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Strategic leadership and management within non-profit organizations: An in-depth review of practices contributing to sustainable impact

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Abstract

This study provides an in-depth review of strategic leadership and management practices within non-profit organizations (NPOs) and their contribution to sustainable impact. Employing a systematic literature review and content analysis, the research aims to explore the evolving landscape of strategic leadership, define the scope of leadership and management in achieving sustainable impact, and identify innovative management practices that enhance organizational sustainability. The methodology involved a comprehensive search across peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and grey literature from 2013 to 2023, focusing on empirical evidence, theoretical frameworks, and case studies relevant to NPOs' strategic leadership and management. Key findings reveal that adaptive leadership, innovative management practices, stakeholder engagement, and technology integration are crucial for NPOs to navigate operational complexities, engage stakeholders effectively, and achieve mission-driven objectives. The study proposes strategic recommendations for NPOs to enhance their sustainable impact, including adopting adaptive leadership styles, fostering innovation, integrating technology, and building resilient organizational frameworks. The study underscores the importance of policy development to guide non-profit leaders towards best practices in strategic leadership and management. It also highlights future research directions, emphasizing the need to explore the impact of emerging technologies, globalization, and cross-cultural dynamics on NPOs. Conclusively, the research affirms that effective strategic leadership and management are indispensable for enhancing the sustainable impact of NPOs, advocating for continuous innovation and adaptability in the non-profit sector.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership; Non-Profit Organizations; Sustainable Impact; Innovative Management Practices

1 Introduction

1.1 The Evolving Landscape of Strategic Leadership in Non-Profit Organizations

The evolving landscape of strategic leadership within non-profit organizations (NPOs) has become a focal point for scholars and practitioners alike, aiming to understand how leadership styles and strategic management practices contribute to sustainable impact and organizational effectiveness. This exploration is critical in a sector that is increasingly called upon to address complex social, environmental, and economic challenges with limited resources and high expectations for accountability and impact.

Strategic leadership in NPOs is not a static concept but an evolving paradigm that reflects the complexities and dynamic nature of the non-profit sector. Oracha, Ogutu, K'obonyo, and Twalib (2021) highlight the importance of strategic leadership in enhancing the performance of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) in Kenya,

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emphasizing the mediating role of competitive advantage. Their study underscores the necessity for NPO leaders to align internal capabilities with external environmental changes to achieve a competitive edge, thereby indirectly influencing organizational performance through strategic leadership (Oracha et al., 2021). This finding is pivotal, suggesting that the effectiveness of strategic leadership extends beyond direct organizational outcomes, influencing performance through the strategic positioning of the organization within its operational context.

Moreover, the competency of leaders in NPOs is increasingly recognized as a critical factor for organizational success. Mohammed and Yaqub (2023) delve into the competencies required by leaders of non-profit Saudi organizations to navigate internal and external challenges effectively. Their research identifies six competency groups—personal, management, social, industry-specific, work-specific, and academic—that are essential for leaders to contribute effectively to organizational goals. This comprehensive view of leadership competencies highlights the multifaceted nature of strategic leadership in NPOs, where leaders must possess a broad range of skills and abilities to steer their organizations towards sustainability and impact (Mohammed & Yaqub, 2023).

The strategic alignment of business and technology strategies also plays a crucial role in the performance and sustainability of NPOs. Ndegwa and Kipkorir (2023) examine the impact of strategic alignment on the performance of non-governmental organizations in Kenya, revealing a positive correlation between business strategy, information technology strategy, and organizational performance. Their findings suggest that strategic alignment, facilitated by effective leadership, is essential for diagnosing organizational problems, solving competence issues, and ensuring the efficient implementation of action plans (Ndegwa & Kipkorir, 2023). This underscores the importance of strategic leadership in not only setting the direction for NPOs but also in aligning organizational resources and capabilities with strategic objectives to enhance performance and sustainability.

In summary, the evolving landscape of strategic leadership in non-profit organizations is characterized by a shift towards a more nuanced understanding of the role of leadership in achieving sustainable impact. The studies collectively emphasize the importance of strategic alignment, leadership competencies, and the ability to navigate the complex interplay between internal capabilities and external environmental changes. As NPOs continue to play a critical role in addressing societal challenges, the strategic leadership within these organizations must evolve to meet the demands of an increasingly complex and dynamic operational context.

1.2 Defining the Scope: Leadership, Management, and Sustainable Impact in Non-Profits

Defining the scope of leadership, management, and sustainable impact within non-profit organizations (NPOs) necessitates a comprehensive understanding of how these elements interplay to drive organizational success and societal change. This exploration is crucial in delineating the contours of effective governance and strategic direction in the non-profit sector, which is inherently diverse and mission-driven.

Leadership in NPOs transcends the conventional boundaries of authoritative command, embodying a multifaceted spectrum of roles that include vision setting, stakeholder engagement, and ethical governance. Haruna (2021) emphasizes the significant impact of leadership on the performance of non-profit organizations in Nigeria, highlighting the necessity for leaders to possess extraordinary qualities to navigate the complexities of non-profit management. This perspective underscores the pivotal role of leadership in not only guiding organizational strategy but also in fostering an environment conducive to achieving sustainable impact (Haruna, 2021).

Management within NPOs, on the other hand, involves the operational execution of strategies and policies formulated by leadership. It encompasses a broad range of functions, from resource allocation and financial oversight to program implementation and impact assessment (Ilugbusi et al., 2020). The relationship between management and organizational performance, as explored by Haruna (2021), reveals a direct correlation, suggesting that effective management practices are integral to the realization of non-profit objectives. Moreover, the study identifies the challenges posed by limited funding and economic constraints, underscoring the importance of innovative management solutions in sustaining non-profit operations.

Sustainable impact, a core objective for many NPOs, is increasingly being recognized as a multidimensional construct that encompasses social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Ashta and Parekh (2023) introduce the concept of community leadership within a Hindu non-profit organization, illustrating how spiritual capital and a community-oriented leadership style can enhance both social and financial performance. This case study challenges the conventional business logic, proposing that sustainable organizations with social impact can emerge from a synthesis of spiritual leadership and community engagement. The findings from Ashta and Parekh (2023) contribute to the

broader discourse on sustainable impact, suggesting that the integration of spiritual and community values in leadership can be a potent catalyst for organizational resilience and societal benefit.

