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The role of leadership values and communication in the process of change towards sustainability: a qualitative research paper

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Abstract: This article aims to explore which leadership values mediate the process of influencing employees to accept change toward different sustainability practices and the role of communication in moderating this process. To answer these questions, 25 leaders from eight sustainable organisations working in different industries in the UK were interviewed. It was found that leadership values have both mediating and moderating roles. The mediating values are sustainability-related. The moderating values are classified into two sets. The first set of values helps in increasing employees' trust in the leaders and building close relationships with them making it easier for leaders to instil sustainability-related values in employees. The second set of moderating values helps in sustaining employees' sustainability-related practices. Moreover, it was found that communication has a moderating effect by further helping to build close relationships between leaders and employees, building employees' trust in leaders, and keeping employees involved.

Keywords: leadership values; communication; change towards sustainability practices; leadership level.

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1 Introduction

In recent years, sustainability has become the centre of attention among the theoretical and practical spheres (Peterlin, 2015). Sustainable development is a three-dimensional approach including environmental, social, and economic aspects (Schaltegger and Burritt, 2005). Sustainable development requires collaborative efforts from several actors, including governments, society, and business organisations. In fact, it is agreed among both academic scholars and practitioners that sustainable development cannot be materialised without the contribution of business organisations (Blindheim and Langhelle, 2010). This has been our main motivation to investigate how sustainability-related change could be implemented within organisations. Nevertheless, this is not an easy task, since organisational change processes are often resisted from within the organisation (Waddell and Sohal, 1998; Frahm and Brown, 2007). However, there is a broad agreement among scholars of both sustainability and change management that leadership plays an important role in this kind of processes (Shvindina, 2017; Crawford and Nahmias, 2010). Leadership is the process of directing, supporting, and influencing a group of people in order to achieve a specific goal (Chemers, 1997; Cole, 2006). This process of influencing has led scholars to study the significance of leadership values for influencing organisational change (Marginson, 2009), as values are understood to be the key drivers of behaviour (Simons, 1994).

Marginson (2009) highlights the role of leadership values as control mechanisms, mediating the relationship of leadership in influencing organisational change. He further highlights the role of communication in moderating the process by which these control mechanisms (leadership values) influence the change. However, his work is based on a single organisation, does not specify sustainability-related values, and only partially results in value congruence while resulting in several unintended negative effects such as polarisation of attitudes and disruption of core activities. Therefore, there is need for further research based on several organisations regarding how communication can effectively result in leader-employee value congruence (Marginson, 2009). We advance this framework first, by further extending existing literature and identifying sustainability values of leaders that can influence sustainability-related change. Second, by examining how communication should be carried out to effectively achieve leader-employee value

congruence and avoid the risks of conflicting values. Thus, we aim to examine the following research questions:

- RQ1 Which leadership values mediate the process by which leaders influence employees to accept change towards sustainability practices?
- RQ2 Which communication skills or methods moderate the process of the communication of leaders' values to influence employees to accept change towards sustainability practices?

We answer our research questions using a hybrid approach to thematic analysis of 25 interviews with leaders from eight sustainable organisations operating in different industries in the UK.

Our findings allow us to contribute to management literature. First, we suggest that leaders in different industries tend to emphasise certain sustainability aspects over the others depending on both altruistic and intrinsic motivations. Second, we introduce new mediating sustainability-related values including accountability and optimism while also confirming the mediating role of responsibility and loyalty. Third, we introduce the moderating effect of leadership values including honesty, trust, humility, and friendship, which help in building trust and close relationships between leaders and employees. We also introduce the moderating effect of leadership values including autonomy and commitment, which help in sustaining employees' sustainability-related practices. Moreover, the value of integrity has a moderating effect when it is defined synonymously to honesty and a mediating effect when it is defined as being committed to one's ethics. Fourth, we present several moderating communication methods that further help in achieving leader-employee mutual understanding, value congruency, and employees' sustainability-related change readiness and supportive behaviour. These include informal, regular, open, participatory, motivational, and storytelling, which increase employees' trust in leaders, help in building close relationships with them and keeping them involved. Moreover, the use of clear and simple language helps in eliminating ambiguities that might lead to uncertainties about the sustainability-related change.

We structure our article as follows. First, we review the existing literature regarding the main isolated elements of our framework: leadership values, communication, and change towards sustainability practices. Second, we explain our method of data collection and qualitative analysis. Third, we present the main findings emerging from the interviews. We then interpret those findings with the aim of advancing Marginson's framework. We conclude by suggesting new questions for future research to explore and by presenting our research implications.

2 Literature review

In this section, we explore the literature to illustrate the relationship between our key variables: leadership values, communication, and change towards sustainability practices. We also look for further variables that might directly or indirectly influence the integration of the key variables. First, we search for the role of leadership values in influencing organisational change. Second, we develop on this relationship by exploring and adding the role of communication in this influencing process. Third, we illustrate the

need to develop on the relationship between leadership values, communication, and organisational change by examining sustainability as the objective of the change.

2.1 Leadership values and change management

Leadership is the key factor contributing to the overall wellbeing of organisations (Odumero and Ifeanyi, 2013). Leadership is fundamental for the success of any organisational process, especially, during the change processes as leaders are key actors who influence change within organisations (Shvindina, 2017; Crawford and Nahmias, 2010). A significant number of scholars have developed different theories regarding leadership, such as transformational (Eisenbach et al., 1999) and transactional leadership styles (Holten and Brenner, 2015). The former emerges as an important factor justifying successful processes of organisational change (Lowe et al., 1996; Groves, 2020). This is because transformational leadership is values-based and posits that leaders' actions are directed by their values. These become key factors in influencing and motivating followers to accomplish organisational change (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999). Leaders can do so by transforming the followers' values, beliefs and attitudes (Bass, 1985). Burns (1978) links transformational leadership with what constitutes a 'good leader'. Transformational leaders are considered as influential and charismatic with motivational and inspirational skills, they are considered as role models (Bass and Alvolio, 1995). Moreover, according to Yukl (1999), one of the key aspects of transformational leadership is that values play a central mediating role in the process by which leaders influence followers to become open and committed to achieving organisational goals. The author thus highlights the importance of leadership values for organisational change management. This gives importance to examining whether transformational leadership style is also effective in the process by which leaders communicate their values in order to influence employees to accept change towards different sustainability practices. Similarly, a significant number of research works emphasise the role of leadership values in influencing employees to work towards a common goal including organisational change processes (Pardo del Val and Martínez Fuentes, 2003; Chatman and Cha, 2003). Values are understood as key factors that influence the attitudes and behaviours of individuals (Meglino and Ravlin, 1998; Bilsky and Schwartz, 2008). Values are guiding principles in people's lives (Schwartz, 1992). Leadership values impact the perception of one's environment and performance (Boubakary, 2015) and influence organisational behaviours (Simons, 1994). Thus, leadership values are critical for organisations as they shape the attitudes and behaviours of leaders, who can also influence and transform the values of employees in order to adapt their attitudes and behaviours according to the organisational goals. This is supported by Crawford and Nahmias (2010) research work in which they argue that changing the behaviour of employees is crucial for the success of organisational change. Regarding the role of values during organisational change processes, values affect how employees perceive change resulting in their acceptance or resistance to change (Groves, 2020). Thus, he argues that leadership values are significant mediators through which leaders can influence employees to achieve organisational change. People who share similar values will perceive situations similarly as well (Meglino and Ravlin, 1998). Consequently, we can conclude that value congruence of leaders and employees can contribute to successful implementation of change in the organisations. Value congruence is one of the most important antecedents leading to employees' change readiness (Rafferty et al., 2012). However, the values

should be relevant and appropriate to the intended change (Meglino and Ravlin, 1998). Leaders values play a significant role in shaping organisational culture and values (Russell, 2001). When leaders behave according to their values it makes them role models for organisational values (Gill, 2002). This is important because in order to successfully modify the behaviours of employees to achieve organisational change it is crucial to foster an organisational culture that is supportive of the intended change (Crawford and Nahmias, 2010). We can notice that the literature emphasises the mediating role of leadership values between leaders and successful organisational change. It presents leaders' personal values as intermediaries (Wu and Zumbo, 2007) that identify the relationship between leadership and achievement of organisational change.

However, the level of the influence that leadership values have depends on the leaders' position in the organisational hierarchy (Harmon et al., 2010). Thus, it is important to examine whether different leadership levels have different levels of effectiveness when communicating their values to employees. A stream of literature focuses on the role of middle-level managers as leaders, which are key agents for bringing change as they have a significant influence on organisations (Wooldridge et al., 2008). In this article, we refer to leaders who are also managers. This is because leadership creates uncertainty and change in the organisation by developing visions and motivating people to follow and take action while management reduces uncertainties by coordinating and implementing the leaders' vision (Kotter, 1987; House and Aditya, 1997). Middle-level managers are important mediators between disconnected actors in the organisation for example between top-level and lower-level managers (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1999). Literature also highlights the role of middle-level managers as important change agents within organisations (Huy, 2002). A number of scholars emphasise middle-level managers' issue-selling, synthesiser, and facilitator roles (Beatty and Lee, 1992; Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Ling et al., 2005; Wooldridge et al., 2008). They argue that middle-level managers can influence and promote strategic change within an organisation both upwards to the top-level management and downwards to lower-level management and employees. When middle-level managers have excluded from strategy related conversations within organisations it can lead to demotivation and alienation, which hinders the process of strategy implementation (Westley, 1990). Moreover, during any change process, organisations might face resistance from employees due to the uncertainties about the future and the anticipated losses that the change might bring (Adriaenssen and Johannessen, 2016). Thus, middle-level managers can influence employees, as they are closer to the employees than the top-level managers (Herzig and Jimmieson, 2006). Middle managers play several roles during these processes including the role of communicators, supporters, trainers, mediators, and resistance managers (Ionescu et al., 2014). The scholars argue that middle managers have great influence as they communicate information about the change, support the change, train employees about the change, mediate between all levels of organisational stakeholders concerning the change, and manage employee resistance to change, as they are closest to employees.

It is important to notice that consistent and reciprocal expectations between top-level managers and middle-level managers are significant because inconsistent expectation form top-level managers can create role conflict and ambiguity for the middle-level leaders which can prevent them from performing their influential role of strategy implementation (Currie and Procter, 2005). This research work along with others (e.g.,

Wiersema and Bantel, 1992), draw attention on the significance of top-level managers' role as well during organisational change processes. Top-level managers also play a key role in organisational change as the designing and management of the change is their responsibility (Albrecht, 2002). Top level managers are the 'thinkers' of change strategies; thus, they need to make sure that middle-level managers or the 'doers' understand the change strategy clearly as their role is to implement the change (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992). These scholars also argue that operational-level managers have a significant role as well as their support for the change strategy is one of the key factors for the success of the change. In short, literature emphasises the role of middle-level managers, top-level managers, and operational level managers in influencing successful organisational change, respectively, while also emphasising mutual involvement from all levels as well. This indicates that decentralised organisational structures are preferred to influence change through values. Organisations with relaxed structures have higher levels of employee involvement than organisations with hierarchical structures (Rangus and Salvec, 2017). Decentralised organisations also have higher levels of managerial/ leadership discretion as they have more freedom to pursue their own objectives and have the opportunity to use their values in order to have an influence (Buchholtz et al., 1999; Hambrick, 2007; Caruana et al., 2002). This raises the need to examine whether the same applies to the role of leadership values influencing change towards sustainability practices within organisations and to what extent involvement from all levels can be effective.

