

ANALYSING THE LEVEL OF SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP AMONG SUSTAINABILITY MANAGERS IN SPAIN

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Abstract: The concept of sustainable leadership has been researched with respect to different contexts at the sectoral or organizational level, such as in the insurance sector in Turkey, as well as the marketing, and logistics sectors in Spain. Sustainable leadership is defined as a type of leadership that is carried out over and for the long term and that is based on acting in a fair and ethical manner with an organization's internal and external stakeholders. The main aim of this study was to identify the degree to which sustainable leadership is commonly practiced among managers in different economic sectors in Spain. Avery and Bergsteiner's (2011) framework was used as the basis for the development of this study. This models organizations into two main categories, referred to as displaying (1) "locust leadership" or (2) "bee leadership". The locust leadership philosophy is based on making and maximizing profits, while the honeybee leadership philosophy generates value to stakeholders and, besides and beyond economic considerations, also takes account of other factors such as the environmental and societal elements. The results of our study demonstrated that managers in companies in Spain are more inclined towards the bee sustainable leadership philosophy. All managers interviewed admitted that they placed a high value on emotionally committed staff and over 90% of respondents considered that doing the right thing" in the business was more important than profit. Likewise, over 90% of interviewees declared that they always emphasized the protection of the environment when setting up business objectives. Finally, our study is innovative in the sense that it is the first time that sustainable leadership is studied among sustainability managers across a diverse range of economic sectors in Spain.

Keywords: corporate sustainability; sustainability managers; social corporate responsibility

1. Introduction

Organizations are key players in the development of sustainable societies through the development of sustainable business models and strategies. Furthermore, integrating these sustainable practices has become essential in order to ensure that these organizations remain competitive in their markets and become leaders in their industries while creating value and responding visibly to the expectations of customers and of their staff alike. Although the implementation of sustainable organizational practices may be costly and incur an initial investment, pursuing sustainability will ensure economic viability for the corporation in the long term, while contributing to best practice both socially and in terms of the environment (Opoku and Ahmed, 2013). The benefits of committing to sustainability are multiple, including money saving, risk mitigation, gaining more customers and retaining talent.

Corporate sustainability concerns the integration of the three pillars of sustainability (i.e., economic, environmental, and social practices) by corporations. These three pillars make up

what is commonly known and referred to as the “triple-bottom line”. It may be defined as the adoption of business strategies and activities that meet the needs of the enterprise and its stakeholders today while protecting, sustaining, and enhancing the human and natural resources that will be needed in the future. Corporate sustainability is closely associated with a number of different concepts such as that of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), corporate citizenship, business ethics, stakeholder engagement, and stewardship (Baumgartner, 2009). The effective implementation of sustainable practices in organizations needs to be complemented and guided by an effective leader. Recently, strategic leadership and corporate sustainability have merged through the development of corporate sustainability management positions, often referred to as “Chief Sustainability Officers” or “CSOs” (Strand, 2014). Business leaders are presently facing new problems that would not have existed previously such as the increasing scarcity of the energy and resources that are necessary in production and distribution. At the organizational level, other challenges that are currently being experienced include global political uncertainties, greater social awareness fuelled by social media and leading customers to expect and demand higher ethical standards from companies, as well as corresponding requirements from lenders and investors (Kantabutra and Avery, 2011). The transformation of an organization through the implementation of such sustainable practice must be led from the very top management level. Furthermore, sustainability must become part of the organization’s mission and vision to safeguard the organization’s relationship with a wide range of stakeholders in the society of today (Jones et al, 2015).

1.1. Sustainable leadership

According to the authors Avery and Bergsteiner, sustainable leadership can be perceived in the way the company is organized; with respect to their principles, processes, values, and way of working (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). The concept of sustainable leadership has been researched with respect to different contexts, such as in the education sector or in organizational settings (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011; Crews, 2010; Davies, 2007). In the first sustainable leadership exercise, data was collected and analysed, and a model developed by Hargreaves and Fink in 2006 in the educational sector. Davies (2007) and Lambert (2011) have also created a sustainable leadership framework at the organizational level in the education sector, both in the United Kingdom and in the United States (Davies, 2007; Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). According to Lambert (2011), sustainable leadership necessitates a commitment at all corporate levels to create a culture in which the skills of future leaders of the organization may be developed appropriately (Lambert, 2011).