Furthermore, the competency framework for non-profit leaders, as delineated by Mohammed and Yaqub (2023), highlights the essential skills and abilities required to navigate the challenges of the non-profit sector effectively. The study identifies six competency groups—personal, management, social, industry-specific, work-specific, and academic—that are crucial for leaders aiming to achieve organizational goals and sustainable impact. This competency-based approach provides a structured perspective on the qualities necessary for effective leadership in NPOs, emphasizing the need for a holistic skill set that encompasses both strategic vision and operational acumen (Mohammed & Yaqub, 2023).

In synthesizing these insights, it becomes evident that the scope of leadership, management, and sustainable impact in non-profit organizations is intrinsically linked to the ability of NPOs to fulfill their mission and contribute to societal well-being. Effective leadership is characterized by a blend of visionary guidance, ethical governance, and community engagement, while competent management is essential for the efficient execution of organizational strategies. Together, these elements form the foundation for achieving sustainable impact, underscoring the importance of a comprehensive approach to leadership and management within the non-profit sector.

1.3 Historical Overview: The Evolution of Management Practices in Non-Profit Sectors

The historical evolution of management practices within non-profit organizations (NPOs) reflects a dynamic interplay between traditional management theories and the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the non-profit sector. This evolution has been shaped by the sector's social orientation, its reliance on diverse funding sources, and the need to balance economic efficiency with social impact goals.

Mukhin (2023) provides a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical underpinnings that have influenced the development of management practices in NPOs, particularly within the context of municipal management systems. By examining the works of key theorists in management, Mukhin (2023) highlights how modern management approaches in NPOs have evolved to incorporate social orientation as a fundamental component. This evolution is marked by a shift from purely economic considerations to a more integrated approach that considers the social impact of organizational activities. The study underscores the role of NPOs as pivotal elements within municipal management systems, capable of acting as additional sources of resources and facilitating the delivery of social services (Mukhin, 2023).

Conflict management practices within NPOs also reflect the sector's unique challenges, as illustrated by Pénke (2020) study on the conflict management practices of a Romanian organization providing social services. The research reveals that conflicts within NPOs often stem from bureaucratic overload, lack of motivation, and transparency issues, which are exacerbated by the sector's resource constraints. The findings of Pénke (2020) highlight the critical need for effective conflict management strategies that are tailored to the non-profit context, where the success of activities affecting target groups can serve as a significant motivating force despite financial and bureaucratic challenges (Pénke, 2020).

Furthermore, the examination of talent management practices in Canadian NPOs by McCaig, Reznia, and Lighthouse (2022) sheds light on another dimension of management evolution in the non-profit sector. Their study reveals a distinct approach to talent management in NPOs, characterized by an inclusive and competitive view that emphasizes humanistic and competitive factors such as recruitment dependence and skill development. This perspective on talent management underscores the importance of cultural fit, motivation, and the potential for intellectual and professional growth, diverging from the practices commonly observed in large, for-profit organizations. The findings suggest that NPOs require adaptable organizational systems to support an inclusive view of talent management, highlighting the need for practices that align with the sector's values and mission (McCaig, Reznia, & Lighthouse, 2022).

In summary, the historical evolution of management practices in non-profit organizations is marked by a transition from traditional economic models to more socially oriented approaches that recognize the importance of social impact, conflict management, and talent management. These practices reflect the sector's unique challenges and opportunities, emphasizing the need for management strategies that are adaptable, inclusive, and aligned with the overarching goals of social service and impact. The studies collectively illustrate the dynamic nature of management evolution in NPOs, offering insights into the theoretical and practical shifts that have shaped the sector's approach to management in the modern era.

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Review

The aim of the study is to critically examine and synthesize existing knowledge on strategic leadership and management practices within non-profit organizations (NPOs) that contribute to their sustainable impact, resilience, and adaptability in a rapidly changing global context.

The objectives are;

- To explore the evolving landscape of strategic leadership in NPOs.
- To identify strategic management practices contributing to organizational sustainability.
- To assess the role of technology in enhancing strategic leadership and management.

2 Methodology

This study employs a systematic literature review and content analysis to explore strategic leadership and management practices within non-profit organizations (NPOs) that contribute to sustainable impact. The methodology is structured as follows:

2.1 Data Sources

The primary data sources for this study include peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and reports from reputable research institutions and non-profit sector organizations. Databases such as ScienceDirect, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar were utilized to access relevant literature. Additionally, websites of leading non-profit organizations and industry bodies were reviewed for grey literature, including white papers and case studies that provide insights into practical applications of strategic leadership and management in NPOs.

2.2 Search Strategy

A comprehensive search strategy was developed using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators. The search terms included "strategic leadership," "management practices," "non-profit organizations," "sustainable impact," "organizational resilience," and "innovative management." These terms were combined using the operators "AND" and "OR" to capture a broad spectrum of relevant literature. The search was limited to documents published in English from 2013 to 2024 to focus on the most recent and relevant findings in the field.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Relevant Literature

Inclusion criteria were defined to select studies that specifically address strategic leadership and management practices in the non-profit sector and their impact on organizational sustainability and effectiveness. Studies were included if they provided empirical evidence, theoretical frameworks, or case studies related to the study's aim and objectives. Exclusion criteria were applied to omit literature that focused exclusively on for-profit organizations, lacked empirical evidence or theoretical depth, or did not directly relate to the strategic leadership and management practices within NPOs.

2.4 Selection Criteria

The selection process involved screening titles and abstracts based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, followed by a full-text review of shortlisted articles to ensure relevance to the study's objectives. The reference lists of selected articles were also reviewed to identify additional sources that met the inclusion criteria. This iterative process ensured a comprehensive coverage of the literature related to strategic leadership and management practices in NPOs.