2.2 Leadership values, communication, and change management

Communication is about an exchange, flow of information, and sharing of ideas from one person to another (Craig and Brennan, 2012). Organisational communication is understood as the "Process by which information is exchanged and understood between two or more people, usually with the intent to motivate or influence behaviour" [Daft, (1997), p.560]. It is this motivational and influential power of communication that makes communication a fundamental element for organisational change management. Communication is the 'glue' that keeps the organisational change together (Barrett, 2002). The initiation and maintenance of organisational change are dependent on communication (Witherspoon and Wohler, 1996). In other words, the ways through which the change strategy and the reason for the change are communicated determine the success of the change. Communication improves leader-subordinate relationships, which is essential during change processes (Riggio et al., 2003). Some scholars (e.g., Penley and Hawkins, 1985) link the effectiveness of change communication with leadership and the different levels of leaders in the organisational hierarchy. The effectiveness of the change communication depends on collaboration from all three levels of managers, especially the top managers as they can create a culture that encourages communication, which is crucial for the success of the change (Frahm and Brown, 2007). Communication is an information processing activity that reduces the change related uncertainties, which change adopters might have (Frahm and Brown, 2007). The scholars argue that there should be common communication styles between the leaders and the change adopters such as face-to-face communication and information sharing about the change to eliminate rumours and grapevine discussions, which create uncertainty and fear about the change among employees thus resulting in change resistance. Resistance to change is one of the key factors leading to the failure of change strategies (Waddell and Sohal, 1998).

Clear and honest communication can be crucial for eliminating employees change resistance (Pina e Cunha et al., 2009). The scholars argue that these communication methods signal care, transparency and authenticity, and they foster feelings of safety, which reduces disputes in the organisation. These feelings of safety can in turn increase employees' acceptance of change as the anticipated dangers of uncertainty are minimised. This is consistent with Habermas's (1984) *Theory of Communicative Action* where he argues that the speaker should speak with truth, normative rightness, adequacy, sincerity, and comprehensibility in order for the listener to validate the speaker's message and reach mutual understanding. Additionally, constant and detailed communication is essential during change processes as it enables employees to give their feedback and comments concerning the change (Koh et al., 2014). Structured, direct, interpersonal, and face-to-face communication helps to translate key strategy related messages to the employees (Barrett, 2002). This scholar argues that top-level managers and middle-level managers should be responsible for this communication up, down, and across the organisation. It is proven in literature that structured communication improves the quality of exchanging information (Marshall et al., 2008). Direct communication is an effective way for changing behaviours and it includes requests, recommendation and promises (Mohr and Nevin, 1990). Face-to-face communication helps to develop relationships as it reflects the personal characteristics of the communicators (Sethi and Seth, 2009). Speaking in pronouns in the organisational setting instead of using organisational titles can lead to symmetrical relationships, which can facilitate and enhance communication (Habermas, 1970). The symmetrical relationships will also create an environment where internal stakeholders from all levels in the organisation can communicate freely without fear (Felts, 1992). Gilley et al. (2009) introduce motivation as another significant factor that is essential for the process of communicating with employees in order to influence them to accept organisational change. Koh et al. (2014) suggest empowerment. These scholars argue that motivational and empowerment skills of leaders are part of their communication skills that play a key role in influencing employees as part of change management. Leaders should motivate employees through communication by reflecting their own values and beliefs, expressing the benefits of the change for the employees, and talking in a language that focuses on 'we' instead of 'I' (Gill, 2002; Gilley et al., 2009). On the one hand, motivation gives employees the confidence and willingness to participate and contribute to organisational strategy implementation (Dess and Picken, 2000). On the other hand, empowering employees through communication will give them a sense of power, knowledge, and self-confidence to do what should be done in the change process (Gill, 2002).

A small number of research works explore the importance of communicating leadership values for influencing employees organisational change readiness. These scholars state that values give coherence to the messages communicated (Darling and Beebe, 2007). During change processes, it is significant to overcome the barriers to the change in order to implement the change successfully. Therefore, it is significant to influence employees so that they accept and support the change process (Shvindina, 2017). This can be carried out through transforming the values of the employees to those values that are supportive of the intended change (Luthra and Dahiya, 2015). This is where communication is significant as values should be expressed and enacted in order to be perceived (Darling and Beebe, 2007). Storytelling is a significant communication method for successful organisational change (Barry, 1997; Wilson, 2019). Storytelling is

an effective communication method for transmitting values, sparking action, sharing knowledge, and fostering collaboration (Denning, 2006). Storytelling leads to good dialogue among leaders and employees, this influences employees to go through reflection and re-evaluate their values and behaviours (Skordoulis and Dawson, 2007). This can lead to value congruence, which creates an effective environment for successful change (Marginson, 2009).

Marginson (2009) develops a framework linking leadership values, communication, and organisational change without focusing on sustainability. His research work is a case study based on a single organisation wishing to implement a new value system. He finds that leaders' values can be used as management control mechanisms in order to influence the behaviours of employees to accept change and these control systems can be transmitted through communication. The scholar argues that values are seen as 'fit for purpose' meaning that values allow leaders to influence employees according to the preferred goal through different values. This indicates that different values can be associated with influencing employees for different change purposes. Regarding communication, Marginson finds formal methods of communication such as newsletters, mission statements, e-mails, and team briefs to be partially effective in transmitting leaders' values to employees for the purpose of influencing them to accept change. This is because the aforementioned communication channels only partially resulted in value congruence while creating unintended negative effects such as polarisation of attitudes, disruption to core activities, project redundancy, and social tensions. According to Marginson these communication methods were only partially effective because as the respondents in his work stated, documents (e.g., mission statements) were no longer relevant, the suffered through the extremely long team briefings, and answers to their questions were too reinforced. Thus, we can argue there is need to further investigate how communication should be carried out to achieve leader-employee value congruence and avoid risks that arise from value incongruence. This investigation should be based on several organisations in order to find as much communication methods as possible (Marginson, 2009).

2.3 Change towards sustainability practices

A widely accepted definition of sustainable development is that by Brundtland Commission in 1987, which defines sustainability as "The development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p.8). Sustainable development includes social, economic and environmental aspects reflected in the triple-bottom-line concept (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002). The environmental aspect reflects the responsible use of renewable and non-renewable resources and the protection and preservation of the biodiversity and the natural environment (Hansmann et al., 2012). The social aspect reflects the sustaining of equality, protection of human health, and the promotion of personal development (Hansmann et al., 2012). The economic aspect reflects ensuring employment, enhancing human capital (Hansmann et al., 2012), ensuring fair price, and balancing shareholder value with other stakeholders (Van Marrewijk and Werre, 2003) to improve the economy and increase the well-being of all individuals (Sheth et al., 2010).

There is a growing interest among business and non-business organisations to adopt social, environmental, and economic sustainability practices within their organisations (Bansal and McKnight, 2009). Therefore, this has led to a growing interest among

academic scholars to look for the most effective tools and methods on how to successfully change in order to integrate sustainable practices within organisations. A significant number of scholars' link leadership values with sustainability practices (Flannery and May, 1994; Hemingway, 2005; Barber, 2011). Florea et al. (2013) present four values that lead to different axes of sustainability practices. First, they link leadership values of altruism, empathy, and private self-effacement to environmental and social sustainability. Second, they link positive norm of reciprocity to economic sustainability. These scholars argue that individuals who value private self-effacement are honest. Honesty is also a self-transcendent value that has been widely associated with social and environmental sustainability as mentioned above. They further argue that positive norm of reciprocity enhances commitment and performance, which can, in turn, enhance organisational performance and lead to economic sustainability, also supported by Guest (2011). Moreover, Steg and Vlek (2009), Gifford and Nilsson (2014) and De Dominicis et al. (2017) also link altruism to environmental sustainability as this value is involved with the concern for health and safety of others. In addition, Ericson et al. (2014) link empathy to environmental sustainability while Decety (2011) argues that it is about sharing and understanding others' feelings thus it has a strong link to social sustainability as well. Leaders values of trust and integrity are also linked with social and environmental sustainability because the value of trust helps break barriers among people, which make a pluralistic society while the value of integrity induces actions that take into account empathy (Williams and Turnbull, 2015).

We can notice that literature presents the relationship between leadership values and sustainability practices without explicitly focusing on the role of leadership values in the context of influencing employees' change readiness for the intended change. Literature also lacks in explaining how leaders can translate their values to employees in order to influence them to accept change towards sustainability practices. We fill this gap by extending Marginson's (2009) framework and adding sustainability as the intended change. We explore which values mediate the relationship between leadership and employees' sustainability-related change readiness. We also explore how communication can help to effectively avoid the risk of leader-employee conflicting values and moderate the relationship between leadership values and employees' sustainability-related change readiness. We also explore how leaders' position in the organisation affects this process.

3 Research method

For answering our research questions, it was important to select a region that could be used to determine the context of the study. Thus, we selected 8 organisations operating in the UK so that relevant information related to the personal values of leaders, communication, and sustainable development within a particular region can be obtained. We selected these organisations because they are part of the 100 most sustainable organisations in the UK (Strauss, 2019) and they were willing to participate.

3.1 Data collection

3.1.1 Sample

In terms of the data collection, we used a convenience sample since there was limited access to the leaders of these organisations (Etikan et al., 2015). We sent letters to 45 leaders from these organisations in the UK inviting them to participate in the study. These were then followed by telephone calls and reminder e-mails. In addition, we provided a clear research purpose to the leaders to make sure that they were convinced to participate in our research (Maruster, 2013). A total of 25 leaders from these eight selected organisations agreed to participate. One of the authors collected the data directly starting from the last half of 2016 to the first half of 2018 through Skype. The participants came from different industries including energy, real estate, professional services, retail, and telecommunications. They had diverse experiences at a different managerial position in the organisations including top-level and mid-level positions such as sustainability consultants, directors, chairpersons, chief marketing officer, project leaders, executive officer, chief sustainability officer, executive officer assistant, and team leaders. For some, this was their first work experience in leadership positions, while others had from 2 to 15 years of work experience as leaders (see Appendix A for the profiles of interviewees).

3.1.2 Interviews

We employed semi-structured interviews. The questions were also developed based on the model we have presented in our first article (Appendix B). We asked the participants seven open-ended questions. First, we asked the interviewees about their position in the organisations and their leadership experience. This helped us to understand their level of leadership in the organisation. This can help us to examine whether the positions of leaders in the organisation determine the effectiveness of the process by which these leaders communicate their values in order to influence employees to accept change towards sustainability practices. Second, we asked them about their understanding of sustainability in order to know which axes of sustainability they focus on more. This was necessary to investigate whether different espoused values of leaders influence different axes of sustainability including social, environmental, and economic. Third, we asked them about their sustainability related decision-making experiences. This was necessary to understand whether the leaders acted according to their values or not. It was also important to analyse the level of managerial discretion that these leaders possessed in their organisations. Through this question, we were also able to observe the leadership style they associate most with the process of communicating their values to employees. Fourth, we asked them which values are considered the most effective in influencing their employees to accept change towards sustainability practices during the aforementioned situations concerning sustainability related decision-making. This helped us to answer our first research question.