Another sustainable leadership analysis is that of Avery and Bergsteiner’s (2011) framework that divides organizations into two main categories, referred to as (1) “locust leadership” and (2) “bee leadership”. The locust leadership philosophy is based on making and maximizing profits at any cost, even if it means harming the environment or others (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). On the other hand, the bee leadership philosophy generate value to stakeholders and also takes account of other factors such as the environmental and societal elements (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). Adopting a long-term perspective has helped companies to survive times of hardship such as economic depressions, recessions, and periods of intense global competition (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011), and well as situations such as, for example, the whole of the COVID-19 context, the consequences of which we are still experiencing.

Although the honeybee model has been found to be more sustainable and profitable in the long term, many companies still persist with the more conventional locust model or adopt a hybrid way of operating through a mixture of locust and honeybee leadership approaches [6].

The main aim of this study was to identify the degree to which sustainable leadership is commonly practised among sustainability managers in different economic sectors in Spain. The research for this study takes as a framework Avery and Bergsteiner's Honeybee and Locust sustainable leadership model and considers the following research questions:

- How do sustainability managers in Spain perceive the type of leadership practised in the companies in which they work?
- Is their perception aligned more to a bee-type model of leadership, or a locust-type model of leadership, or neither one nor the other or a mixture of both?

Over the years, the honeybee-type sustainable leadership approach has been gaining momentum among several scholars. This study will examine the concept in more detail through a qualitative analysis using a group of 83 sustainability managers.

2. Materials and Methods

Avery and Bergsteiner's framework [6] will be used as a basis for the methodological approach undertaken. The model is based on 23 key factors that underlie the concept of sustainable leadership and which, if carried out together, will contribute over time to improving organizational performance.

A qualitative quantitative study was carried out based on the analysis of the answers given by 83 sustainability managers in Spain who responded to a 54-point questionnaire.

The questionnaire used was based on the sustainable leadership model of Avery and Bergsteiner, with the pertinent modifications made to adapt it to the peculiarities of our research. Of the 54 questions posed, 46 (Part II) analysed the level of sustainable leadership of the company in which the different managers worked and 8 questions (Part I) were introductory, seeking to learn a little more about the profile of each manager interviewed. The 46 questions presented in Part II analysed the level of sustainable leadership and were broken down into three main categories: fundamental practices (questions 1 to 26), top-level practices (questions 27-38), and key performance drivers (questions 39-46). The 46 questions of Part II are listed below:

1. In terms of training and development I aim to develop everyone continuously.
2. In terms of training and development I aim to develop people selectively.
3. For me, long job tenure is very important at all levels.
4. At some level I can accept a high degree of personnel turnover.
5. I mostly make promotions from within the organization wherever possible.
6. I mostly appoint people from outside the organization wherever possible.
7. I am concerned about employees' welfare.
8. For me employees are interchangeable and employee cost is a very significant cost item in accounting.
9. In my opinion a CEO works as the top team member or as the representative of the team.

10. In my opinion a CEO is a decision maker and can be considered as the person in charge.
11. "“Doing the right thing”" in the business is more important than profit.
12. For me, assessable risks can be taken in any situation to increase profit.
13. I prioritize long-term business objectives over those that are short term.
14. I prioritize short-term profits and growth considerations.
15. I think that change is an evolving and considered process.
16. I think that change is something rapid, volatile, perhaps even ad hoc.
17. I think that people should work with maximum independence from others to increase the profits from their work.
18. I think people should follow their managers and obey instructions.
19. In setting business objectives, I always emphasize protecting the environment.
20. In my opinion, the environment is there to be exploited to increase profit.
21. I think that the interests of the people and of the community within the business environment should be carefully considered in making business decisions.
22. I think the people and community should be exploited since they are available to the business to increase profit.
23. I think that everyone matters, whether they are related to the business or not.
24. I think, since we are in business to generate profits, that only shareholders matter.
25. I believe in vision statements embodying a shared view of the future as an important strategic tool.
26. I believe that a vision of a shared, consensual future does not necessarily drive the business.
27. I believe the decision making in the business should be consensual and devolved.
28. I believe the decision making in the business should be primarily manager centred.
29. I believe staff are capable of self-managing.
30. I believe managers should manage and control staff.
31. I think team working should be extensive and empowered.
32. I think team working should be limited and manager centred.
33. I think widely shared culture fosters and enables the meeting of business objectives.
34. I think the pursuit and the achievement of short-term business objectives constitutes a valid business culture.
35. I believe the sharing of knowledge is especially important and should be practised throughout the organization.
36. I believe that knowledge-sharing is important only to the extent of a need-to-know basis with people having access only to what they need to fulfil their specific roles in meeting the overall business objectives.
37. In business I need to foster a high degree of trust through relationships and good will.
38. In business we must control and monitor staff to compensate for a low trust environment.
39. In my opinion strategic innovation is especially important and therefore should be encouraged at all levels of the organization.