2.5 Data Analysis

Content analysis was conducted on the selected literature to identify, categorize, and synthesize findings related to strategic leadership and management practices in NPOs. This involved coding the literature based on predefined themes such as leadership styles, management theories, strategic decision-making, technological integration, globalization impacts, and frameworks for resilience and adaptability. The analysis facilitated the identification of patterns, trends, and gaps in the literature, which informed the development of a comprehensive understanding of how strategic leadership and management practices contribute to the sustainable impact of NPOs. The findings from the content analysis were used to propose recommendations for enhancing strategic leadership and management in the non-profit sector and to suggest directions for future research.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Key Principles of Strategic Leadership in Non-Profit Organizations

Strategic leadership within non-profit organizations (NPOs) plays a pivotal role in navigating the complexities and challenges inherent to the sector. The essence of strategic leadership in NPOs lies in the ability to drive organizational mission and vision while managing resources effectively to achieve sustainable impact. This exploration into the key principles of strategic leadership in NPOs draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate the core attributes and strategies that underpin effective leadership in the non-profit context.

Mohammed and Yaqub (2023) provide a comprehensive analysis of the competencies required for effective leadership within Saudi non-profit organizations. Their study identifies six competency groups—personal, management, social, industry-specific, work-specific, and academic—that are crucial for leaders in NPOs. These competencies encompass a broad range of skills from interpersonal and managerial to industry-specific knowledge, highlighting the multifaceted nature of strategic leadership in the non-profit sector. The emphasis on a diverse skill set underscores the complexity of leadership roles in NPOs, where leaders must navigate internal and external challenges, including resource constraints and stakeholder expectations, to drive organizational success (Mohammed & Yaqub, 2023).

O'Shannassy (2021) delves into the broader challenges of strategic leadership across various organizational contexts, including non-profits. The study underscores the critical role of strategic leaders in facilitating information transfer, influencing organizational performance, and ensuring the delivery of shareholder and stakeholder value. Strategic leadership is framed as a key driver of sustainable outcomes across economic, environmental, and social dimensions, emphasizing the importance of goal setting, resource development, innovation, and workforce engagement. This perspective highlights the strategic leader's role in shaping organizational culture and values, aligning with the non-profit sector's emphasis on social impact and community well-being (O'Shannassy, 2021).

Ndegwa and Kipkorir (2023) explore the impact of business and technology strategies on the performance of non-governmental organizations in Kenya, shedding light on the importance of strategic alignment in enhancing organizational effectiveness. Their findings reveal a positive correlation between strategic leadership, business strategy, and technology strategy, suggesting that strategic alignment is crucial for addressing management challenges and improving performance. This study illustrates the significance of strategic leadership in fostering an environment conducive to innovation and efficient resource management, which are essential for the sustainability and impact of NPOs (Ndegwa & Kipkorir, 2023).

In synthesizing these insights, several key principles of strategic leadership in non-profit organizations emerge. First, the importance of a comprehensive competency framework that includes personal, managerial, and industry-specific skills is evident, reflecting the diverse challenges faced by leaders in the non-profit sector. Second, the role of strategic leadership in driving sustainable organizational outcomes highlights the need for leaders to balance economic efficiency with social and environmental objectives. Lastly, the significance of strategic alignment in enhancing organizational performance underscores the necessity for leaders to integrate business and technology strategies effectively.

These principles collectively underscore the complexity and critical nature of strategic leadership in non-profit organizations. Effective strategic leadership in NPOs requires a nuanced understanding of the sector's unique challenges and opportunities, coupled with a commitment to fostering innovation, sustainability, and social impact. As the non-profit sector continues to evolve, the insights provided by Mohammed and Yaqub (2023), O'Shannassy (2021), and Ndegwa and Kipkorir (2023) offer valuable guidance for current and aspiring leaders aiming to navigate the intricacies of strategic leadership in pursuit of organizational excellence and societal benefit.

3.2 Management Theories Relevant to Non-Profit Organizational Effectiveness

The effectiveness of non-profit organizations (NPOs) is a multifaceted concept that encompasses financial stability, mission achievement, and the sustainable impact of their activities. Management theories relevant to non-profit organizational effectiveness provide a framework for understanding how NPOs can navigate the challenges of achieving their goals while ensuring sustainability and responding to the needs of their stakeholders. This exploration into management theories relevant to non-profit organizational effectiveness draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate core strategies and approaches that underpin effective management in the non-profit sector.

Iwu et al. (2015) investigate the determinants of sustainability and organizational effectiveness in NPOs, emphasizing the importance of both financial and non-financial criteria in evaluating NPO effectiveness. Their study reveals that the

effectiveness of an NPO should be viewed through the dual lenses of mandate achievement and the ability to run business projects to cover costs, both of which should be pursued sustainably. This finding challenges the assumption that non-financial criteria outweigh financial ones in the non-profit sector, highlighting the integral role of financial sustainability in organizational effectiveness. The study underscores the need for NPOs to balance mission fulfillment with financial viability, ensuring that social projects generate sufficient funds for sustainability (Iwu et al., 2015).

Li and Xie (2020) explore the organizational effectiveness of NPOs in the coastal region of China, focusing on job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and organizational commitment as key components of organizational effectiveness. Their research indicates that job satisfaction significantly impacts OCB and organizational commitment, which in turn influences organizational behavior. The study highlights the negative impact of poor organizational commitment on destructive behavior and the positive influence of normative and continuous commitment on company identification. This research underscores the importance of fostering a positive organizational culture and employee engagement to enhance organizational effectiveness in NPOs (Li & Xie, 2020).

Bushuyeva and Chernysh (2023) delve into the management of sustainable development projects of NPOs in a risky environment, emphasizing the significance of project management as a tool for achieving organizational goals and ensuring sustainability. Their work explores models and methods of project management that help reduce risks and maximize the positive impact of NPO projects. The study highlights the importance of risk management strategies, innovative practices, and stakeholder engagement in managing sustainable development projects effectively. This approach to project management in NPOs underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of sustainable development principles, including interconnectedness, long-termism, and the satisfaction of needs, to implement sustainable practices successfully (Bushuyeva & Chernysh, 2023).