Fifth, to answer our second research question, we asked them how they communicated with employees during sustainability related decision-making situations. This was necessary to understand which communication methods or skills they associate with each different value and sustainability axes. Sixth, we asked whether they faced any challenges when communicating their values to employees. This was necessary to investigate the risks associated with this process and how these risks can be avoided.

As each interview was open-ended, there was no limitation of expression and the participants responded freely. Each session lasted from 20 minutes to one hour. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants for later transcription. The participants did not want their names to be mentioned therefore we used aliases. To ensure the confidentiality of the data from research participants, no information has been shared with anyone apart from the authors (Baez, 2002).

We concluded the data collection process once we realised that new data would not add value to our research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Sandelowski, 2008; Given, 2015) and that our data is sufficient for answering our research questions as well (Legard et al., 2003). For example, the leadership values started to repeat among interviews. Similarly, communication methods and skills started to repeatedly focus on the importance of communicating in order to build trust and involve employees with the process.

3.2 Data analysis

In this article we carry out a thematic analysis following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006).

3.2.1 Familiarising with data and data transcription

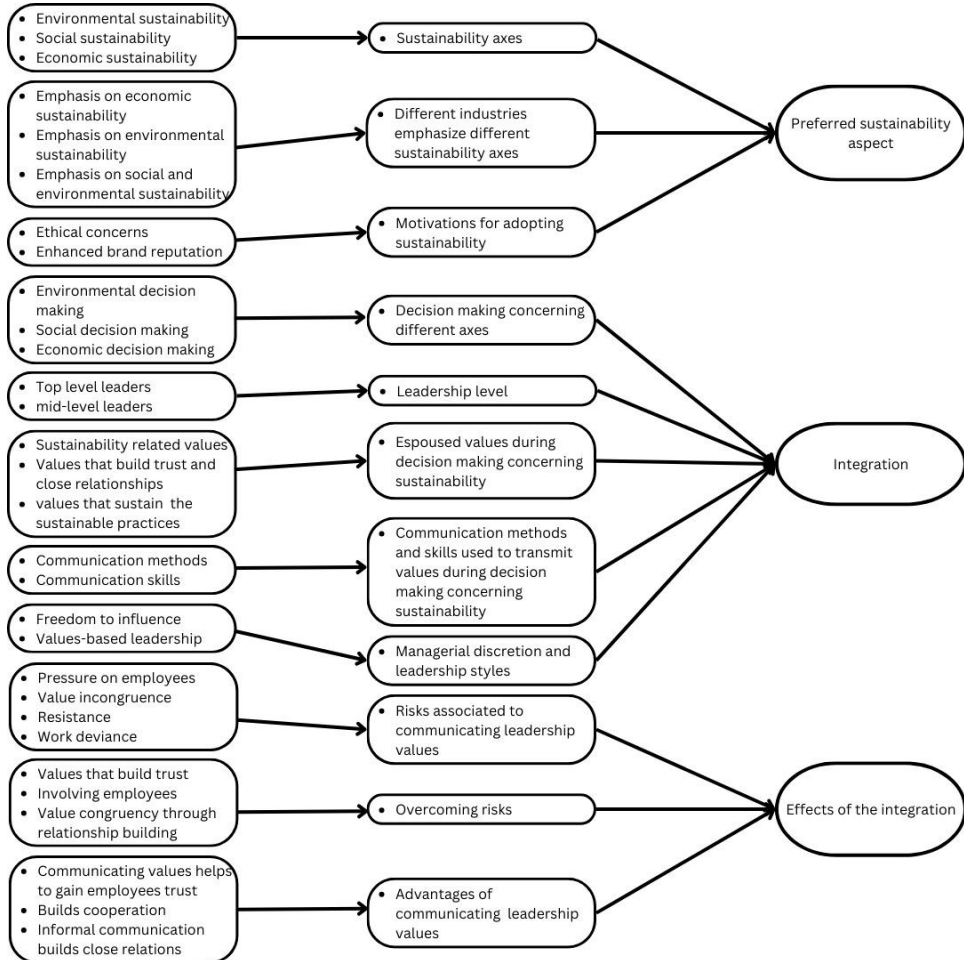
After collecting the data, we transcribed them as soon as possible in order to make it easier for the analysis process (Bailey, 2008). This step helped us to familiarise ourselves with the data and identify the potential emerging patterns that would make the coding process easier. Next, we imported the transcriptions to NVivo 11 Pro. In this article, we use a hybrid approach of qualitative methods of thematic analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). We use deductive priori coding approach (Crabtree and Miller, 1999) and data-driven inductive approach by Boyatzis (1998) to make sure we are answering our research questions and that we are not neglecting any data that could be important and relevant to our research. We also use an iterative reflexive approach by travelling between existing literature and our data in order to have a better vision of potentially emerging themes. Following the example of Tobin and Begley (2004), we used an iterative and reflexive process. We undertook the data collection and data analysis simultaneously by continuously rereading the previous stages before conducting further analysis during each stage to make sure that each theme or dimension is well saturated.

3.2.2 Generating initial steps

We coded as many information from the dataset as we could that might potentially develop into relevant themes. We coded information regarding the different variables in our research questions. For example, we coded raw information such as “The soil after utilization of such fertilizer would become unfertile after 8–10 year. [...] I declined the production of such fertilizer” and combined them under a code which we named ‘environmental decision-making’. We applied a similar process to the remaining data. During our second stage of coding, we used a similar process to the first stage of coding. For example, we coded raw data mentioning “[...] The degradation of environment” or “[...] We need to source the right material” into a code and named it ‘environmental sustainability’ (see Figure 1). We applied a similar approach to the rest of the data.

Figure 1 includes all of our codes. To ensure that our codes are applicable to our raw data (Boyatzis, 1998) we re-read the raw data and observed whether similar codes would appear. This process confirmed that our codes were sufficient and no new codes could emerge. As a result of the first stage of coding, 30 codes emerged (see Figure 1). We grouped the 30 codes into 11 categories depending on the relevance and relationship between each code (left part of Figure 1).

Figure 1 Data structure



3.2.3 Searching, reviewing, and naming themes

We searched for further relationships between and among these codes in each category by engaging in axial coding (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) in order to integrate the elements as much as we can. As a result, 11 themes emerged (central part of Figure 1). We reread our entire dataset again to make sure that our themes work in relation to our dataset, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). When we found that no new codes could emerge into new themes or add value to our existing themes, we ended with the 11 themes. We

labelled our themes in sentences or phrases in order to capture the complete idea behind each theme as suggested by Sandelowski and Leeman (2012). Appendix B includes some quotations that support each of our themes. We also used iterative reflexive approach, by travelling between literature and our data, which allowed us to find more specific relationship between our data, and emerging themes. For example, we compared Marginson's (2009) framework and the framework we develop in our first article (Appendix A) to our data. By doing so, we were able to better integrate our codes and find specific relationships that helped us to develop our framework. As suggested by Tuckett (2005), this step enhanced our analysis by sensitising us about subtle features in our data.

3.2.4 Creating dimensions

We searched for abstraction of more relationships among the themes, which helped us to develop a storyline to present our findings. Thus, it was necessary to combine our relevant themes into three dimensions (right part of Figure 1) to help us portray our findings in a storyline as suggested by Birks et al. (2009) and Vaismoradi et al. (2016). The first three themes included information about how the leaders define sustainability, which aspect of sustainability they consider most, and their motivation for doing so. Therefore, we combined the themes and labelled the first dimension 'preferred sustainability aspect'. The following five themes included information about a decision-making situation in which the leaders were able to successfully influence their employees to accept the change towards sustainability practices. They also included information about what was their leadership style, which values they used to carry out this influence, which communication methods they used, which of their communication skills were useful, what level of discretion they had to carry out this influence, and which sustainability practices resulted from this influencing process. We combined the five themes and labelled the second dimension 'integration' which includes data revealing the leadership style, values, communication, level of leadership discretion needed to influence employees' acceptance of change towards different sustainability practices. The dimension is an integration of different variables that influence sustainability practices. The following three themes include information about the advantages and risks of communicating leadership values to influence change towards sustainability practices, and how to avoid these risks. We combined the three themes and labelled our third dimension 'effects of the integration'. Therefore, our dimensions are complementary and together they give a storyline.

3.2.5 Validity and reliability

For reliability and validity purposes, we shared our (Figure 1) and analysis with our interviewees in order to validate whether our themes and dimensions are representative of our raw data (Mantere et al., 2013). Some of the interviewees reached back to us and confirmed that our framework was representative of their answers and experiences.

4 Findings

In this section, we present our findings included in the three dimensions. The first dimension ‘preferred sustainability aspect’ includes the interviewees’ perception and understanding of sustainability, how each leader prefers a certain aspect of sustainability to the others, and their motivation for doing so. The second dimension ‘integration’ includes the relationship between our three key variables, leadership values, communication, and change towards sustainability practices. The third dimension ‘effects of the integration’ includes the advantages and risks of communicating leadership values to employees in order to influence them to accept the change towards sustainable practices and how to avoid these risks.

4.1 Preferred sustainability aspect

Sustainability can have a different meaning for different people. This applies to the organisational context as well. Different leaders’ value different aspects of sustainability. It is important to identify which aspects are more significant for each leader to understand which values and communication methods they associate with each aspect. Some leaders only emphasise the role of the environmental aspect of sustainability. For example, Richard who is a chairman of his organisation states “[...] Sustainability is important for all of us including the organisation and me. Sustainability ensures the productivity of the organisation and protects wastage of resources, which make the organisation profitable.” Similarly, Collette, a senior director, states, “In simple words, I define sustainability as to be healthy in the long-term. Certainly, dealing with the climate issue is one of the cores aims behind sustainability.”

Victoria who has more than two years of experience working as a global sustainability director states, “[...] Sustainability is related with the wide-ranging topics such as management of the company’s responsible sourcing, administering the production programs and looking after the company’s global tree planting program.” We can interpret Victoria’s answer about administering production programs as social sustainability because production also involves labour. Sara, an executive officer assistant, mentions the higher significance of social sustainability than environmental sustainability

“For me as well as my company, sustainability plays an important role at local as well as global level. My company considers every step and action keeping in mind the sustainability aspect of the environment. [...] In order to maintain the brand promise, the organisation tries to keep the well-being of all the millions of customers in the country and overseas. [...] Therefore, we are more concerned with the social aspects and we look for sustainability in every action that we are taking.”

This indicates that social sustainability is more significant for her and her company. Paul, emphasises on social sustainability as well as he states, “[...] Sustainability is to work for the betterment of everyone related with us directly or indirectly...”