40. In my opinion, innovation is risky and therefore should only be managed by managers.
41. I highly value emotionally committed staff.
42. In my opinion, financial rewards suffice as motivators, therefore I do not expect emotional commitment from the staff.
43. In my opinion, quality ought to be embedded within the culture of the business.
44. In my opinion, quality may only be achieved through mechanisms of control.
45. I effectively communicate the business culture and the strategic actions to be developed.
46. I understand that the functions of the workers on my team are easily achievable using new technologies, and that using them can eliminate jobs.

The questionnaires were created using Google Forms, to be able to send them digitally by email and WhatsApp, given the context of the COVID- 19 pandemic and the difficulty in being able to carry out face-to-face interviews. Interviewee anonymity was always guaranteed.

Each of these questions was evaluated via a Likert scale with a range of 1 to 5 (i.e., each of these range levels is further explained in the table below in Table 1 below):

Table 1. Survey question range level explanation.

Range Level	Explanation
1	I completely agree
2	I agree
3	I do not agree or disagree
4	I disagree
5	I completely disagree

3. Results

Among the sustainability managers interviewed, 34.9% were women and 65.1% men. We found that they came from very heterogeneous sectors such as logistics, publicity, third (not for profit) sector, communications, and public relations. All these profiles, as part of the role, need to manage teams and thus display and practice leadership characteristics. Interviewee professional experience ranged varied from 2 years to 42 years.

The type of projects managed by the sustainability managers interviewed included:

- Organizational Social Corporate Responsibility projects (i.e., ESG projects)
- Communication projects
- Social projects
- Projects related to research and academia.
- Consultancy projects
- Climate change and risk management projects
- Product transformation and improvement projects
- CO2 reduction projects
- Public policy development projects
- Solar energy projects
- Engineering projects

- Quality management projects
- Health and safety projects
- Gender equality projects
- Event projects
- Supply chain management projects

The interviewees were also asked with which were the challenges they were faced with in their organizations:

- Stakeholder management with lack of collaboration from the top management and without participation from the workers. Lack of understanding from colleagues, creating obstacles to the carrying out of specific projects. This last point is also applicable to uncooperative clients.
- Educate management to include sustainability. This involves the understanding of the long-term benefits of sustainability.
- Supply chain crises and a reduction in demand.
- Cybersecurity
- Regulatory changes at the European level and keeping up with these regulatory changes.
- More market competition.
- Internal communication problems.
- Changing and fluctuating markets, as well as the need for continuous innovation.
- Platforms that are opposed to renewables.
- Lack of support to change the mindset and ways of working of suppliers.
- Lack of funding for sustainability-related projects.
- Promoting innovation.
- Resource limitations.
- Keeping up to date with changes and advances in sustainability.
- Energy crises.
- Challenges of an organization's digitalization.
- Promoting decarbonization and the Circular Economy.

The results of the second part of the survey that aimed to assess the level and application of each of the components of Avery and Bergsteiner's (2011) contextual model of sustainable leadership are shown and described in Table 1 below.

Table 2. Results of a questionnaire based on interviews with 83 sustainability managers.

