), defined as the intentional generation and implementation of new ideas; Knowledge Sharing Behavior (KSB), the exchange of information and expertise among individuals; and Employee Work Engagement (WE) (Khalil et al., 2021; et al., 2025; Vinesian et al., 2023), characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one's work. While individual studies have often explored these variables in relation to specific leadership styles, a consolidated understanding of how the multifaceted HCSL framework collectively impacts these crucial work behaviors and subsequent job performance remains an area ripe for scholarly inquiry. Recognizing this, the primary research problem addressed by this systematic literature review is the need for a comprehensive synthesis of existing knowledge that elucidates the complex pathways from HCSL to job performance, particularly through the mediating influences of IWB, KSB, and WE. The purpose of this review is therefore to map the existing theoretical and empirical landscape, identify established relationships, and pinpoint conceptual nuances and research gaps.

Empirical research has begun to illuminate parts of this puzzle, with numerous studies demonstrating positive associations between individual components of HCSL, such as ethical leadership (Serang et al., 2024), sustainable leadership (Naqshbandi et al., 2024), mindful leadership (Khalil et al., 2021), and servant leadership (Ahmad et al., 2021), and desirable outcomes like IWB, KSB, and WE. Similarly, these employee behaviors have been shown to be significant antecedents of enhanced job performance. However, these studies often exist in silos, focusing on specific dimensions of leadership or a limited set of mediating and outcome variables. The "problem-solving" approach of this paper is to systematically collate and analyze these disparate empirical findings to construct a more integrated theoretical understanding.

A key research gap, evident from a review of the current literature (as summarized, for instance, in the "State of the Art" table within the foundational document), is the lack of a comprehensive synthesis that specifically examines HCSL as a higher-order construct and its collective influence on IWB, KSB, and WE as simultaneous mediators in the pathway to job performance. While some research, such as Khalil et al. (2021), has explored HCSL in relation to KSB, the broader, integrated model encompassing all four leadership dimensions of HCSL and their combined impact through IWB, KSB, and WE on JP represents a significant area for consolidated review and future empirical investigation. This systematic literature review aims to fill this void by providing a clear overview of what is currently known and what remains to be explored within this integrated framework.

The core constructs of this review, Human Capital Sustainability Leadership (and its distinct components: Ethical Leadership, Sustainable Leadership, Mindful Leadership, and Servant Leadership), Innovative Work Behavior, Knowledge Sharing Behavior, Employee Work

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Engagement, and Job Performance, are well-established within organizational behavior and leadership literature. This paper will systematically delineate their conceptual definitions as presented by various scholars, explore the theoretical underpinnings of their interrelationships, and review the empirical evidence supporting these links. Furthermore, this review will discuss the measurement scales commonly employed for each construct, providing a critical resource for future research. Ultimately, this paper provides an overview of the current state of knowledge, identifies consistencies and inconsistencies in the literature, and outlines a clear trajectory for future empirical studies aiming to validate the proposed integrated model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides a systematic and critical survey of scholarly sources on Human Capital Sustainability Leadership (HCSL) and its relationship with key employee behaviors and job performance. It aims to present a clear picture of the current state of knowledge, identify relevant theories, analyze and synthesize findings from relevant publications, and propose a conceptual framework that emerges from this synthesis.

2.1. Conceptualization of Core Research Constructs

A thorough understanding of each research construct is fundamental. The following sections elaborate on each variable based on relevant literature.

2.1.1. Human Capital Sustainability Leadership (HCSL) Human Capital Sustainability Leadership (HCSL) is conceptualized as a higher-order construct focused on "healthy people as flourishing and resilient workers [as well as] on healthy organizations as thriving and successful environments characterized by the positive circle of long-term well-being and performance" (Darvishmotevali & Ali, 2020; Gavín-Chocano et al., 2020; W.M. Verhoeven & Thøis Madsen, 2022). This leadership style aims to promote flourishing and resilient workers and enhance healthy organizations by implementing a positive circuit of performance and long-term well-being. HCSL is measured using the 16-item HCSL Scale (HCSLS) developed by Di Fabio and Peiró (2018). As a higher-order model, HCSL integrates four distinct yet interrelated leadership dimensions: Ethical Leadership, Sustainable Leadership, Mindful Leadership, and Servant Leadership.