For Steven, both social and environmental sustainability are equally important. Steven states, “[...] We look forward to fulfil social obligations and that is how we consider being sustainable.” Moreover, he shows the importance of environmental sustainability as well “I ensure that the people living in the area that I am handling are effectively consuming energy without wasting unnecessary amount. [...] I believe it is

my department's obligation that we help our consumers in understanding how to efficiently use the energy with lesser wastage." William who is leading a team of 420 employees emphasises social and environmental sustainability while also presenting the advantages of adopting sustainability. He argues, "[...] We must take responsibility towards all stakeholders and our environment. [...] I believe that sustainability brings stability to the company. The members of the organisation develop a passion and a vision for themselves, and they get clear about what they have to achieve in the organisation." William further argues that adopting sustainability practices brings employees together and creates a participatory environment "[...] With sustainability, the culture of the organisation becomes participatory, and hence all the people contribute to its development. [...] Therefore, it becomes easier for me to make the people perform and it becomes easier for the company to achieve its business goals." In fact, the majority of the interviewees emphasise social and environmental aspects of sustainability. Nevertheless, for Blythe economic sustainability has great significance. He argues, "[...] During our experience I have viewed that the cases of fraud and manipulation in the financial accounts and the risk management framework are other consequences of lack of sustainability into business disciplines."

A small number of interviewees emphasise the significance of all three aspects of sustainability. Joanne who is a project leader states, "[...] For me, the economic sustainability is most important, although the social and environmental sustainability are also important. Though economic sustainability is essential to sustain economic growth, but at the same time, social and environmental sustainability are also important for a company to be accepted by the society at large." Joanne identifies the advantages of all three sustainability aspects. She associates economic sustainability with the long-term wellbeing of all individuals. She also associates the other two sustainability aspects with strong company image and reputation. Similarly, David, a senior leader (chief marketing officer), also emphasises the three aspects of sustainability as he states "Sustainability is the process of managing social, economic and environmental aspects with respect to business."

We can conclude that leaders mostly focus on the aspects of social and environmental sustainability. The motivation for valuing these aspects is due to the improved company reputation and strong brand image associated with these sustainability aspects. Nevertheless, some of the interviewees stress the importance of ethical consideration these sustainability aspects cover. The economic aspect of sustainability is the least emphasised. This can be due to the fact that only two leaders are from an organisation that works in the field of professional services, concerning financial consultancy those are Joanne and Blythe. Leaders who work in the real estate and energy industries mainly stress on the importance of environmental sustainability such as Richard, Collette, and Steven. This can be due to the large environmental footprint through carbon emissions that these two industries create. Leaders working in the telecommunication and retail industries stress on the significance of environmental sustainability while focusing more on the social aspect such as Paul, Sara, and David. This can be due to the nature of the work of these organisations as they work directly with the customers and thus must have an excellent reputation to attract customers. In short, leaders working in different industries emphasise different aspects of sustainability. This is important to understand as the values of leaders being associated with sustainability aspects might also differ

depending on the industry these leaders work for. Table 1 summarises which aspect of sustainability each leader from different industry emphasises.

Table 1 Different industries and sustainability aspects

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Sustainability aspect</i>
Richard	Energy	Environmental
Collette	Energy	Environmental
Robert	Real estate	Environmental
Sara	Retail	Social sustainability
Paul	Retail	Social sustainability
Blythe	Professional services	Economic
Victoria	Retail	Social and environmental
Steven	Energy	Social and environmental
William	Telecommunication	Social and environmental
Joanne	Professional services	Economic, social, and environmental
David	Retail	Economic, social, and environmental

4.2 Integration

The values of leaders play a pivotal role in setting goals and objectives for organisations. Leadership values also help in dealing with different people and situations paving the way for sustainability in a clear and precise manner. Nevertheless, it is important that leaders display consistency between their behaviour and the espoused values. This is significant as a lack of congruence between values espoused and enacted undermines perceived integrity, trust and credibility of the leader (O'Neill et al., 2017).

All of our interviewees show congruence between their espoused values and their behaviour. For example, when the interviewees were asked about whether they have been involved in a decision concerning sustainability, Archie states,

“Yes, I was involved in such a situation. I was at the position of advisor to the board of the project. An issue related to sustainability emerged in which high-quality fertilizer was of concern. There was a concept that showed that if we use a mixture of chemical, it will raise the productivity of the soil by just double. It was a good idea, but there was some side effect of that fertilizer as well. The soil after utilization of such fertilizer would become infertile after 8–10 years or the productivity of the soil decrease tremendously. I was asked whether the company should go for the production of such fertilizer because I was serving the company as an advisor. I was aware of the side effect of the fertilizer so I declined the production of such fertilizer.”

We can notice that regardless of the short-term profitability that the use of the fertilisers would bring, Archie was consistent with his values and looked at the long-term consequences of using the fertilisers. Archie behaved according to his values of integrity, honesty, responsibility, and accountability. In this example, we can argue that values of responsibility and accountability mediated the relationship between his role as a leader and the influencing of change towards environmental sustainability practices. Archie states, “[...] The values that I attach to sustainability personally and also as a leader, and that I think they are important to each leader to have, are knowing responsibility and

accountability values as I told you before.” We can see that Archie took responsibility and accountability by refusing to go with the fertilisers, as they would turn the land infertile in the future. Moreover, when these values reached the employees, they also started to realise the negative implications of the fertilisers and accepted the decision not to use them. Archie translated these two values to the employees in order to influence their acceptance of the decision through open communication. He openly communicated the hazards and risks of going with the unsustainable fertilisers. Archie states,

“[...] I prefer to have open communication with my co-workers. This helps me understand others perspective and there is always a healthy argument based on which you can get the desired solution or even helps decide. After a lot of open discussion on the pro and cons of the use of fertilizer, I knew that there is more possibility of the side effect of the fertilizer and I need to communicate with the employees. [...] I said that we can go for production because we do not have evidence of side effect but what if the side effect of the fertilizer would be a disaster. Then I said the possibility of the side effect is much more. Therefore, we should not go for the production of the fertilizer. Because I had a detailed discussion with the team, I think I was able to show them the power of the chemicals, which is to be used in the fertilizer. In this way, I convinced them.”

In addition, Archie openly communicated two more values that made the employees trust him and follow his decision. The values, honesty and integrity, facilitated and increased the opportunity for Archie to translate his values of responsibility and accountability as the values created trust between him and his employees, which made them listen and follow him. Archie states, “[...] I also attach integrity and honesty with sustainability to some extent because if a leader is honest and truthful everyone in the organisation can trust him and follow him.” Thus, the values of integrity and honesty along with open communication moderated the relationship between transmitting leaders’ values of accountability and responsibility and influencing change towards environmental sustainability practices.

Colette also stresses on the mediating effect of integrity while emphasising the moderating effect of autonomy and commitment for influencing employees’ acceptance of environmentally sustainable practices. She states, “I will tell you about a project I’m working on ... It is a great project to reflect our company’s consideration towards the preservation of non-renewable energy resources. I’m assigned the responsibility to decision making in order to transform Victoria to the ambitious developments. [...] I am responsible to make my employees implement this project.” She argues that she emphasised ethical actions when she communicated with the employees. She states,

“I arranged regular meetings. [...] Regular communication isn’t about pressurising others as I believe that it’s more concerned with persuading others. [...] I showed the employees my integrity and encouraged them to take ethical actions in every situation they find necessary beyond this program, actually, I always tell them to commit to ethical action in every situation. You see we must teach them (employees) how to be autonomous in their decision making and commit to their values to sustain results, believe me, I have witnessed such results.”

We can notice that integrity encouraged ethical actions in employees thus it acted as a mediator while autonomy and commitment influenced consistency in the sustainability-related practices of employees and helped to sustain these practices, therefore, these two values have a moderating effect. Regular communication moderated the relationship

between Colette's values of integrity, autonomy, and commitment and the employees' acceptance and consistency of environmentally sustainable practices.

Paul who is a chief sustainability officer and has ten years of experience as a leader explains his opinion about the values that he associates to social sustainability. He states,

"[...] I designed the strategies for guaranteeing minimum prices and social premium to the farmers already dealing with the wider level issues such as climatic changes, drought, diseases, political instability. It relates with tea farming to help the farmers in generating and securing a sustainable supply chain in relation to the most favourite drink of the UK, tea while preserving it for the future generation of UK."

Paul faced difficulties after taking this socially responsible decision, however, through communication during meetings he was able to translate his value of integrity to the employees in order to influence them to think ethically and accept his decision. Paul states,

"[...] Conflicting values of the employees with that of the business values indicated in the project of was at the stake. The issue was resolved through honest information sharing and listening by allowing export partners as well as farmers to collaborate in sharing their opinions. [...] They (employees) started to think ethically with integrity. We arranged meetings with the farmers, academic, advisory board as well as employees in order to make them listen as well as to listen to them. Periodic meetings were necessary for gathering different opinions and thoughts and for the employees to re-evaluate their thoughts about the discounts."

We can notice that while communicating honestly to the employees about the difficulties the farmers had to go through, Paul was able to inculcate his value of integrity in his employees. Paul states, "[...] I consider honesty as vital pillars of my strategy too. It makes employees trust you and have confidence in your words." Thus, the value of integrity mediated the relationship between Paul's role as a leader and employees' acceptance of the socially sustainable practice while honesty and periodic meetings moderated this process.

It is important to notice that Paul and Colette define the value of integrity differently from Archie. Archie mentions honesty and integrity inseparably. He perceives the two values as being truthful as he states "[...] I also attach integrity and honesty with sustainability to some extent because if a leader is honest and truthful everyone in the organisation can trust him and follow him." Therefore, in Archie's situation, honesty and integrity build employees' trust in the leader and make them follow listen and follow his decision. In this case, integrity has a moderating effect. On the other hand, Paul and Colette define integrity as related ethics, which is the basis of sustainability. Paul states, "[...] they (employees) started to think ethically with integrity." While Colette states, "[...] I showed the employees my integrity and encouraged them to take ethical actions..." In these cases, integrity is directly linked with sustainability as it influenced the employees to think and act ethically, thus, it has a mediating effect.

Another interviewee, Feilim, who has seven years of experience as a leader states,

"[...] I participated in recycling initiatives. Connecting customers from different cities and areas of the UK require building a large network for connecting everyone with great ease. My role was to enhance accessibility towards the recycling services. 2 million devices have been recycled. Products include phones, tablets as well as other smart devices. In the decision-making process related to the sustainability change or any business change it is highly

crucial for employees to be certain that the change implementation would not result of their layoffs. It was my job to make them satisfied with their job during and after the implementation of the sustainability change within our organisation.”

Feilim highlights the importance of ensuring that employees are well managed during the change process. This is significant as employees’ fear about losing their job during change processes is one of the reasons that uncertainties about the change emerge and lead to resistance to the change from the employees. Feilim further explains how he managed this situation through his values of trust, loyalty, and humility. First, he mentions the significance of loyalty for influencing sustainability-related change as his loyalty to his sustainability-related work presented him as a role model and inspired the employees to follow him. He states, “[...] If your followers or employees saw your loyalty to your work, followers and organisation [...] they will follow you and your vision of any change you want to make in the organisation.” Thus, the value of loyalty mediated the relationship between his role as a leader and the employees’ acceptance of his environmentally sustainable practice. Second, he mentions the significance of trust and humility as well. He was able to satisfy and convince the employees to accept the change through the trust he built with the employees and through being humble which creates close relationships with the employees. He states,

“[...] If they (employees) trust you and see that that you share with them everything they will listen and follow your vision. Also, a truthful and humble leader is successful in connecting with followers emotionally while accepting mistakes and creating methods to accomplish team goals and meet organisational expectations in this way, humility supports sustainable development for continued future positive outcomes with the team and the organisation.”