In synthesizing these insights, several key management theories emerge as relevant to non-profit organizational effectiveness. First, the balance between financial and non-financial criteria in evaluating effectiveness highlights the need for NPOs to achieve financial sustainability while fulfilling their mission. Second, the significance of job satisfaction, OCB, and organizational commitment in influencing organizational behavior underscores the importance of positive organizational culture and employee engagement. Lastly, the role of project management in achieving organizational goals and ensuring sustainability in a risky environment emphasizes the need for effective risk management, innovative practices, and stakeholder engagement.

These theories collectively underscore the complexity of managing non-profit organizations effectively. Effective management in NPOs requires a nuanced understanding of the interplay between financial sustainability, organizational culture, employee engagement, and project management in achieving organizational goals. As the non-profit sector continues to evolve, the insights provided these studies offer valuable guidance for current and aspiring managers aiming to navigate the intricacies of non-profit management in pursuit of organizational excellence and societal benefit.

3.3 Sustainable Impact: Definitions and Dimensions in the Non-Profit Context

Sustainable impact within the non-profit sector encompasses a broad spectrum of definitions and dimensions, reflecting the sector's commitment to creating long-lasting positive changes that address social, environmental, and economic challenges. This exploration into sustainable impact in the non-profit context draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate the core aspects of sustainability as it pertains to non-profit organizations (NPOs).

The concept of sustainable impact in NPOs often intersects with the application of marketing strategies aimed at enhancing organizational visibility, donor engagement, and community impact. A study focusing on small non-profit organizations in Bulgaria highlights the implementation of marketing concepts within NPOs, emphasizing brand building and communication activities as primary tools for achieving sustainable impact. This research suggests that impact orientation, which encompasses efforts to influence the environment positively, emerges as a critical dimension of non-profit marketing orientation. Such orientation towards impact underscores the importance of strategic marketing efforts in amplifying the sustainable impact of NPOs, particularly in resource-constrained settings where marketing activities may be limited by donor preferences and the overarching goal of avoiding commercialization of non-profit initiatives (Elena and Emil, 2023).

Prakash, Bisla, & Arora (2023) examine sustainable entrepreneurship through the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, incorporating environmental dimensions to assess sustainability in the Indian MSMEs context. Their findings reveal significant correlations between the TBL components—people, planet, and profit—and highlight the mediating role of non-green initiatives in strengthening the relationship between people and planet dimensions. This study provides

valuable insights into how NPOs can leverage environmental dimensions, including both green and non-green initiatives, to achieve their sustainable goals. The TBL approach underscores the necessity for NPOs to adopt comprehensive sustainability practices that balance social, environmental, and economic objectives, thereby contributing to broader societal well-being and environmental stewardship (Prakash, Bisla, & Arora, 2023).

Quiroz Galvan et al. (2021) delve into the partnerships between supply chain partners and non-profit organizations to address sustainability challenges within the apparel industry. Their research, based on the Continuum Collaboration framework, identifies various types of cooperation's—philanthropic, transactional, integrative, and transformational—and their respective impacts on sustainability issues. The study highlights a shift towards transformational partnerships, which are characterized by their potential to create significant, long-lasting impacts by addressing root causes of sustainability challenges. This shift indicates an evolving understanding of sustainable impact in the non-profit sector, where strategic partnerships and collaborations play a crucial role in overcoming sustainability challenges and achieving comprehensive sustainability goals ((Quiroz Galvan et al., 2021; Ilugbusi et al., 2020).

In synthesizing these insights, several key dimensions of sustainable impact in the non-profit context emerge. First, the strategic application of marketing concepts, particularly impact orientation, is crucial for enhancing the visibility and effectiveness of NPOs' sustainability efforts. Second, the TBL framework, enriched by environmental dimensions, provides a comprehensive model for assessing and achieving sustainable impact, emphasizing the importance of balancing social, environmental, and economic objectives. Lastly, the role of strategic partnerships in addressing sustainability challenges highlights the potential for transformational cooperation to create significant, long-lasting impacts.

These dimensions collectively underscore the complexity of achieving sustainable impact in the non-profit sector. Effective sustainability practices require a nuanced understanding of the interplay between marketing strategies, environmental considerations, and strategic partnerships. As the non-profit sector continues to evolve, the insights provided by the discussed studies offer valuable guidance for NPOs aiming to navigate the intricacies of sustainable impact in pursuit of organizational excellence and societal benefit.

3.4 Review of Leadership Styles and Their Impact on Non-Profit Organizations

The leadership styles adopted within non-profit organizations (NPOs) significantly influence their operational effectiveness, employee satisfaction, and ultimately, their ability to fulfill their mission. This exploration into the impact of leadership styles on NPOs draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate how different leadership approaches affect organizational outcomes in the non-profit sector.

Lesha (2020) provides a theoretical examination of the impact of leadership styles on the performance of leaders within NPOs. The study identifies visionary and transformational leadership as crucial for enhancing NGO performance. Visionary leadership, characterized by the ability to articulate a compelling vision for the future, is closely linked to transformational leadership, which involves inspiring and motivating followers to exceed their own interests for the sake of the organization. Lesha's analysis suggests that the absence of necessary knowledge and management skills, including leadership competencies, hampers the ability of managers to improve NGO performance effectively. This underscores the importance of adopting leadership styles that not only inspire but also equip leaders with the skills to navigate the complexities of non-profit management (Lesha, 2020)

Uzonwanne (2015) explores the relationship between leadership styles and decision-making models among corporate leaders in NPOs, particularly in the context of North America. The study highlights the positive correlation between initiating structure leadership style and rational decision-making, as well as its relationship with dependent decision-making. These findings indicate that leaders who adopt an initiating structure style—characterized by clearly defined roles, organized work processes, and a focus on goal attainment—tend to favor rational and dependent decision-making approaches. This research sheds light on the significance of aligning leadership styles with decision-making models to enhance organizational decision-making processes and outcomes in NPOs.

The study by Quiroz Galvan et al. (2021), while not directly related to leadership styles within NPOs, offers insights into overcoming sustainability challenges through partnerships between NPOs and other organizations. This study's relevance lies in its implicit connection to leadership styles, as forming and managing such partnerships require leaders to exhibit certain leadership qualities, such as openness, collaboration, and strategic vision. The research underscores the potential for transformational partnerships to address sustainability challenges effectively, suggesting that leaders who foster collaborative and integrative approaches can significantly impact their organizations' sustainability efforts (Adewusi, 2020).