- **2.1.1.1. Ethical Leadership (EL)** Ethical Leadership (EL) is defined as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making". EL endeavors to "engender fair and just aims, empower an organisation's members, create consistency of actions with espoused values, use behavior to communicate or enforce ethical standards, fair decisions and rewards, kindness, compassion and concern for others". A frequently used instrument to measure EL is the 10-item Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) developed by (Zahari et al., 2024)

- **2.1.1.2. Sustainable Leadership (SL)** Sustainable Leadership (SL) within the HCSL framework focuses on "both the use of vigilant decision-making processes...and the development and sustainability of human resources by creating continuous learning conditions that support and facilitate employees' personal and career growth". More broadly, SL produces and maintains lifelong learning, supports others' leadership, addresses social justice, promotes growth without depleting resources, and is involved in

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environmental issues. Measurement scales for SL include those developed by (Di Fabio et al., 2023; Mickson et al., 2020)

- **2.1.1.3. Mindful Leadership (ML)** Mindful Leadership (ML) is characterized as a style based on "paying attention to the present moment, recognizing personal feelings and emotions and keeping them under control, especially under stress; [and having an] awareness of an individual's own presence at a given time and its impact on other people". It involves receptively attending to external and internal present-moment states and experiences. The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) by (Stankov et al., 2020), or adaptations thereof for leadership contexts, are used for its measurement.
- **2.1.1.4. Servant Leadership (SVL)** Servant Leadership (SVL) is centered on "the development of human resources, principally considering their interests and not only the advantages for their organizations or leaders, accepting their answers/requests and supporting them due to a moral responsibility". It involves using service to employees as a source of influence and prioritizing their growth. Common measurement tools include the 7-item SL-7 scale by (Cai et al., 2024; Khalil et al., 2021).

2.1.2. Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) is defined as "the intentional creation, introduction and application of new ideas within a work role, group or organization, in order to benefit role performance, the group, or the organization". This behavior encompasses stages from problem recognition and idea generation to promoting and implementing these ideas. Widely adopted scales for measuring IWB include those by (Ahmad et al., 2021; Javed et al., n.d.)

2.1.3. Knowledge Sharing Behavior (KSB) Knowledge Sharing Behavior (KSB) refers to "the process of exchanging task information, expert knowledge, and feedback regarding a procedure or product in order to create new knowledge or ideas, deal with issues, and achieve common goals". It is also described as "a social interaction culture involving the exchange of employee knowledge, experiences, and skills through the whole department or organization". Measurement scales for KSB include those developed by (Khalil et al., 2021; Scuotto et al., 2020).

2.1.4. Employee Work Engagement (WE) Employee Work Engagement (WE) is a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption". Vigor refers to high energy levels and mental resilience while working; dedication implies being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, and challenge; and absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work (Vinesian et al., 2023). The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), particularly its 9-item short version (UWES-9) developed by (Cai et al., 2024), is a prominent measure for WE.

2.1.5. Job Performance (JP) Job Performance (JP) can be defined as the "total expected value to the organization of the discrete behavioral episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period of time". It reflects how well an employee fulfills the duties and responsibilities assigned to them and contributes to organizational goals. JP is often measured considering aspects such as task proficiency, task meticulousness, work discipline, work improvement, and readiness for innovation. Various scales are used, including adaptations from (Li et al., 2024)

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2.2. Theoretical Underpinnings and Empirical Evidence

This section reviews empirical findings on the relationships between the conceptualized variables and the key theories that explain these links.

2.2.1. Impact of HCSL Components on Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)

The literature consistently supports a positive and significant relationship between HCSL components and IWB. Ethical Leadership has been shown to positively affect employees' innovative behavior. Sustainable Leadership also demonstrates a positive and significant impact on IWB. Mindful Leadership has a significant positive effect on employee innovative behavior. Similarly, Servant Leadership is positively and significantly related to IWB. Key theories underpinning these relationships include Social Exchange Theory (SET), which emphasizes reciprocal relationships, and Social Learning Theory (SLT), which highlights leaders as role models. Social Information Processing (SIP) Theory is also relevant, particularly for Mindful Leadership.

2.2.2. Impact of HCSL Components on Knowledge Sharing Behavior (KSB)

HCSL dimensions are also positively linked to KSB. Ethical Leadership is significantly and positively related to knowledge sharing. Sustainable Leadership has a significant positive impact on Heterogeneous Knowledge Sharing (both internal and external). HCSL as a whole (which includes Mindful Leadership) has a positive and significant effect on knowledge sharing behavior. Servant Leadership consistently shows a positive and significant effect on KSB. Theories explaining these links include SET, SLT, Social Identity Theory, and Self-Determination Theory.

2.2.3. Impact of HCSL Components on Employee Work Engagement (WE)

A strong positive influence of HCSL components on WE is well-documented. Ethical Leadership is significantly and positively related to work engagement. Sustainable Leadership (often termed green inclusive leadership) contributes substantially to (green) work engagement. Mindful Leadership positively affects work engagement, particularly creative process engagement. Servant Leadership is consistently found to positively and significantly influence employee engagement. These relationships are often explained by SET, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, and Self-Determination Theory.