Thus, Feilim influenced his employees to accept his sustainable practices by showing them his loyalty to these practices through being humble and building trust with the employees. Humility and trust moderated the relationship between his value of loyalty and employees’ acceptance of environmentally sustainable practices. Third, Feilim argues that he was able to show his loyalty and humility, and build trust with employees through various communication methods

“[...] I plan day outs more often than group communication on the extranet portals. We are able to express ourselves and act more during these informal outing. At some occasions, social media sites were also helpful in making communication without any time and space boundaries. I always try to coordinate my actions through clearing and simplification of the communication in order to reduce conflicts and ambiguities.”

Thus, informal communication methods such as discussions during a group outing, social media, simple and clear language moderated the relationship between Feilim’s values of loyalty, humility, and trust and his employees’ acceptance of the change towards environmental sustainability practices.

Susan also emphasises the mediating effect of loyalty and optimism for influencing employees’ acceptance of environmentally sustainable practices. She states, “In my line of business, I have a choice of either pushing the sale of the products that are less sustainable in comparison to other product types. I have always relied on choosing the alternatives that have supported sustainability such as O2 Refresh, universal charger, phones of eco-rating, etc.” She argues that her loyalty to society and her customers’ work

inspires her employees to become loyal as well and support her sustainability-related decisions. She states, “My loyalty to our customers by providing sustainable high-quality products and my loyalty to the protection of the environment by choosing to push for the sale of sustainable products inspired my employees and they became supportive of my decisions...” She also mentions that optimism makes employees open to sustainability practices. She states,

“I am always optimistic about situations and ready to come up with solutions for that instead of fretting over the issues. It influences my employees to view sustainability in a positive light. [...] I prefer collaborative and direct communication as it is easier to come up with strategic decisions and promoting an optimistic environment instead of indirect communication which creates ambiguities.”

We can notice that collaborative and direct communication moderates the relationship between Susan’s values of loyalty and optimism and employees’ acceptance of the change towards environmentally sustainable practices.

John, who is a project leader, explains his experience regarding sustainability

“[...] There was a situation in the UK when the electricity-generating activity of our company was considered as a key source for emitting carbon. So, I played the role of identifying and depicting the sources which needed to be modified for reducing the emission of carbon which included lowering the intensity of carbon through the generation of electricity, lowering the emission of carbon-related to lose distribution and programs for efficiently using the energy to lower the emission of carbon.”

While delegating this work to his team of ten members he states that his values of responsibility and accountability were significant “[...] A true leader takes responsibility and accountability for his decisions, these values are very related to sustainability.” Thus in this situation, these two values mediated the relationship of his role as a leader in influencing change towards sustainability practices. John was able to express and transmit his value through e-mails and mainly small seminars. John states, “I generally, communicate via meetings or e-mails. Sometimes I also take small seminars. [...] Through these meetings and seminar only, I made them (employees) aware of the alternative and renewable sources of energy, which can be used like solar, hydro and wind energy.” John is mainly concerned about the social and environmental aspects of sustainability

“For me, it (sustainability) is a very significant aspect as the energy is considered as a non-renewable resource. The concept of the use of energy is omnipresent and everyone in each household requires this source for electricity and every other basic need. Sustainability helps to protect the environment naturally, ecological and human health in order to drive innovation and compromise the way of life.”

We can notice that formal communication methods such as e-mails and mainly small seminars moderated the relationship of John transmitting his values to influence change towards environmental and social sustainability practices.

Thomas, a consultant leader with six years of experience, explains why he associates responsibility to economic sustainability. He argues that the challenges facing the economic market were affecting their investment capabilities. This made Thomas take responsibility and influence his employees to take responsibility as well and start implementing sustainable economic practices. Thomas states, “[...] I supported the

organisation in taking decisions that were more likely to bring the company towards sustainability. [...] Let me tell you one of them. It was improving the financial reserves of the company and correctly assessing risk. This created more financial stability in the organisation.” For Thomas as well it is informal discussions that enabled him to inculcate responsibility in his employees “[...] It was an informal conversation with my employees that caught up their attention. [...] I opened small discussions about how our current actions were affecting our investment capabilities. This makes the issue spread through grapevine talks and raises awareness.” In short, responsibility mediated the relationship between Thomas’ role as a leader and the employees’ acceptance of his sustainable economic practice while informal discussions moderated this process.

For William who leads a team of 420 people from different geographical location, the values of honesty and responsibility are significant. When his company asked him about starting a new project, William refused to invest in it due to the negative social implications of the project. He states,

“[...] I was asked to take the decision regarding starting or not starting that project. I analysed the issue and took the views of the stakeholders on the project. I realized the project was not socially responsible, so I did not want to invest in it. [...] Therefore, I suggested that we should not go for this project and we should look for something else. [...] This (project) could have caused sustainability issues for the company in future.”

William thus had to explain to his team and other employees why the project was not accepted. Responsibility mediated the relationship of his role as a leader in influencing change towards sustainability practices. This is because he inculcated the value of responsibility in his employees while explaining the drawbacks of the project to them and thus, he was able to convince them about the decision taken. He used storytelling to communicate with his employees through both face-to-face and virtual communication methods. He states,

“After the project had been rejected, the employees and my team had to be communicated for the same. I did this by telling them a business story. I completely involved them with the case that happened in a hypothetical organisation. This made them believe that what the company did at that time was correct and it took the right decision. After the story session with them, I took their feedback. Most of them agreed to what the company did in that situation and when I got positive feedback from them, I talked to them honestly so they trusted me. [...] I am handling a team of 420 people who are placed at different geographical locations. I lead and manage most of them on the virtual network. I handle a team of 100 people in-house with whom I can communicate face to face.”

We can notice that William emphasises honesty as well. In this case, as well, honesty moderated the process by which he transmitted his value of responsibility to the employees in order to influence them to accept change towards sustainability practices. This is because as he indicates that it was his honesty that led to employees’ trust in him, which in turn made them listen. Moreover, face-to-face storytelling moderated the relationship between William’s values of responsibility and honesty and his in-house employees’ acceptance of the socially sustainable practice while storytelling through virtual channels of communication moderated the same for employees located far from the office.

Table 2 Relationship between leadership values, communication, and change towards sustainability practices

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Mediating values</i>	<i>Argument</i>	<i>Moderating values</i>	<i>Argument</i>	<i>Moderating communication</i>	<i>Argument</i>	<i>Sustainability aspect</i>
Archie	Responsibility Accountability	Refusal to use fertilisers that increase land productivity in the short-term and lead to the long-term infertility of the land in the future	Honesty Integrity (similar definition to honesty)	Honesty and truthfulness build employees' trust in the leader and make employees follow him/her	Open communication	It leads to healthy arguments and sharing of several perspectives. It helps to share the hazards and negative implications of not adopting sustainable practices	Environmental
Colette	Integrity (related to ethics)	Influences ethical actions	Autonomy Commitment	Influences consistency in the sustainability related practices of employees and helps to sustain these practices	Regular communication	It helps to express values consistently and persuade employees	Environmental
Feilim	Loyalty	Shows leader as role model and inspires employees to follow ethical action	Trust	Make employees connect emotionally to the leader, listen to him/her, and follow	Informal communication (group outings and social media)	Group outings make it easier to express ones' self-directly while social media makes it easy to do so indirectly	Environmental
Susan	Loyalty	Loyalty to customers for providing sustainable high-quality products and loyalty for protection of natural environment inspires employees to follow	Humility		Clear and simple language Collaborative communication	Eliminates ambiguities Easy to take into account perspectives of employees as well. Increases employee involvement	Environmental
Steven	Optimism Loyalty	Influences employees to view sustainability in a positive light Being loyal to the environmental practices and passionate about implementing them inspires employees to follow	Friendship	Building friendship aligns employees' perspectives with those of leaders	Direct communication Informal one on one meetings Motivational dialogue	Eliminates ambiguities and promotes optimistic environment Easier to motivate employees Helps to inspire employees to get involved	Environmental
Paul	Integrity (related to ethics)	Influences employees to think and act ethically	Honesty	Builds trust and confidence in the leader	Periodic meetings	Allow all participants to understand a problem clearly and re-evaluate their values	Social

Table 2 Relationship between leadership values, communication, and change towards sustainability practices

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Mediating values</i>	<i>Argument</i>	<i>Moderating values</i>	<i>Argument</i>	<i>Moderating communication</i>	<i>Argument</i>	<i>Sustainability aspect</i>
William	Responsibility	Refusal to pursue practices that have negative social implications	Honesty	Builds trust and confidence in the leader	Storytelling	Involves employees with the situation and illustrates the negative implications of certain practices which enables employees to envision it and reflect on themselves and re-evaluate their values and behaviour	Social
John	Responsibility Accountability	Depicting and modifying work activities that emit carbon harming the environment and human health			E-mails Small seminars	Raising awareness on unethical consequences of current practices and suggesting alternative practices	Environmental and social
Thomas	Responsibility	Depicting unsustainable practices and sustainably assessing risks to improve financial stability			Informal discussions	Raises awareness through grapevine communication	Economic

Steven, who is a middle-level leader, associates the values of loyalty and friendship to environmental sustainability. Steven works in meter installation and implements sustainability practices “I ensure that the people living in the area that I am handling are effectively consuming energy without wasting unnecessary amount. [...] You see, the task I give my subordinates are to assist locals in understanding energy use is not always endorsed by my company directly and so it becomes a kind of overtime activity.” He argues that although this activity is not obligatory, he influences his employees to carry it out by influencing their values. First, he mentions that loyalty inspired the employees to become loyal as well. He states, “[...] I’m loyal to what I do as I’m passionate about the sustainability subject so it inspires them (employees).” Second, he mentions that friendship made it easier for the employees to follow him and become inspired by his loyalty. He states, “[...] Friends usually have similar perspectives and values so I believe my relationship with them (employees) enabled them to see my loyalty to my passion and work and impacted their decision to follow me.” Therefore, we can see that loyalty mediated the relationship between his role as a leader and his employees’ acceptance of environmentally sustainable practice while friendship moderated this process. Furthermore, informal individual meetings helped Steven to show his loyalty and build friendships. He states, “My method of communication is a team meeting, and also one on one discussion when required.” Nevertheless, he finds personal meetings more effective “[...] I prefer informal personal meetings more than the group as it becomes far easier to motivate one individual and build close relations. Also, the other individual gets enough opportunity to put counter questions, which is good for better clarity. [...] When we (Steven and his employees) discuss one on one it is easier to show how much you care about your work.” Therefore, informal individual meetings moderated the relationship between his values of loyalty and friendship and his employees’ acceptance of environmentally sustainable practices. While referring to the situation where he asks his employees to assist the locals he states, “In such a situation, motivation skills come handy.” This indicates that leaders’ motivational communication skills are also moderate this process for facilitating the process of influencing employees.