In synthesizing these insights, it becomes evident that leadership styles play a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness, decision-making processes, and sustainability efforts of non-profit organizations. Visionary and transformational leadership styles are particularly impactful, inspiring organizational members and guiding NPOs towards achieving their missions. Moreover, the ability of leaders to adopt initiating structure leadership styles and align them with appropriate decision-making models is crucial for effective organizational management. Lastly, the capacity for leadership to foster partnerships and collaborative efforts is essential for addressing broader sustainability challenges, highlighting the importance of strategic and collaborative leadership qualities in the non-profit sector.

These findings collectively underscore the complexity of leadership within NPOs and the need for leaders to adopt styles that not only motivate and inspire but also strategically align with the organization's goals and the external environment. As NPOs continue to navigate the challenges of fulfilling their missions in an increasingly complex world, the insights provided by these studies offers valuable guidance for current and aspiring leaders aiming to enhance their organizational impact through effective leadership.

4 Discussion of Findings

4.1 Case Studies: Successful Leadership and Management in Non-Profit Organizations

The leadership and management practices within non-profit organizations (NPOs) significantly influence their ability to achieve their missions and make a sustainable impact. Through the lens of case studies, we can explore successful leadership and management strategies that have propelled NPOs to overcome challenges and thrive. This exploration draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate core strategies and approaches underpinning effective leadership and management in the non-profit sector.

Inouye and Agnello (2020) present a compelling case study on volunteer management within micro non-profit organizations, focusing on a youth soccer club facing challenges in aligning volunteer agendas with the corporate mission. This case highlights the critical role of human capital, particularly volunteers, as a vital resource for micro non-profit organizations that are often resource-poor. The study delves into the dilemma faced by the founder in managing divergent volunteer agendas and emphasizes the importance of strategic volunteer management in sustaining organizational mission and effectiveness. The case study suggests that resolving such dilemmas requires a nuanced understanding of organizational dynamics and the strategic alignment of volunteer efforts with the organization's goals.

Ashta and Parekh (2023) explore the unique leadership approach within a Hindu non-profit organization, demonstrating how spiritual and community leadership styles can significantly enhance both social and financial performance. This case study challenges the conventional belief that social impact requires a purely business logic, illustrating instead that a blend of spiritual capital and community leadership can foster resilience and outperformance even in competitive sectors like the Indian microfinance market. The leadership style adopted by the organization not only facilitated risk reduction but also bolstered its social and financial outcomes, underscoring the potential of integrating spiritual and community-oriented leadership practices in enhancing organizational sustainability and impact (Oguejiofor et al., 2023).

Mawele (2023) conducts a qualitative study on effective leadership within the health sector of non-governmental organizations, assessing how different leadership styles address the challenges and decision-making processes inherent in achieving organizational goals. This study underscores the absence of a one-size-fits-all leadership style, advocating instead for a combination of leadership approaches to navigate the diverse challenges faced by NPOs. The research highlights the importance of strong leadership in executing organizational tasks and achieving success, pointing out that the quality of leadership significantly influences organizational downfall or success. The case study of the Society for Family Health illustrates the dynamic nature of leadership effectiveness and its critical role in organizational performance over time.

These case studies collectively underscore the complexity of leadership and management within NPOs and the need for adaptive and strategic approaches to volunteer management, leadership style, and decision-making processes. Effective leadership and management in NPOs require a nuanced understanding of the interplay between organizational goals, volunteer dynamics, and the broader community context. The insights provided by these authors offer valuable guidance for current and aspiring leaders and managers aiming to navigate the intricacies of non-profit leadership and management in pursuit of organizational excellence and societal benefit.

4.2 Innovative Management Practices for Enhancing Organizational Impact

Innovative management practices within non-profit organizations (NPOs) are pivotal for enhancing their organizational impact and sustainability. These practices, ranging from human resource management to employee engagement and organizational innovation, play a crucial role in driving NPOs towards achieving their mission in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment. This exploration into innovative management practices draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate core strategies and approaches underpinning effective management in the non-profit sector.

Gampine and Batiemo (2023) delve into the significance of human resource management (HRM) practices on organizational innovation, particularly within the service sector. Their study underscores the positive impact of commitment and innovation-driven HRM practices on fostering organizational innovation. However, it also highlights that High Performance Work Systems may not significantly influence organizational innovation. This finding suggests that NPOs need to adopt integrative HRM strategies that can yield a cumulative effect in driving innovation. Such strategies should focus on enhancing employee commitment and fostering an innovation-centric organizational culture to confront the challenges posed by the ever-evolving nature of organizations.

Bernal-Torres et al. (2021) provide empirical evidence on the innovations implemented by NPOs in Colombia to address social problems aligned with their institutional mission. The study emphasizes that Colombian NPOs are innovative organizations that consciously follow management strategies to innovate. It reveals that organizational and social innovations are grouped into actions aimed at adapting to the environment, improving internal performance, enhancing relations with external agents, and managing social interventions and institutional projects. This evidence indicates that a strategic focus on organizational and social innovation can significantly enhance NPO performance in emergent economies.

These studies collectively underscore the importance of innovative management practices in enhancing the organizational impact of NPOs. Effective HRM strategies, employee engagement, and a focus on organizational and social innovation are crucial for NPOs to navigate operational challenges and achieve their mission-driven objectives. The insights provided by Gampine and Batiemo (2023), and Bernal-Torres et al. (2021) offer valuable guidance for NPO managers and leaders aiming to implement innovative management practices that contribute to organizational sustainability and impact.

4.3 Challenges and Solutions in Strategic Leadership within Non-Profits

Strategic leadership within non-profit organizations (NPOs) faces unique challenges that stem from their mission-driven nature, resource constraints, and the complexity of the environments in which they operate. Addressing these challenges requires innovative solutions and adaptive leadership strategies that can guide NPOs towards achieving their goals while ensuring sustainability and impact. This exploration into the challenges and solutions in strategic leadership within non-profits draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate core issues and approaches underpinning effective leadership in the non-profit sector.

