


Chapter 4

Leadership Styles and Sustainability Practices: Driving Forward Circular Economies

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ABSTRACT

The concepts of circular economy is gaining momentum in addressing global issues in the areas of waste management, climate change, product life-cycle design and supply chain management. Leaders have significant impact on the strategic directions of their organizations and dedication to the circular economy goals. The chapter examines how the transformational, ethical, participative, and adaptive leadership influence sustainable resources use in circular economies (CE). The chapter used a descriptive analysis based on exploring an update of existing literature and articles and a peek on real world insights. The chapter aims at giving readers an insight at how leaders can effectively support the shift towards circular economies while maintaining their commitment to sustainability initiatives, and highlighting existing challenges in the field. It attempts to combine different perspectives from leadership theories, circular economy and sustainability principles, to address properly the research topic. It provides future recommendations in the field.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of circular economy (CE) was identified as a new sustainable development paradigm, specifically in its managerial context (Kisi, 2022). Organizations are living in an era where technologies are swiftly changing; consumers are demanding sophisticated products that cater to their needs, and climate changes are imposing global challenges. Circular economy and sustainability are gaining momentum to address significant global issues in the areas of, waste management, climate change, product life-cycle design and supply chain management. Sustainability initiatives themes in circular economies are highly relevant as organizations struggle to maintain their continuity in the business landscape. Assessing the effect of sustainable management on circular economy initiatives is crucial for organizations seeking business growth and competitiveness, as sustainable development aims at achieving the needs of society without consuming the future generations' ability to achieve their own requirements. The need to protect and conserve natural resources is paving the way to a surge in balancing environmental, social and economic development facets (Bashynska et al., 2024).

The circular economy strategies require organizations to re-evaluate their processes in terms of product re-design, to ensure the reduction in resource consumption, and to improve sustainability practices (Zhu et al. 2020). Walmart announced in early 2021 (Walmart, 2021) that they will reach a zero-waste production in the US market by end of 2025, and this achievement is the result of strategies focusing on enhanced recycling processes, reduced excess packaging, and the redistribution of unsold food to food banks. The circular economy strategies require in its implementation phase stakeholders' collaboration, transparency, engagement, knowledge sharing and increased efficiency (Schmidt & Donselaar, 2020). Circular strategies incorporate sustainable practices and cycles assessment throughout the product life-cycle span from the choice of material to the end of product life. Nike's strategic "Move To Zero" initiative is committed to zero carbon and zero waste throughout its product life cycle and supply chain management (Nike, 2022), and the company was able to introduce a line of products called "Nike Air" that illustrates the recycled materials achievement. Unilever has been committed to a long term strategy that will enable her by end of 2025 to make all of its plastic packaging recyclable, compostable or reusable (Unilever, 2021), in addition to its continuing initiatives towards sustainable sourcing and waste reduction.

The world is witnessing a need for sustainable practices driven by environmental concerns, economic instability and social inequalities. Multinational organizations, with their consumption of resources and global footprint, are under increased monitoring to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable practices. Sustainability in its simplest form refers to meeting the needs of the current generation without

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