Steven also presents another variable, which is leadership style. Steven highlights the role of transformational leadership in the process of integrating leadership values, communication, and sustainability, as he believes transformational leaders have the ability to motivate others and inspire them. He states, “[...] I personally link motivation with transformational leadership style as well because inspirational motivation is one its aspects.” Rachel and Blythe also stress on the role of transformational leadership. Rachel states, “[...] My values are all of the transformational leadership styles which allows leaders and managers to reflect the adapting of the needs and corporate values in his goal of changing others.” While Blythe states, “Transformational leadership style was used to communicate my vision and values in front of the employees.” We can notice that it is the values-based nature of this leadership style making the interviewees stress on its role. Table 2 summarises the main arguments in this subsection.

4.3 *Effect of the integration*

The process by which leaders communicate their values in order to influence employees to accept change towards sustainability practices has its implications. This process can be either advantageous or disadvantageous for leaders to bring about change towards sustainable practices. According to Blythe communicating values is not always efficient

and the strength of this process depends on other factors as well. When Blythe's organisation decided to identify and eliminate the practices in their business operations and services that were degrading the environment, as a senior leader, he had to influence employees to start taking responsibility. He states, "I'm talking about the 10-year strategy of 'our green journey', which was initiated in the year 2011." The strategy about traditional sustainability goals is about environmental targets. All the managers were asked to share their ideas for reducing the impact of our business operations and services on the overall environment. "[...] I was asked about the activities which can be introduced in the businesses to the water efficiency based on the full-time equivalent (FTE)." Blythe tried to influence his employees to consume water more responsibly and efficiently by transmitting his value of integrity to the employees as he explains this value is about adhering to ethical principles. He states "[...] it was a situation where I needed to employ my leadership values. Most interestingly integrity is an important one. [...] Sustainability decisions will need to be directed through ethical principles." Blythe tried to transmit integrity through formal communication methods as he explains, "[...] communication included formal meetings, conferences, and presentations." Nevertheless, Blythe argues that after observing the behaviour of employees following our discussion, he found that some of the employees were consuming more water. He states, "[...] Asking the employees to save water is easy but checking and measuring the response given by the employees was a complicated task. [...] you see after I talked with them about our water consumption plans, I found that some of them did not listen ... it is as if they were intentionally letting the water run out of the tap for no reason."

We can notice in this case that the process of communicating values actually led to work deviance and this can be explained through Blythe's answer "There is a possibility that employees start considering the leader as a pressurising force and forcing something which they are not agreed to accept." This could also have resulted from value incongruence among the values of the leader and those of the employees. This is because when Blythe started building close relationships with these employees their behaviour changed and they started to display integrity as well. Blythe states, "[...] To deal with such situation it was necessary to employ the personal values consistent with the values of the employees. Hence maintaining a close relationship between the employees and the leader was the main focus of my management during the water efficiency initiative." Blythe further argues that through informal communication he was able to build closer relationships with employees and thus influence their values and behaviour. He states,

"Communication methods as they are called grapevine methods included casual talks during breaks, lunchtime discussions. [...] I believe that employees can share our vast range of data in a relaxed conversation environment relative to the formalised environment. In the informal environment, employees consider that they are heard... They are allowed to pass gestures. They can nod ... They can smile ... they can share their aggression ... in short, they connected."

This indicates that informal communication methods are more effective for influencing employees through values than formal communication methods. It is important to notice that Blythe's answer does not imply that communicating values is disadvantageous; it is rather the values incongruence that leads to complications. Thus, we can argue that building close relationships with employees can be carried out effectively through informal communication which moderated the relationship between Blythe's sustainability related value of integrity and employees' acceptance of the change towards

the environmental sustainability practices. This is also consistent with Louise's opinion that emphasises on achieving value congruency through close relationships, which can be built by communicating with employees. He states,

"As the topic of your thesis suggests there is a great role of personal values of leader and communication in the processes of change toward sustainability... However, these values should be consistent with the mutually agreed values rather than dealing in an independent manner. [...] Employees trust and cooperation can be one of the aspects... I've read many theories that organisational change brings resistance... Such resistance can be dealt with smart tactics... Tactics related to the communication, decision-making, relationship building."

Table 3 Communicating leadership values to influence employees' acceptance of change towards sustainability practices

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Mediating values</i>	<i>Communication</i>	<i>Risks</i>	<i>Overcoming risks</i>
Blythe and Louise	Integrity	Formal meetings, conferences, and presentations	Value incongruence leads to workplace deviant behaviour as employees might feel they are being pressured and forced into a specific decision	Value congruency by: • Informal communication makes employees more relaxed to express their opinions and connect with the leader thus creating close relationships • Building close relationships with employees builds employees' trust in leader
Collette and David			Value incongruence leads to further employee resistance	Value congruency by: • Involving employees with decision making makes them engage with the issue and extends their focus on attaining organisational goals
Rachel		Corrupted and biased dialogue	Employees will be discouraged to participate as they feel their opinions will not be taken into account	Value congruency by: • Creating uncorrupted communication environment to decrease employees' fear of involvement • Involving employees in decision-making

We can notice from Blythe's example that involving employees in decision making and letting them share their concerns helps in reducing employee stress and building value congruence. This is also supported by Collete who mentions "During my experience, I have noticed that a decision cannot lead to satisfaction of all individuals however by

producing a cooperative style of working like involving employees in decision making, you can simply resolve concerns of many people about the change direction to make all employees engage.” Similarly, David states, “I always involve them in the process of decision making for the reason that it gives me some valuable suggestions and encourage them to involve in the process of attaining organisational goals and targets easily.” Therefore, we can argue involving employees in decision-making is about participatory communication, which moderates the relationship between leaders’ values and employees’ acceptance of change towards sustainability practices. Similarly, Rachel emphasises the significance of involving employees with the decision-making, and creating an unbiased and uncorrupted environment where the employees will not fear to discuss their opinion and engage. She states, “I gave suggestions to focus on several elements mainly to drive the behaviours and values towards the sustainability... The first was about decision making say the decision tree, the second was connected with the communication say to promote speaking without fear [...]”

Other interviewees emphasise the importance of communicating leadership values to influence change towards sustainability practices. Richard states, “I don’t think that there is any negative side of communicating values with staff. It always helps in gaining the trust of the employees.” Later he lists some of the advantages of this process “It increases the morale and motivation of the employees, it helps in building cooperation between the management and employees, it also helps in supporting the management of change in critical decision making, and the performance and productivity of the employee’s regarding the change increases.” Similarly, David states,

“I just want to let you know the role of leader’s personal values and communication plays a vital role in the process of executing change towards sustainability because without these two things it is quite difficult for an organisation to manage their activities particularly related to sustainability. [...] I personally don’t think that there is anything at stake in that time because the sharing of values always helps them to open-up their mind and think something out of the box for the betterment of our organisation.”

We can conclude that communicating leadership values is an effective process in order to influence employees to accept and adopt change towards sustainability practices as the majority of the interviewees confirmed the effectiveness of this process. In addition to that, involving employees in decision making, building close relationships with them through informal communication, and creating an uncorrupted communication environment builds a supporting environment for value congruence among leaders’ values and those of the employees and influences employees to accept the sustainability-related change. Table 3 summarises the main arguments in this subsection.

5 Discussion

In this section, we discuss our findings and present new suggestions regarding the relationship between leadership values, communication, and change towards sustainability practices.

5.1 *Sustainability practices in different industries*

Our first theme allowed us to make the following suggestion. Leaders from different industries tend to consider different aspects of sustainability. Leaders from the financial industry emphasise economic sustainability more than social and environmental sustainability. Leaders from the energy and real estate industries emphasise environmental sustainability more than social and economic sustainability. Leaders from the retail and telecommunication industries emphasise social and environmental sustainability more than economic sustainability.

The ability of a business organisation to survive in competitive environments depends on its strategic response to the dominant industry characteristics and demands (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1987). The demands and characteristics of almost all industries are now associated with sustainable development as the demand for responsible practices are increasing globally (Benn et al., 2014). Thus, business organisations have to adapt their practices to the demand for sustainability to enhance their image and survive in a competitive environment (Shearman, 2006). Adopting sustainable practices improves the image of the organisations and eventually leads to more sales (Hillestad et al., 2010). The literature identifies why retail and telecommunication industries tend to emphasise social and environmental sustainability practices more than economic sustainability. Książak (2016) argues that the motivation for the fashion industry to emphasise social and environmental responsibility more than economic aspect is because these aspects help to restore and enhance their reputation, as this industry is known for its negative impact on the society and the environment. Organisations in the telecommunication industry also emphasise the social and environmental aspects of sustainability as this industry is very customer-oriented and needs to adapt to current trends in consumer demands to survive in the competitive environment (Kang et al., 2010). However, literature falls short in explaining the motivation for energy and real estate industries to emphasise environmental sustainability, and the motivation for the financial service industry to emphasise economic sustainability. Nevertheless, we can apply similar logic to why energy and real estate industries emphasise environmental sustainability. This is because these industries have high environmental damaging practices and they are major contributors to global carbon emissions (Ghoble, 2011; World Economic Forum, 2016). Moreover, there have been local and international efforts to put in place policies pressuring financial service organisations to be transparent in their financial reporting and to implement sustainable financial investment practices (UN Environment and World Bank Group, 2017). This can explain why leaders in the financial services industry tend to emphasise economic sustainability more.

5.2 *Mediating leadership values*

Developing on Marginson's (2009) framework, our previous findings reveal several values that mediate the relationship between leadership and employees' sustainability-related change readiness and supportive behaviour. We suggest responsibility, accountability, integrity, loyalty, and optimism as the sustainability-related values that have a mediating effect in the process of our concern.

First, the value of responsibility has been previously associated to pro-environmental practices. According to Kaiser et al. (1999) and Kaiser and Shimoda (1999), responsibility results in pro-environmental practices as this value stems from feelings of

guilt. According to this explanation, we can argue that awareness of the practices that contribute to the degradation of the environment develops a sense of guilt, which in turn induces pro-environmental decision-making and behaviour (Onwezen et al., 2013; Schneider et al., 2017). Responsibility has also been associated to sustainable social practices (Arnaud and Sekerka, 2010). Adding to literature, our findings suggest that responsibility mediates the relationship between leadership and change towards sustainable economic practices as well. We can apply the aforementioned logic to this relationship. We can argue that when leaders express their value of responsibility to the employees, it produces a sense of guilt in them, which stems from their self-perceived lack of sufficient actions to improve the situation and this, in turn, led to their acceptance of adopting economic practices.

Second, the value of loyalty is an ethical value that influences all three aspects of sustainable practices (Dolan and Altman, 2012). However, these authors do not focus on the role of this value on employees' acceptance of change towards sustainability practices. Our previous findings suggest that the value of loyalty induces leaders' loyal behaviour towards their work and the protection of the environment. This, in turn, presents the leader as a role model and inspires the employees to follow similar behaviour. Brown and Treviño (2013) agree that having an ethical role model influences ethical behaviour.