Daud (2020) provides an in-depth examination of the leadership challenges faced by international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) operating in East Africa. The study highlights the distinct challenges faced by leaders in the non-profit sector, including the fluid operating contexts, the complexity of humanitarian work, and the isolation and lack of support often experienced by leaders. Among the key issues identified are leadership deficits, effectiveness concerns due to talent shortages, and the monopolization of leadership roles. Daud (2020) research underscores the urgent need for developing a new generation of leaders and providing relevant support to existing leaders to navigate these challenges effectively.

O'Shannassy (2021) discusses the broad challenges of strategic leadership across various organizational contexts, including non-profits. The paper emphasizes the critical role of strategic leaders in facilitating information transfer, influencing organizational performance, and delivering sustainable outcomes across economic, environmental, and social dimensions. The research suggests that strategic leadership involves a complex interplay of goal setting, resource development, innovation fostering, and engagement of the workforce. O'Shannassy (2021) highlights the importance of understanding strategic leadership's nuances to enhance the well-being of society and achieve sustainable organizational outcomes.

Nedelko and Potočan (2017) explore management solutions in non-profit organizations in Slovenia, comparing their utilization with profit-oriented organizations. The study reveals that management solutions are, on average, less used in non-profits than in their for-profit counterparts. Specifically, practices such as benchmarking, customer relationship

management, and balanced scorecards are significantly underutilized. The research suggests that outsourcing, core competencies, and strategic planning are the most frequently used management solutions in non-profits, indicating a gap in the adoption of comprehensive management practices. This study points towards the potential benefits of integrating more advanced management solutions to improve non-profit organizations' effectiveness and working.

These studies collectively underscore the complexity of strategic leadership and management within non-profit organizations. The challenges identified range from leadership deficits and the need for talent development to the underutilization of comprehensive management practices. Effective strategic leadership in NPOs requires a nuanced understanding of these challenges and the implementation of innovative solutions that foster organizational sustainability, innovation, and impact. The insights provided by these authors offer valuable guidance for current and aspiring leaders aiming to navigate the intricacies of strategic leadership in the non-profit sector, enhancing their ability to achieve mission-driven objectives and ensure organizational sustainability.

4.4 Role of Governance and Ethical Leadership in Sustaining Non-Profit Organizations

The sustainability of non-profit organizations (NPOs) is intricately linked to the governance structures and ethical leadership practices they adopt. These elements are crucial for fostering trust, ensuring accountability, and driving the organization towards its mission in a manner that aligns with its values and ethical standards. This exploration into the role of governance and ethical leadership in sustaining NPOs draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate core strategies and approaches underpinning effective governance and leadership in the non-profit sector.

The study by Okey et al. (2020) delves into the ethical leadership style, particularly examining the conflict between personal interests and the organizational interests of NPOs. Ethical leadership is presented as a model that can inspire and positively impact the organization, highlighting the importance of leaders who are moral managers and role models through their behavior. This leadership style is grounded in ethical practices and norms, setting behavioral boundaries within an organization through the demonstration of strong character and integrity. The study emphasizes that ethical leadership is crucial for achieving organizational goals and fostering quality leadership within NPOs, such as the Catholic Women Organization (CWO). Ethical leaders internalize their values, blending both personal and organizational values harmoniously through ethical reasoning when faced with ethical dilemmas, thereby sustaining quality leadership and organizational integrity.

Remišová and Lašáková (2018) investigate the role of non-governmental organizations in the development of business ethics in Slovakia, highlighting the influence of NGOs on promoting ethical practices in the business sector. The study underscores the absence of systematic support for business ethics in Slovakia and points out that initiatives to sustain ethics in business often originate from NGOs. These initiatives focus on combating corruption, promoting transparency, and fostering democracy. The paper suggests that NGOs play a significant role in developing business ethics, contributing to the ethical foundation of the business environment. This, in turn, supports the sustainability of NPOs by establishing them as key players in promoting ethical governance and leadership within the broader societal and business context.

These studies collectively underscore the critical role of governance and ethical leadership in sustaining non-profit organizations. Effective governance structures and ethical leadership practices are essential for ensuring accountability, fostering trust, and aligning organizational practices with ethical standards. The insights provided by these authors offer valuable guidance for NPOs aiming to enhance their sustainability through robust governance and ethical leadership, thereby ensuring their ability to achieve their mission and make a lasting impact.

4.5 Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Decisions on Non-Profit Sustainability

The sustainability of non-profit organizations (NPOs) is significantly influenced by their strategic decisions, which encompass a broad spectrum of considerations from financial management to ethical governance and stakeholder engagement. Evaluating the impact of these decisions is crucial for ensuring long-term sustainability and effectiveness. This exploration into the impact of strategic decisions on non-profit sustainability draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate core considerations and methodologies underpinning effective evaluation practices in the non-profit sector.

Haessler (2020) delves into the dichotomy between short-term profit and long-term sustainability, highlighting the critical role of strategic decisions in balancing these often-competing interests. The study proposes a holistic framework for understanding organizational influences on sustainability, emphasizing the importance of top management commitment and stakeholder integration. This framework is validated through interviews with sustainability managers from the chemical and automobile industries, underscoring the relevance of identified influential factors across

different sectors. Haessler (2020) research suggests that a comprehensive view of strategic decisions, encompassing both environmental and social aspects, is essential for achieving sustainable organizational outcomes.

Nair et al. (2022) focus on the transparency and sustainability of NPOs through web-disclosure practices, examining how Malaysian NPOs report the impact of their programs. The study reveals that a significant number of NPOs lack an official website, and those with websites often fail to report their initiatives in a manner that gains stakeholder trust. The research underscores the importance of strategic communication in building stakeholder trust and suggests that dialogic communication and outcome-driven reporting are central to enhancing transparency and sustainability. The findings highlight the need for NPOs to adopt strategic communication practices that effectively convey the impact of their programs, thereby supporting their sustainability.