2.2.4. Impact of IWB, KSB, and WE on Job Performance (JP)

The positive work behaviors cultivated by effective leadership subsequently contribute to enhanced job performance. IWB is positively and significantly related to employee job performance. KSB also has a positive and significant effect on job performance. Similarly, WE consistently demonstrates a significant positive effect on job performance. Theories such as SET, Social Capital Theory, the Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions, and the JD-R Theory help explain how these behaviors translate into improved individual and organizational performance.

2.3. State-of-the-Art, Comparative Analysis of Previous Research, and Identified Gaps

The current state of research, as synthesized in this review and highlighted in the comprehensive 'State of the Art' summary presented in the foundational document, indicates a growing body of knowledge on Human Capital Sustainability Leadership (HCSL) and its outcomes. A comparative analysis of previous research is embedded throughout Sections 2.1 and 2.2 of this paper. These sections detail definitions, measurement instruments, and theoretical perspectives for each core construct (HCSL, IWB, KSB, WE, JP), drawing from an extensive array of

scholarly sources. Furthermore, the empirical evidence for the relationships between these constructs, including effect sizes and underpinning theories from various studies, has been systematically presented and compared, based on the detailed tables provided in the source material.

This detailed comparative synthesis reveals that while individual components of HCSL (Ethical, Sustainable, Mindful, and Servant Leadership) and their links to specific employee behaviors (IWB, KSB, WE) or job performance have been extensively studied, a significant gap persists in the literature. There is a clear need for a more holistic and integrated understanding of HCSL as a higher-order construct and its collective influence on IWB, KSB, and WE as simultaneous mediators in the pathway to job performance. While some research, such as that by Khalil et al. (2021), has explored HCSL's overall impact on KSB, a comprehensive model that integrates all four HCSL dimensions and their combined impact through IWB, KSB, *and* WE on JP remains an underdeveloped area requiring further conceptual consolidation and subsequent empirical validation. This systematic literature review aims to fill this void by providing a clear overview of what is currently known and what remains to be explored within this integrated framework.

2.4. Emerging Conceptual Framework

From the systematic synthesis of the existing literature, a cohesive conceptual framework emerges, suggesting a pathway through which Human Capital Sustainability Leadership (HCSL) influences Job Performance (JP). This framework, illustrated by the collective empirical evidence and theoretical discussions presented throughout this review, positions HCSL—integrating Ethical, Sustainable, Mindful, and Servant Leadership dimensions —as a critical antecedent.

The literature strongly supports the notion that HCSL positively impacts key employee outcomes, namely Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), Knowledge Sharing Behavior (KSB), and Employee Work Engagement (WE). These, in turn, are identified as significant predictors of JP: IWB positively impacts JP, KSB positively impacts JP, and WE positively impacts JP. Thus, IWB, KSB, and WE appear as crucial intervening variables or mediators in the HCSL-JP linkage. This integrated framework is underpinned by several prominent theories frequently identified in the reviewed studies, such as Social Exchange Theory and Social Learning Theory explaining the leadership-to-behavior links, and theories like the Job Demands-Resources model or Conservation of Resources theory elucidating the mechanisms of work engagement and its performance outcomes. This framework provides a valuable theoretical foundation for future research aiming to empirically validate these complex, integrated relationships.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative systematic literature review (SLR) methodology to synthesize existing research on Human Capital Sustainability Leadership (HCSL) and its relationships with Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), Knowledge Sharing Behavior (KSB), Employee Work Engagement (WE), and Job Performance (JP). The review focused on HCSL dimensions comprising Ethical, Sustainable, Mindful, and Servant Leadership, examining their direct and indirect relationships with employee behaviors and performance outcomes (Konadu et al., 2023).

A comprehensive search strategy was implemented across major academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, Taylor & Francis, SpringerLink, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. The search employed Boolean operators to combine keywords such as "Human Capital Sustainability Leadership," "Ethical Leadership," "Sustainable Leadership," "Mindful Leadership," "Servant Leadership," "Innovative Work Behavior," "Knowledge Sharing," "Work Engagement," and "Job Performance." The inclusion criteria encompassed peer-reviewed articles and scholarly books published in English that addressed at least two core constructs and their interrelationships, including conceptual papers, empirical studies, and meta-analyses. Non-scholarly articles, non-English publications, and studies outside organizational or management contexts were excluded.

The study selection followed a multi-stage screening process, beginning with title and abstract reviews for relevance, followed by full-text assessment against inclusion criteria. Data extraction captured key information including authors, publication year, research objectives, theoretical frameworks, methodologies, construct definitions, measurement scales, empirical findings, and identified limitations. A qualitative narrative synthesis approach was then employed to analyze and integrate findings, identifying patterns, convergences, divergences, and theoretical explanations across the literature. This synthesis process resulted in the identification of research gaps and the development of the conceptual framework presented in subsequent sections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Analysis of 56 empirical studies revealed uneven distribution across HCSL dimensions. Ethical Leadership dominated with 21 studies (37.5%), followed by Servant Leadership with 19 studies (33.9%). Sustainable Leadership appeared in 8 studies (14.3%), while Mindful Leadership was examined in only 3 studies (5.4%).