Third, personal accountability is defined as "The fidelity to personal conscience in basic values such respect for human dignity and acting in a manner that accepts responsibility for affecting the lives of others" [Sinclair, (1995), p.13]. It is a value that drives ethical behaviour (Beu and Buckley, 2004a, 2004b). This value has not been previously associated to sustainability practices. Our previous findings suggest that a person who values accountability will not ignore his/her actions that have a negative impact on other beings and the environment and will take action to correct the situation. Thus, the value of accountability mediates the relationship between leadership and employees' acceptance of change towards sustainable social and environmental practices.

Fourth, our previous findings also suggest optimism as a mediator in the relationship between leadership and change towards sustainable environmental practices because it enables people to view sustainability in a positive light. This is true as optimism influences people to be more open to change (Wanberg and Banas, 2000).

Finally, our previous findings confirm that the value of integrity also has a mediating effect on the relationship of our concern. For Williams and Turnbull (2015), this is because it induces actions that take into account empathy. However, our previous findings suggest that the mediating effect of integrity is only true when it is defined as staying true and committed to your moral and ethics. This is because a person who is true to their moral and ethical values will act responsibly towards the environment and society. On the other hand, when this value is defined as a synonym of honesty it has a moderating effect in the relationship between leaders' sustainability-related values and employees' acceptance of change towards sustainability practices. This is because integrity here means being truthful in your words as honesty. In this case, these values build employees' trust and confidence in the leader thus making them further listen and follow the leaders when they express their sustainability-related values. It increases the chance for leaders to inculcate their sustainability-related values in employees, which will directly influence their acceptance of change towards sustainability practices. Rand (1957) and Becker (1998) are some of the authors who differentiate between integrity and

honesty while Yukl and Van Fleet (1992) and Hosmer (1995) use honesty and integrity synonymously in their research works.

5.3 Moderating leadership values

Our previous findings allow us to add a new factor to the framework of Marginson (2009) and our framework in Article 1 along with setting the change objective to sustainability. This factor is the moderating effect of leadership values in the relationship between leaders' aforementioned sustainability-related values and employees' acceptance of change towards sustainability practices. The moderating values create a better environment for leaders to instil the sustainability-related values in employees.

We divide the moderating values into two sets. The first set includes five values that build trust and close relationships between leaders' and employees thus making it easier for leaders to instil the sustainability related-values in employees. First, as mentioned in the previous section, integrity moderates the relationship between leaders' sustainability related values and employees' acceptance of change towards sustainability practices. However, this moderating effect is only true when integrity is defined synonymously with honesty, which is related to being truthful. Second moderating value is honesty. Honesty builds trust, which makes a leader believable and credible (Kouzes and Posner, 2007). This makes it easier for leaders to instil sustainability-related values in employees. A similar explanation applies to why the third value has a moderating effect as well which is the value of trust. Fourth moderating value is humility. This value improves leader-employee relationship because it presents the leader as a reachable person and one that the employees can relate to (Owens and Hekman, 2012). Fifth moderating value is friendship. Our previous findings suggest that this value allows employees and leaders to share similar perspectives about situations. Pesämaa and Hair (2007) and Kunday (2016) argue that workplace friendship increases employees' commitment.

The second set includes two values that help in sustaining and keeping consistency in employees' sustainability practices. Sweeny et al. (2012) argue that people might confront potentially undesirable situations frequently, which will require them to choose between action and inaction, and the choice people most value may not correspond with the choice they actually make. This research work raises the need for people to value commitment in order for them to stay true and committed to their values. Our previous findings suggest that leaders should instil the value of commitment along with sustainability-related values because once employees have this value they will be committed to sustainability-related values and practices. Moreover, our previous findings suggest that the value of autonomy will also enable employees to pursue sustainable practices whenever they find it necessary. Lack of autonomy results in indecisiveness in decision-making (Guay et al., 2006), therefore, it is necessary for leaders to instil autonomy in employees along with sustainability-related values in order for employees to know when to take sustainability-related actions.

Contrary to Marginson's framework, our previous findings do not allow us to suggest any relationship between leaders' position in the organisation and their ability to have an influence on employees' acceptance of the sustainability-related change through the communication of their values. However, this can be due to the decentralised organisational structures that our data is based on and their high level of leadership discretion. Decentralised structures provide more conducive conditions for managerial discretion (Sandhu and Kulik, 2018). Moreover, the organisations in our data are from the

UK, which is a low power distance culture. Low power distance cultures value relaxed authority and structures (Khatri, 2009).

5.4 Moderating role of communication

Our previous findings extend the framework of Marginson (2009) by revealing new moderating communication methods that enable leaders to achieve value congruence with their employees to influence their sustainability-related change readiness. Our previous findings allow us to make the following suggestions. First, the moderating effect of informal communication is higher than the moderating effect of formal communication. This is because informal communication diminishes the hierarchical relationship between leaders and employees, which increases employees' trust in the leader (Auvinen et al., 2013) thus making it easier to achieve value congruency (Gillespie and Mann, 2004). Value congruency, in turn, is essential for influencing sustainability-related change. Second, open communication also has a moderating effect. This is because open communication involves being transparent which builds trust between employees and the leader (Proctor and Doukakis, 2003). Open communication about the unethical implication of not adopting sustainability practices can induce a sense of guilt in employees and lead to their acceptance of such practices. This is consistent with Habermas's (1984) first validity claim, which is being truthful to reach mutual understanding with the listener. Third, storytelling has a moderating effect as it involves employees with the situation and illustrates the negative implications of certain practices, which enables employees to envision it and reflect on themselves and re-evaluate their values and behaviour. This is consistent with Habermas's second validity claim for reaching mutual understanding, which is speaking a message that adheres to normative rightness. By explaining the negative implications that unsustainable practices of others have had through storytelling, the employees will understand how such practices are against the current norms, rules, and regulations. The second and third findings are also consistent with Rafferty and Ninbashian's (2018) research work concerning how to influence employees' change readiness and supportive behaviour, particularly, discrepancy and appropriateness. By openly communicating the need for change towards sustainability practices and how not adopting such practices results in unethical implications will influence employees to believe that sustainability-change is legitimate for addressing the deficiencies of current practices and most appropriate response to current organisational issues.

Fourth, regular communication has significant moderating role because it increases leader/employee interaction, which allows leaders to continuously, and consistently express their values in order to instil these values in employees. Increase in leader-employee interaction also helps build close relationships (Luthra and Dahiya, 2015), which enables employees and leaders to share similar views on similar situations (Wegner et al., 1985). This is consistent with Rafferty and Ninbashian's (2018) research work in which they argue that support from both leaders and peers influences employees' change readiness and change supportive behaviour. Therefore, by building close relationships with employees, leaders can have significant influence on them. Fifth, participatory communication has a moderating effect as it increases employees' involvement. Involving employees in decision-making further increases employee commitment (Iqbal Khan et al., 2011). Participation is a key property of effective

communication (Habermas, 1970). When employees are involved and committed it is easier for leaders to express their values and instil these values in employees in order to influence their acceptance of the sustainability-related change. This is consistent with Habermas's theory of communicative action in which he emphasises on encouraging involvement in order to avoid biased and corrupted dialogue that inhibits mutual understanding. The fifth finding is also consistent with Rafferty and Ninbashian's (2018) research work in which they argue that employee's feelings of self-efficacy about the change will influence their change readiness and supportive behaviour. Therefore, when employees are encouraged to participate and get involved in the sustainability-change readiness, they will feel confident about having capabilities to implement change. This in turn will influence their sustainability-related change readiness and supportive behaviour.

Sixth, leaders' clear and simple language has a moderating effect as it eliminates ambiguities that might create uncertainties for the employees. The clear and simple language also makes it easier for the employees to understand the message of the leader through which he aims to express his values to influence employees' sustainability-related change readiness. This is consistent with Habermas's comprehensibility validity claim. Finally, leaders' motivational skills have a moderating effect, as leaders need to know how to persuade their employees. Carlisle and Murphy (1996) argue that leaders can motivate employees by knowing how to effectively answer their questions. Thus, we can argue that leaders can motivate employees by clarifying their questions regarding uncertainties about the sustainability-related change, which can motivate them to accept the change.

Our previous findings allow us to argue that the communication methods we find are indeed effective moderating factors for avoiding risks of value incongruence and instead reaching leader-employee value congruence. This is evident in how the risks of workplace deviant behaviour were overcome through communication that was based on increasing interaction with employees to build close relationships with them, involving employees in decision-making, and uncorrupted dialogue. Involving employees in decision-making also increases employee engagement (Gurman and Saks, 2011), which is an essential factor for successful change management because engaged employees will go the extra mile to work for the goals in the interest of the organisation (Swarnalatha and Prasanna, 2013).

As mentioned previously both moderating leadership values and communication can help build close relationships and increase employee involvement in decision-making. This further highlights the significant role of the two moderating factors.

6 Conclusions

In this article, we aim to extend the framework of Marginson (2009) in order to find the relationship between leadership values, communication, and employees' acceptance of change towards sustainability practices. We use a hybrid approach to qualitative thematic analysis of 25 interviews with leaders from eight sustainable organisations in the UK working in different industries.

We identify and introduce several relationships that can influence change towards sustainability practices within organisations. First, we present that leaders from different industries consider the sustainability aspects, which their practices have negative

implications. This relationship is driven by both altruistic motivations of taking responsibility for actions and intrinsic motivation of enhancing brand image.

Second, we identify that leadership values can be classified into three sets of values. The first set includes the sustainability-related values that mediate the relationship between leadership and employees' acceptance of change towards sustainability practices. We introduce new sustainability-related mediating values such as accountability and optimism and we confirm the mediating effect of responsibility, loyalty, and integrity. The second and third sets of leadership values moderate the relationship between leaders' sustainability-related values and change towards sustainability practices. We introduce for the first time the moderating leadership values in the process of our concern. The second set of values includes the moderating values that help in building close relationships between employees' and the leaders and increase employees' trust in the leaders. These values include honesty, integrity, trust, humility, and friendship. It is important to notice that the mediating/moderating effect of integrity depends on its definition. When the value is defined synonymously to honesty it has a moderating effect. On the other hand, when integrity is defined as being committed to one's ethics, it has a mediating effect. Moreover, the third set of values includes the moderating values that sustain the sustainability-related practices. These values are autonomy and commitment.

Third, we present the moderating effect of several communication methods that enable leaders to reach mutual understanding and value congruence with employees and influence their sustainability-related change readiness. Informal, regular, and open communication help in building close relationships while participatory, motivational, and storytelling help to involve employees in the process and avoid corrupted dialogue. Moreover, the use of clear and simple language helps in eliminating ambiguities that might lead to uncertainties about the sustainability-related change. Fourth, we confirm the significance of the transformational leadership style for influencing change through leadership values, particularly, sustainability-related change.