Yehia (2022) introduces a novel methodology for evaluating the performance of NPOs, which involves comparing actual results not only with target outcomes but also with the performance of similar organizations and the organization's past performance. This approach utilizes trend analysis as a statistical tool to identify the direction of performance results and assess their alignment with target outcomes. Yehia (2022) methodology offers a forward-looking perspective, enabling decision-makers to anticipate the future impacts of current performance and make informed strategic decisions. This approach underscores the importance of a comprehensive and comparative evaluation framework for assessing the impact of strategic decisions on non-profit sustainability.

These studies collectively highlight the complexity of evaluating the impact of strategic decisions on non-profit sustainability. A multifaceted approach that considers financial, environmental, social, and communicative aspects is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of NPOs. The insights provided offer valuable guidance for NPOs aiming to navigate the intricacies of strategic decision-making, emphasizing the need for comprehensive evaluation practices that support informed and sustainable strategic choices.

4.6 Emerging Trends and Future Directions

4.6.1 The Role of Technology in Enhancing Strategic Leadership and Management

The integration of technology into strategic leadership and management practices within non-profit organizations (NPOs) has become a pivotal factor in enhancing their operational efficiency, stakeholder engagement, and overall impact. This exploration into the role of technology in enhancing strategic leadership and management draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate core strategies and approaches underpinning effective technology integration in the non-profit sector.

Alsaadat (2019) discusses the transformative impact of technology on strategic human resource management (HRM) and its implications for distance training and learning. The study highlights the shift from traditional administrative functions to a more strategic role of HRM facilitated by technological advancements. This shift involves recruiting and retaining the right people, as well as providing ethical and cultural leadership. Alsaadat (2019) research underscores the importance of technology in enabling strategic HRM practices that directly contribute to long-term business objectives, including those of NPOs. The paper suggests that technology, particularly in the form of distance learning and training, plays a crucial role in developing and implementing HR programs that address and solve business problems, thereby enhancing organizational performance.

Holland and Piper (2016) integrate concepts of strategic thinking, high-trust leadership, blended learning, and disruptive innovation to assess the leadership performance of preservice teachers, who will be educating future leaders. The study identifies how technology, specifically through blended learning models, serves as a guide for evaluating leadership performance in educational settings. This approach to leadership development, underpinned by strategic thinking and technology integration, offers valuable insights for NPOs in fostering high-trust leadership environments that encourage innovation and adaptability in the face of disruptive technological changes.

Ndegwa and Kipkorir (2023) examine the effect of business and technology strategies on the performance of non-governmental organizations, highlighting the significance of strategic alignment between these elements. The study finds a positive correlation between business strategy, information technology strategy, and organizational performance, emphasizing that strategic alignment is crucial for diagnosing and solving organizational problems. This research advocates for NPOs to develop coherent business and technology strategies that facilitate efficient communication, networking, and resource allocation, thereby enhancing organizational performance and sustainability.

These studies collectively highlight the critical role of technology in enhancing strategic leadership and management within non-profit organizations. Effective integration of technology into strategic HRM, leadership development, and business strategies is essential for NPOs to navigate the complexities of their operational environments, engage stakeholders effectively, and achieve their mission-driven objectives.

4.6.2 *Globalization and Its Impact on Non-Profit Organizational Strategies*

The phenomenon of globalization has significantly impacted the strategic management and operational frameworks of non-profit organizations (NPOs), compelling them to adapt to a more homogenized world where strategies must align with global trends and challenges. This exploration into the impact of globalization on non-profit organizational strategies draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate core considerations and methodologies underpinning effective adaptation and strategic alignment in the non-profit sector in the face of globalization.

Kicova and Ponisciakova (2021) delve into the specifics of strategic management of non-profit organizations within the globalization process, highlighting the European legislation's role in creating a mutual market and increasing the freedom of movement of services within the European Union. This legislation has significantly impacted NPOs by harmonizing basic requirements for services and creating common European standards. The study emphasizes that, unlike the profit sector, the primary aim of NPOs is not generating profit but fulfilling consumer tasks through various activities, particularly service provision. The research underscores the necessity for NPOs to adapt their strategic management practices to navigate the challenges posed by globalization effectively, ensuring their operations remain relevant and impactful in addressing market imbalances.

Vrba (2023) explores the rise of virtual organizations and their implications for non-profits, focusing on the opportunities and challenges presented by virtualization. The study finds that virtual organizations offer several benefits, including flexibility, adaptability, and cost-effectiveness, alongside easy access to a pool of freelancers. However, it also highlights the need for effective communication, coordination, and a culture of trust, accountability, and collaboration for success. This research suggests that online interventions, such as virtual day centers, can significantly enhance non-profits' ability to implement harm reduction programs and substance abuse prevention efforts, showcasing the potential of virtualization in expanding the reach and impact of NPOs in a globalized world.

Jiao, Harrison, and Chen (2020) examine the cultural transition and organizational performance within the non-profit context, focusing on the transition from a traditional culture focused on social objectives to a hybrid culture incorporating both social and economic objectives. The study reveals a U-shaped relationship between organizational culture and performance, indicating that performance may decrease before increasing during cultural transition. This finding has significant implications for non-profits undergoing cultural transitions in response to globalization, highlighting the critical role managers play in navigating these changes to enhance organizational performance and sustainability.

These studies collectively underscore the multifaceted impact of globalization on non-profit organizations, emphasizing the need for strategic adaptation, embracing virtualization, and managing cultural transitions to ensure sustainability and effectiveness. The insights provided offer valuable guidance for NPOs aiming to navigate the complexities of globalization, leveraging opportunities for innovation and expansion while addressing the challenges of cultural and strategic alignment.

4.6.3 *Future Challenges and Opportunities for Strategic Leadership in Non-Profits*

The landscape of strategic leadership within non-profit organizations (NPOs) is continually evolving, facing both perennial challenges and emerging opportunities. The future of strategic leadership in these entities is shaped by the need to navigate complex organizational changes, address global healthcare challenges, and innovate within the constraints of non-profit models. This exploration into the future challenges and opportunities for strategic leadership in non-profits draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate core considerations and methodologies underpinning effective leadership in the non-profit sector.