Question	1	2	3	4	5
1	1 (1.2%)	2 (2.4%)	11 (13.3%)	27 (32.5%)	42 (50.6%)

2	6 (7.2%)	9 (10.8%)	17 (20.5%)	26 (31.3%)	25 (30.1%)
3	2 (2.4%)	5 (6%)	17 (20.5%)	33 (39.8%)	26 (31.3%)
4	12 (14.5%)	28 (33.7%)	22 (26.5%)	20 (24.1%)	1 (1.2%)
5	1 (1.2%)	1 (1.2%)	5 (6%)	25 (30.1%)	51 (61.4%)
6	6 (7.2%)	15 (18.1%)	37 (44.6%)	18 (21.7%)	7 (8.4%)
7	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.2%)	13 (15.7%)	69 (83.1%)
8	44 (53%)	14 (16.9%)	9 (10.8%)	9 (10.8%)	7 (8.4%)
9	7 (8.4%)	10 (12%)	22 (26.5%)	27 (32.5%)	17 (20.5%)
10	2 (2.4%)	6 (7.2%)	23 (27.7%)	30 (36.1%)	22 (26.5%)
11	0 (0%)	5 (6%)	11 (13.3%)	30 (36.1%)	37 (44.6%)
12	7 (8.4%)	24 (28.9%)	23 (27.7%)	24 (28.9%)	5 (6%)
13	1 (1.2%)	10 (12%)	15 (18.1%)	34 (41%)	23 (27.7%)
14	29 (34.9%)	41 (49.4%)	13 (15.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
15	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (4.8%)	23 (27.7%)	56 (67.5%)
16	24 (28.9%)	21 (25.3%)	19 (22.9%)	11 (13.3%)	8 (9.6%)
17	30 (36.1%)	29 (34.9%)	14 (16.9%)	9 (10.8%)	1 (1.2%)
18	15 (18.1%)	24 (28.9%)	30 (36.1%)	12 (14.5%)	2 (2.4%)
19	0 (0%)	1 (1.2%)	4 (4.8%)	35 (42.2%)	43 (51.8%)
20	74 (89.2%)	9 (10.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
21	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.2%)	11 (13.3%)	71 (85.5%)
22	74 (89.2%)	8 (9.6%)	1 (1.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
23	0 (0%)	1 (1.2%)	2 (2.4%)	15 (18.1%)	65 (78.3%)
24	66 (79.5%)	15 (18.1%)	2 (2.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
25	0 (0%)	1 (1.2%)	0 (0%)	18 (21.7%)	64 (77.1%)
26	51 (61.4%)	17 (20.5%)	11 (13.3%)	4 (4.8%)	0 (0%)
27	1 (1.2%)	9 (10.8%)	17 (20.5%)	36 (43.4%)	20 (24.1%)
28	12 (14.5%)	31 (37.3%)	19 (22.9%)	17 (20.5%)	4 (4.8%)
29	3 (3.6%)	10 (12%)	28 (33.7%)	31 (37.3%)	11 (13.3%)
30	3 (3.6%)	13 (15.7%)	27 (32.5%)	28 (33.7%)	12 (14.5%)
31	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.2%)	13 (15.7%)	69 (83.1%)
32	39 (47%)	31 (37.3%)	11 (13.3%)	2 (2.4%)	0 (0%)
33	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.4%)	13 (15.7%)	68 (81.9%)
34	0 (0%)	6 (7.2%)	8 (9.6%)	17 (20.5%)	52 (62.7%)
35	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (9.6%)	75 (90.4%)
36	63 (75.9%)	16 (19.3%)	3 (3.6%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.2%)
37	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (7.2%)	31 (37.3%)	46 (55.4%)
38	28 (33.7%)	30 (36.1%)	20 (24.1%)	3 (3.6%)	2 (2.4%)
39	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.2%)	19 (22.9%)	63 (75.9%)
40	54 (65.1%)	23 (27.7%)	6 (7.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
41	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (9.6%)	75 (90.4%)
42	42 (50.6%)	35 (42.2%)	5 (6%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.2%)
43	2 (2.4%)	2 (2.4%)	13 (15.7%)	26 (31.3%)	40 (48.2%)
44	30 (36.1%)	30 (36.1%)	12 (14.5%)	8 (9.6%)	3 (3.6%)

45	0 (0%)	2 (2.4%)	12 (14.5%)	34 (41%)	35 (42.2%)
46	26 (31.3%)	26 (31.3%)	22 (26.5%)	6 (7.2%)	3 (3.6%)

Most of the respondents (question 1, 73.1%) considered that continuous training and development were important, or very important and this training had to be carried out selectively (question 2, 61.4%) while 71.1% (question 3) of interviewees acknowledged that job tenure was relevant at all levels, while 48.2% (question 3) thought that they could accept some degree of personnel turnover (question 4). Related to this point, 91.5% of interviewees said that they tried to make promotions from within the organization wherever possible (question 5). 98.8% agreed (question 7) that they cared for the well-being of their employees. All respondents admitted that they highly valued emotionally committed staff.