This article further develops the framework we introduce in our first article (see Appendix). This gives new subjects for future research to explore. For example, data based on a larger sample of industries can better reveal why leaders from different industries tend to consider certain sustainability aspects over others. Regarding practical implication, first, our article presents new sustainability-related values by which leaders can influence sustainability-related change in their organisations. Second, it presents new leadership values that have a similar moderating role to communication in preparing employees to trust the leaders, be open to accepting their sustainability-related values, and follow their implementation of the sustainability-related change. Third, it extends Marginson's framework by introducing several communication methods that are focused on avoiding risks associated to conflicting values and effectively achieving leader-employee value congruence through mutual understanding. The moderating leadership values and communication methods are based on eight sustainable organisations and will help leaders to effectively influence employees' sustainability-related change readiness and supportive behaviour. Fourth, as Waddock (2016, 2018) highlights the need for sharing new narratives to influence sustainability-related behaviour, our article provides leaders with effective communication methods through which they translate a narrative to employees that is based on sustainability-related memes (leaders' sustainability-related values).

One limitation of our article is that our data is only based on organisations with decentralised organisational structures in low power distance cultures and does not take into account the lower level leadership. Therefore, we find that leaders holding both high and middle level positions in the organisation have the ability to influence employees' sustainability-related change through the communication of their values. Nevertheless, the role of lower level in this process is unknown. Thus, future research can focus on all three levels of leadership and their ability influence employees' sustainability-related change readiness while comparing between organisations in high and low power distance cultures. This is because some cultures such as high-power distance cultures have hierarchical structures, which allow less discretion to their leaders (Caruana et al., 2002) in comparison to low power distance cultures which allow higher discretion as our data sample is based on. Future research can compare between data based on organisations having both centralised and decentralised structures to better illustrate this relationship.

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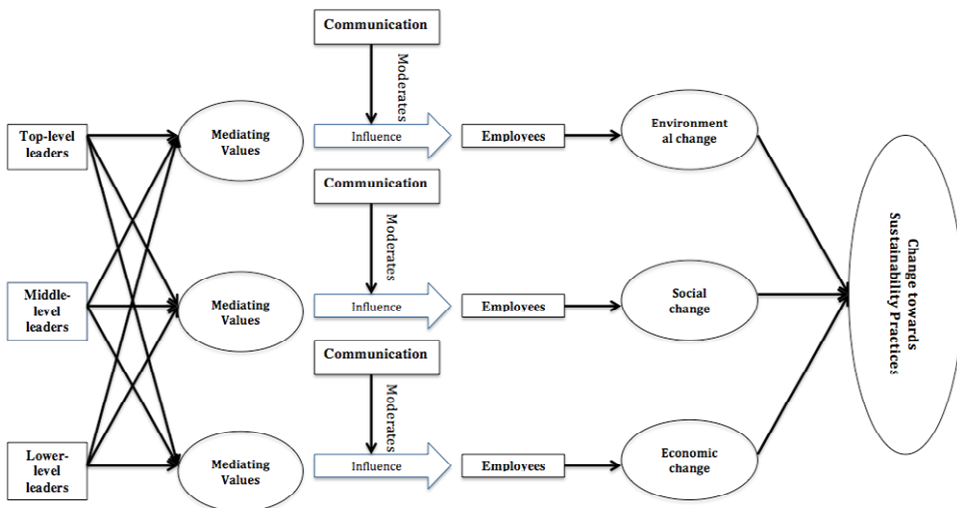
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Appendix A

Figure A1 Framework of Article 1 (see online version for colours)



Appendix B

Table B1 Supporting data for data structure

Themes	Participants	Data supporting concepts
Sustainability axes	Richard Sara Blythe	"[...] Sustainability means protecting the valuable and non-renewable resources from depletion and wastage." "[...] The organization tries to keep the well-being of all the millions of customers in the country and in overseas. [...] Therefore, we are more concerned with the social aspects and we look for sustainability in every action that we are taking." "[...] During our experience I have viewed that the cases of fraud and manipulation in the financial accounts and the risk management framework are other consequences of lack of sustainability into business disciplines."
Different industries emphasise different sustainability axes	Joanne in professional services industry Richard in energy industry Paul in retail industry Feilim in telecommunications industry Robert in real estate industry	"[...] For me, the economic sustainability is most important, although the social and environmental sustainability are also important. [...] "Sustainability is all about optimum utilization of the scarce resources. Optimum utilization means with minimum input producing maximum output." "Sustainability is to work for the betterment of everyone related with us directly or indirectly in our B2B and C2B models." "[...] I participated in recycling initiatives. Connecting customers from different cities and areas of UK require building a large network for connecting everyone with great ease. My role was to enhance accessibility towards the recycling services. 2 million devices have been recycled." "I am majorly concerned with the environment sustainability and to some extent with the employee sustainability. When I work with the suppliers, then I ensure that whatever materials we bring on board for the constructions are not having negative impact on the environment at present or in the days to come." "[...] Social and environmental sustainability are also important for the company to be accepted by the society at large. It reflects the company's reputation." "Sustainability ensures the productivity of the organization and protects wastage of resources." "[...] I realized the project was not socially responsible, so I did not want to invest in it. [...] Therefore, I suggested that we should not go for this project and we should look for something else."
Motivations for adopting sustainability	Joanne	"[...] During our experience I have viewed that the cases of fraud and manipulation in the financial accounts and the risk management framework are other consequences of lack of sustainability into business disciplines."
Decision-making concerning different sustainability axes	Archie William Blythe John	"[...] I played the role of identifying and depicting the sources which needed to be modified for reducing the emission of carbon which included lowering the intensity of carbon through generation of electricity, lowering the emission of carbon related to loss distribution and programs for efficiently using the energy to lower the emission of carbon." "I am working as a strategy leader (senior financial advisor) with the finance department of the company. I manage the finances of the company, i.e., from raising of funds to investment of funds to distribution of funds. Also, I give my advice to the board on crucial decisions involving finances of the company. It has been five years for me in this organization now."
Leadership-level	Joanne Charles	"I am in the packaging division of the company at mid-level position. I am working with this company for the past five years. For the initial three years I was overlooking the procurement of strawberries from few suppliers, but now I shifted for some change."

Table B1 Supporting data for data structure (continued)

Themes	Participants	Data supporting concepts
Espoused values during decision-making concerning sustainability	John	"[...] A true leader takes responsibility and accountability for his decisions, these values are very related to sustainability."
	Blythe	"[...] It was situation where I needed to employ my leadership values. Most interestingly integrity is the important one. [...] Sustainability decisions will need to be directed through ethical principles."
	Archie	"[...] I also attach integrity and honesty with sustainability to some extent because if a leader is honest and truthful everyone in the organisation can trust him and follow him."
	Susan	"I am always optimistic about situations and ready to come up with solutions for that instead of fretting over the issues. It influences my employees to view sustainability in a positive light."
	Loyalty	"[...] Friends usually have similar perspectives and values so I believe my relationship with them (employees) enabled them to see my loyalty to my passion and work and impacted their decision to follow me."
	Feilim	"[...] If they (employees) trust you and see that you share with them everything they will listen and follow your vision. Also, a truthful and humble leader is successful in connecting with followers emotionally while accepting mistakes and creating methods to accomplish team goals and meet organisational expectations in this way, humility supports sustainable development for continued future positive outcomes with the team and the organisation."
	Colette	"[...] I showed the employees my integrity and encouraged them take ethical actions in every situation they find necessary beyond this program, actually, I always tell them to commit to ethical action in every situation. You see we must teach them (employees) how to be autonomous in their decision making and commit to their values to sustain results, believe me I have witnessed such results."
	Steven	"[...] So, I think the values of loyalty, and friendships are important values for any business leader to have. [...] Friends usually have similar perspectives and values so I believe my relationship with them (employees) enabled them to see my loyalty to my passion and work and impacted their decision to follow me."
	Blythe	"Communication methods as they are called grapevine methods included casual talks during breaks, lunchtime discussions. [...] I believe that employees can share our vast range of data in a relaxed conversation environment relative to the formalised environment. In the informal environment employees consider that they are heard... They are allowed to pass gestures. They can nod... They can smile... they can share their aggression ... in short, they connected."
	Paul	"The issue was resolved through honest information sharing and listening by allowing export partners as well as farmers to collaborate in sharing their opinions."
Communication methods and skills used to transmit values during decision-making concerning sustainability		"Periodic meetings were necessary for gathering different opinions and thoughts and for the employees to re-evaluate their thoughts about the discounts."
	Archie	"[...] I prefer to have open communication with my co-workers. This helps me understand others perspective and there is always a healthy argument based on which you can get a desired solution or even helps decide. After a lot of open discussion on the pro and cons of the use of fertilizer, I knew that there is more possibility of the side effect of the fertilizer and I need to communicate with the employees."
	William	"After the project had been rejected, the employees and my team had to be communicated for the same. I did this by telling them a business story. I completely involved them with the case that happened in a hypothetical organization. This made them believe that what the company did at that time was correct and it took the right decision."

Table B1 Supporting data for data structure (continued)

Themes	Participants	Data supporting concepts
Communication methods and skills used to transmit values during decision-making concerning sustainability	Steven	"[...] I prefer informal personal meetings more than group as it becomes far easier to motivate one individual and build close relations. Also, the other individual gets enough opportunity to put counter questions, which is good for better clarity."
	Feilim	"I always try to coordinate my actions through clearing and simplification of the communication in order to reduce conflicts and ambiguities."
	William	"[...] I realized the project was not socially responsible, so I did not want to invest in it. [...] Therefore, I suggested that we should not go for this project and we should look for something else."
	Archie	"[...] An issue related to sustainability emerged in which high-quality fertilizer was of concern. There was a concept that showed that if we use a mixture of chemical, it will raise the productivity of the soil by just double. It was a good idea, but there was some side effect of that fertilizer as well. The soil after utilization of such fertilizer would become infertile after 8–10 years or the productivity of the soil decrease tremendously. [...] I said that we can go for production because we do not have evidence of side effect but what if the side effect of the fertilizer would be a disaster."
Managerial discretion and leadership style	Steven	"[...] I personally link motivation with transformational leadership style as well because inspirational motivation is one its aspects."
	Rachel	"[...] My values are all of the transformational leadership style which allows leaders and managers to reflect the adapting of the needs and corporate values in his goal of changing others."
	Blythe	"Transformational leadership style was used to communicate my vision and values in front of the employees."
	Blythe	"[...] Asking the employees to save water is easy but checking and measuring the response given by the employees was a complicated task. [...] You see, after I talked with them about our water consumption plans I found that some of them did not listen ... it is as if they were intentionally letting water run out of the tap for no reason."
Risks associated to communicating leadership values		"There is a possibility that employees start considering the leader as a pressurising force and forcing something which they are not agreed to accept."
	Blythe	"[...] To deal with such situation it was necessary to employ the personal values consistent with the values of the employees. Hence maintaining the relationship between the employees and the leader was the main focus of my management during the water efficiency initiative."
	Collette	"During my experience I have noticed that a decision cannot lead to satisfaction of all individuals however by producing cooperative style of working like involving employees in decision making, you can simply resolve concerns of many people about the change direction to make all employees engage."
	David	"I always involve them in the process of decision making for the reason that it gives me some valuable suggestions and encourage them to involve in the process of attaining organisational goals and targets easily."
Advantages of communicating leadership values	Richard	"[...] It always helps in gaining the trust of the employees."
	David	"[...] I personally don't think that there is anything at stake in that time because the sharing of values always helps them to open-up their mind and think something out of the box for the betterment of our organisation."