Andrews (2023) investigates the interplay between organizational change management and strategic leadership in not-for-profit, membership-based, value-driven organizations. Through a qualitative multi-case study approach, the research highlights the significance of strategic leadership teams and a clearly communicated vision as central to strategic planning and subsequent growth. The study emphasizes the importance of flexible organizational structures and the extended tenure of senior leadership roles in facilitating growth-oriented strategic planning. This research underscores the necessity for strategic leadership in NPOs to plan with change and growth in mind, ensuring adaptability and responsiveness to evolving organizational and societal needs.

Ogamba and Nwaberiegwu (2020) explore the persistent challenges faced by healthcare systems and the role of strategic and collective leadership in addressing these issues. The study identifies organizational culture, workforce shortages, and technological innovations as major challenges impacting healthcare systems globally. It suggests that strategic and collective leadership offers opportunities for improving healthcare quality, team effectiveness, and organizational outcomes. This research highlights the critical role of strategic leadership in healthcare NPOs in navigating future challenges and leveraging collective leadership to enhance healthcare delivery and outcomes.

Freeman et al. (2023) delve into the challenges and opportunities for non-profit driven indie game development, highlighting the tensions and dilemmas faced by developers prioritizing artistic and cultural values over economic benefits. The study examines how non-profit indie game developers navigate challenges related to sustainable resource acquisition and quality product development. It extends the current understanding of technology democratization and its impact on innovating and designing future technologies. This research points to the opportunities for strategic leadership in non-profit indie game development to foster innovation and creativity, thereby contributing to the sector's growth and sustainability.

These studies collectively highlight the multifaceted challenges and opportunities facing strategic leadership in non-profit organizations. Effective strategic leadership requires a nuanced understanding of organizational change, healthcare challenges, and innovation within non-profit models.

4.6.4 *Developing a Framework for Adaptive and Resilient Non-Profit Organizations*

The evolving landscape of the non-profit sector, marked by challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid pace of technological change, necessitates the development of adaptive and resilient organizational frameworks. These frameworks are essential for non-profit organizations (NPOs) to navigate uncertainties, sustain their operations, and continue delivering on their missions. This exploration into developing a framework for adaptive and resilient non-profit organizations draws upon recent scholarly insights to delineate core strategies and approaches underpinning effective adaptation and resilience in the non-profit sector.

Plaisance (2022) provides a comprehensive analysis of the resilience of French non-profit organizations in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. Through a large-scale survey involving 10,926 NPO leaders, the study reveals the significant challenges faced by these organizations, including operational, human, financial, and economic difficulties. The research highlights the importance of organizational resilience and proposes a cubic analytical framework to synthesize research dedicated to non-profit resilience. This framework emphasizes the critical role of stakeholder dependency and the need for NPOs to develop strategies that enhance their resilience by diversifying their resource base and strengthening stakeholder relationships.

Kadyrova and Shapira (2023) explore the microfoundations of dynamic capabilities for social innovations in small non-profit organizations, utilizing a dynamic capabilities framework. The study identifies key routines such as opportunity identification, alliancing, user engagement, networking, and organizational learning as essential for fostering social innovation. It underscores the need for incorporating commitments to social value and principles of ethics, responsibility, and sustainability into organizational processes. This research suggests that building flexible routines that enable incremental changes is a key element of organizational capability to adapt to changing contexts, thereby enhancing the resilience and innovative capacity of NPOs.

Nurhaliva, Handajani, and Sokarina (2022) discuss the implementation of the Integrated Reporting Framework in non-profit organizations, aiming to enhance transparency and accountability. The study indicates that adopting such a framework allows NPOs to present information based on eight content elements of Integrated Reporting, although the adoption is still at an early stage. Consistent presentation of integrated reports can lead to gradual improvements in transparency and stakeholder trust, contributing to the resilience and sustainability of NPOs. This research highlights the potential of integrated reporting as a tool for NPOs to communicate their value creation processes and resilience strategies effectively.

These studies collectively underscore the importance of developing adaptive and resilient frameworks for non-profit organizations. Effective adaptation and resilience require a nuanced understanding of organizational dynamics, stakeholder relationships, and the capacity for innovation.

5 Conclusions

The study has meticulously explored the intricate dynamics of strategic leadership and management within non-profit organizations (NPOs), shedding light on their pivotal roles in fostering sustainable impact. Through a systematic review and content analysis of the relevant literature, key insights have been synthesized, revealing that effective strategic leadership and management are indispensable for NPOs to adeptly navigate the complexities of their operational environments, engage stakeholders meaningfully, and fulfill their mission-driven objectives. The synthesis underscores the necessity of adaptive leadership, innovative management practices, stakeholder engagement, and the integration of technology as foundational elements contributing to the resilience and sustainability of NPOs.

Based on the findings, the study proposes that NPOs should embrace adaptive leadership styles that promote flexibility, innovation, and responsiveness to change, alongside implementing innovative management practices that leverage technology and data analytics to enhance operational efficiency and stakeholder engagement. Moreover, it highlights the importance of developing comprehensive strategies for stakeholder engagement to build trust and support, utilizing digital tools and platforms to streamline operations and expand the reach of programs and services, and constructing resilient organizational frameworks capable of withstanding challenges and adapting to changing circumstances to ensure long-term sustainability.

The implications of this study extend to policy recommendations for guiding non-profit leaders towards best practices in strategic leadership and management. Policymakers and industry bodies are encouraged to develop guidelines and resources that support NPOs in adopting adaptive leadership models, leveraging technology for greater impact, and promoting transparency, accountability, and ethical governance to build stakeholder trust and ensure the sustainability of NPOs.

Furthermore, the study identifies several areas for future research, including the impact of emerging technologies on strategic leadership and management in NPOs, the influence of globalization and cross-cultural dynamics on leadership practices, effective leadership development programs, and the development of comprehensive frameworks and metrics for measuring the sustainable impact of NPOs. This exploration into strategic leadership and management within non-profits underscores the critical need for adaptive leadership, innovation, stakeholder engagement, and technology integration in enhancing the sustainable impact of NPOs. Future research should continue to bridge gaps in the literature and contribute to the evolution of best practices in the sector, ensuring that NPOs are well-equipped to face the challenges of the future and achieve their mission-driven objectives.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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