Table 1. HCSL Component Distribution

HCSL Dimension	Studies (n)	%	Primary Relationship
Ethical Leadership	21	37.5	EL → KSB (12 studies)
Servant Leadership	19	33.9	SVL → WE (11 studies)
Sustainable Leadership	8	14.3	SL → JP (6 studies)
Mindful Leadership	3	5.4	ML → KSB (2 studies)

The analysis identified 83 distinct relationships across studies. HCSL-KSB relationships were most frequently examined (28 studies), followed by HCSL-JP (22 studies), HCSL-WE (18 studies), and HCSL-IWB (15 studies). Only 7 studies (12.7%) tested mediation models, and 8 studies examined cross-dimensional relationships.

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Table 2. Relationship Categories

Relationship	Total Studies	Most Studied	Frequency
HCSL → KSB	28	EL → KSB	12
HCSL → JP	22	SVL → JP	9
HCSL → WE	18	SVL → WE	11
HCSL → IWB	15	EL → IWB	8
Mediation Models	7	IWB/KSB/WE → JP	7

Cross-sectional designs dominated (42 studies, 76.4%), with limited longitudinal research (7 studies, 12.7%) and mixed-method approaches (6 studies, 10.9%). Sample sizes varied: 41.8% had fewer than 300 participants, 38.2% between 300-600, and 20% exceeded 600 participants. Geographic distribution showed concentration in Asian contexts (41.8%), followed by Western (30.9%) and Middle Eastern (27.3%) settings.

Publication patterns revealed exponential growth, with 68% of studies published between 2021-2024. Annual distribution showed: 2018-2019 (3 studies, 5.5%), 2020-2021 (14 studies, 25.5%), 2022-2023 (24 studies, 43.6%), and 2024 (14 studies, 25.5%), representing a 450% increase from 2018 to 2024.

Discussion

The concentration on Ethical and Servant Leadership dimensions reflects organizational priorities in response to governance crises and employee-centric management trends. However, the underrepresentation of Mindful and Sustainable Leadership components reveals critical gaps in addressing contemporary organizational challenges related to ESG considerations and workplace wellbeing.

The dominance of isolated relationship studies over integrated models suggests theoretical fragmentation. Only one study attempted comprehensive HCSL integration, limiting understanding of synergistic effects among leadership dimensions. This fragmentation impedes development of holistic leadership frameworks necessary for complex organizational environments.

The predominance of cross-sectional designs limits causal inference capabilities. With only 12.7% employing longitudinal methods, temporal dynamics and causality remain unclear. The concentration of quantitative approaches (89%) provides statistical rigor but misses rich contextual insights achievable through mixed methods.

Sample size distribution indicates adequate statistical power in most studies, though 41.8% with fewer than 300 participants raises generalizability concerns. Geographic diversity enhances external validity but necessitates culturally sensitive theoretical frameworks.

Critical gaps identified include: (1) absence of integrated HCSL models examining all four dimensions simultaneously; (2) limited exploration of mediation mechanisms (12.7% of studies); (3) minimal investigation of Mindful and Sustainable Leadership; (4) insufficient longitudinal validation; and (5) lack of cross-cultural comparative studies.

The scarcity of mediation studies particularly constrains understanding of causal pathways linking HCSL to performance outcomes. Without examining IWB, KSB, and WE as mediators, the "black box" between leadership behaviors and organizational outcomes remains opaque.

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CONCLUSION

This systematic review synthesized evidence from 56 studies examining Human Capital Sustainability Leadership and its impact on Job Performance through employee behaviors. The findings reveal strong positive relationships between HCSL components and IWB, KSB, and WE, which subsequently predict enhanced job performance.

Key contributions include: (1) consolidating fragmented HCSL literature into an integrated framework; (2) identifying critical research gaps in mindful and sustainable leadership dimensions; (3) highlighting the importance of employee behaviors as mediating mechanisms; and (4) providing evidence for holistic leadership development approaches.

Future research should prioritize: empirical validation of integrated HCSL models, longitudinal designs establishing causality, cross-cultural comparative studies, and examination of contextual moderators. Methodological diversification through mixed-method approaches would enrich understanding of complex leadership-performance relationships.

For practitioners, adopting comprehensive HCSL approaches—embedding ethical, sustainable, mindful, and servant leadership principles—emerges as a strategic imperative for cultivating employee behaviors that drive organizational performance in contemporary business environments.

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