96.4% (question 23) of interviewees felt that all stakeholders matter inside and outside of the organization, consistent with which (question 24) 97.6% of them disagreed that in business only the interests of the shareholders matter. This was also very much aligned with the fact that 98.8% (question 21) thought that the interests of the people and of the community affected by or dependent upon the business environment should be carefully considered in making business decisions.

For 80.7% of respondents, "Doing the right thing" (question 11) in the business was more important than profit. 68.7% (question 13) prioritized long-term business objectives over those that are short-term, while 95.2% (question 15) of interviewees considered that proper management of change needs to be an evolving and considered business process. Related to this, 97.6% (question 33) highlighted the importance of effectively communicating the business culture and the strategic actions to be developed. Among these long-term objectives was the importance of environmental protection. 94% of interviewees responded positively to question 19, "In setting business objectives, I always emphasize protecting the environment". Furthermore, all of the respondents disagreed with the proposition (question 20) that the environment is there to be exploited to increase profit.

84.3% (question 32) disagreed that teamwork should be limited, and manager centered. 97.6% (question 33) of respondents thought that a widely shared culture fosters and enables the meeting of business objectives. Moreover, all of the respondents believed (question 35) that the sharing of knowledge is especially important and should be practiced throughout the organization. 92.7% agreed with the statement (question 37) that in business "I need to foster a high degree of trust through relationships and good will".

4. Discussion

The main objective of this research was to analyse how sustainability managers from different sectors in Spain perceived the level of sustainable leadership at their companies, and how it fits within the model of sustainable leadership of bees and locusts formulated by Avery and Bergsteiner (2011). The results of the study demonstrate that leadership among sustainability managers in Spain is now more inclined towards the bee sustainable leadership philosophy [6]. The honeybee leadership approach provides a vision of social leadership with the involvement of all stakeholders. It is more holistic in nature, is based on generating value for all stakeholders and thus is aligned with the seventeenth Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations (i.e., SDG 17), that of creating global alliances. Although it has been shown that the application

of bee leadership in companies is more sustainable and profitable in the long term, many national and international companies continue to apply a more conventional model, such as the locust model, prioritizing short-term benefits. Although the honeybee leadership approach is more sustainable and profitable in the long term, Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) demonstrate the perhaps curious finding that many business schools, consultants, and managers still persist with the Locust model, in whole or in part (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011).

Organizations tend to follow a hybrid approach with regard to sustainable leadership, and therefore this leadership tends to be a combination of both locust and honeybee sustainable leadership elements. This is evidenced by previous studies that have analysed the level of sustainable leadership in the insurance industry in Turkey (Kalkavan, 2015), in the logistics industry in Spain (Bulmer et al., 2021), in the marketing sector in Spain, and among project managers in Spain (Riera et al., 2022). The results of this study were rather surprising in the sense that sustainability managers in Spain described their organization's leadership as having adopted more of a bee-leadership philosophy approach.

In the first section on fundamental leadership practices (questions 1-26), it is important to highlight that the sustainability managers interviewed considered the implementation of continuous training and the shaping of professional careers of employees in companies to be imperative to achieving sustainable leadership. All interview respondents admitted that they highly valued the staff that were emotionally committed to the organization and 98.8% (question 7) stated that they cared for the well-being of the employees. Furthermore, most interviewees also acknowledged the significance of job tenure and 91.5% (question 5) said that they tried to make promotions from within the organization whenever possible.

When organizations implement Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies, they need to think in the long term, and not only consider short-term benefits. In the study, 68.7% (question 13) prioritized long-term business objectives over those that are short-term. Implementing CSR strategies entails undertaking actions that comply with the three pillars of sustainability which are the economic, social, and environmental pillars. Often the implementation of CSR actions entails organizational change, and change often involves risks, one of these being that workers (i.e., team members) being unconvinced by the need for change and thus reticent in implementing it. 95.2% (question 15) of interviewees considered that change was an evolving and considered process.

Organizations are presently being pushed to change towards a honeybee leadership approach, however, they may find themselves with several hurdles in adopting the latter. The authors Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) highlight that introducing change at the organizational level (i.e., in this respect from the locust to the honeybee philosophy) can be hampered by four main elements (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011):

- There is a tendency to stick with conventional wisdom.
- Change entails both financial and intangible costs.
- Most managers do not make decisions based on evidence but rather on ideological belief or on their experience of what is "tried and tested".
- Major changes are accompanied by risks.

Ulrich et al. (2009) propose a four-step model for managing major change. This is very much associated with a transformation in human resources management to a more holistic and systematic approach.

1. Change should be communicated, explaining clearly the “why” behind it.
2. People need to understand the benefits (i.e., “what outcomes”) of implementing the changes.
3. A procedure is needed on how to make these changes (i.e., complying with the “how”).
4. Engaging a team and determining “who” will be involved in helping to implement the change.

Today, companies use their commitment to sustainability as a competitive advantage, broadly speaking. They want to continue differentiating themselves from the competition, just as they did at the time, they incorporated corporate social responsibility into their strategy. Such an approach may sometimes be greenwashing, as it may be simply a marketing strategy aimed at generating an image which may not, in reality, be aligned with the company’s mission.

For this study, 90.7% of respondents said that “Doing the right thing” in the business was more important than profit and 83.2% highlighted the importance of effectively communicating the business culture and the strategic actions to be developed. Among these long-term objectives was the importance of environmental protection. 94% of respondents admitted that they emphasized the importance of protecting the environment when setting up their business objectives.

One might argue perhaps that there is a certain degree of bias in this study as theoretically the responding sustainability managers should have the “know how” on how organizations should behave regarding the implementation of sustainable strategies and practices and thus may simply be giving the “correct” responses. However, even if that were to be so, the responses to the study questions demonstrate a clear awareness of what needs to be done, even if, in some cases, practice may toil to keep up with intention. What this research also demonstrates is that companies need managers with a sustainability vision, such as that of the sustainability managers interviewed, not as an additional layer of bureaucracy but as a function capable of generating or suggesting profit opportunities for the business. Incorporating sustainability in their company will benefit the organization long-term, ensuring profitability and success that is long-lasting. Today companies are under pressure more and more to embrace environmental and societal responsibility and engage in adaptive change (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006).

5. Conclusions

This study aimed to identify the level of sustainable leadership among sustainability managers from different sectors in Spain. This research was carried out taking as its framework Avery and Bergsteiner’s Honeybee and Locust sustainable leadership model. This study and its results are more wide-ranging than previous research that on level of sustainable leadership in sectoral or organizational settings, as in studies in the insurance industry in Turkey (Kalkavan, 2015), in the logistics industry in Spain (Bulmer et al., 2021), in the marketing sector in Spain, and among project managers in Spain (Riera et al., 2022) and the results of these studies confirmed a generally hybrid type of sustainable leadership made up of honeybee and locust elements.

The honeybee philosophy is very much more social and stakeholder-based, while the locust approach is described as “tough, ruthless, asocial and profit-oriented-at-any-cost” [6: 30]. In the honeybee leadership context, managers consider themselves to be guardians or stewards of the business for future generations. Furthermore, they care about the environment and local communities. Sustainability managers were found to follow this same approach. Over ninety percent of respondents agreed that it was important to emphasize the protection of the environment when setting up business objectives, and that the environment was not there just to be exploited.

Corporate leadership is a factor that affects organizational performance and consequently affects the whole business. Sustainable corporate leadership aims at generating sustainable enterprises that operate in a transparent and ethical manner, while considering the different stakeholders’ needs and interests. In this respect, companies will be complying with the definition of Sustainable Development that was set out in the Brundtland report “Our Common Future” of 1987, “satisfy the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Report, 1987).

This study is a first in that its results pointed towards the general adoption of honeybee leadership philosophy among sustainability managers.

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