

## SUSTAINABILITY ETHICS IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: NURTURING ETHICAL LEADERS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Saba Khalil\*, Wajeeha Aurangzeb, Umair Arshad

National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan

### Abstract

The aim of education for sustainable development is to promote the attitudes, ways of living and values that are necessary to address the world's economic, social and environmental problems. It places a high value on social work and social work education, which has a high value on topics like poverty reduction, health and well-being. The main purpose of the current study was to analyse sustainability ethics in social work education to nurture ethical leaders for a sustainable future and to determine leaders' attitudes towards social work education. To achieve these objectives, the conceptual framework of the study was drawn up with the help of utilitarianism theory of ethics and the elements of sustainability in context of future leaders. The study followed a parallel mixed methods approach with the population of all secondary schools, working under Federal Directorate of Education, located in Urban areas of Islamabad. The researcher has used a self-developed questionnaire (5-point Likert scale) applied on sample size of the study who were Heads of 5 Federal Government Secondary Schools in Islamabad from Urban-II sector of Islamabad. Whereas, a focus group discussion was conducted to get insights of research questions from 25 secondary school teachers. The data was analysed through descriptive and inferential statistical measurements. Furthermore, the findings of quantitative data revealed that majority of heads of secondary schools were in favor of leader's sustainability, sustainable economic growth, sustainable environmental protection and social inclusion regarding sustainability ethics in social work education, also the leader's attitude has proved to be a statistically significant predictor of social work education. Whereas, the qualitative data revealed various themes, through which sustainable social work and sustainability ethics can be promoted among the institutes. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that educational institutions should focus on the updated and improved social work education curricula so that they can smoothly incorporate sustainability ethics in order to overcome the lack of integration.

### Keywords

*Sustainability ethics, social work education, ethical Leaders, sustainable future, Utilitarianism theory.*

## 1. Introduction

Any policy pertaining to sustainable development (SD) has historically included education as a crucial component, and education for sustainable development (ESD) has grown to be a key idea in the SD movement. ESD, in accordance with UNESCO (2018), offers the essential values, knowledge and abilities as a crucial strategy for developing "global citizens" and citizens who will contribute to sustainable society. Learners are

---

\*Corresponding Author: Saba Khalil, e-mail: [sabakhalil99@yahoo.com](mailto:sabakhalil99@yahoo.com)

empowered for societal transformation through the multidisciplinary, learner-centered, and context-dependent nature of ESD (UNESCO, 2005-2014; Fredriksson *et al.*, 2020).

Sustainable development benefits greatly from the use of social work and social work education (Drolet *et al.*, 2015). Ensuring a healthy and good environment, economic and social well-being and justice for present and future generations is the goal of sustainable development (UKÄ, 2017). In keeping with the objectives of sustainable development, the Global Definition of the Social Work Profession (IFSW-CSWE, 2018; IASSW, 2014) emphasizes the significance of "principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities". Social workers can play a variety of roles in assisting disadvantaged populations in their journey toward a more sustainable society. Social professionals have the difficult task of taking into account intricate, linked and systemic issues in their practice. In the future, problems will get more complex, necessitating new strategies and creative solutions. It is critical to develop social work education so that social workers are prepared to take on these challenging tasks (Collén, 2019).

Education for sustainable development is a lifelong process that extends much beyond the parameters of traditional schooling and takes the form of lifelong learning, which fosters the construction of ecological cultures and the growth of environmental consciousness. Ecological worldview formation is one of the main goals of ESD. Currently, the development of a systemic worldview and critical thinking, acquiring new knowledge and skills that support society's sustainable development, promoting healthy lifestyles, instilling high moral standards, teaching sustainable consumption and encouraging social activism are the main goals of ESD (Nasibulina, 2015). In order to achieve sustainable development, businesses must integrate their social, economic and environmental goals into their operations without endangering resources that will be used by future generations. These days, one of the most difficult problems facing the world is sustainable development. Businesses are under pressure to operate sustainably in the increasingly complicated environment from a variety of stakeholders, including the public, government and nongovernmental organizations (Iqbal *et al.*, 2020).

An ethical leader can improve organizational policy by encouraging moral and ethical behavior that supports sustainable growth on all fronts - economic, social and environmental (Fernando, 2016; Muff *et al.*, 2020). According to earlier research, ethical leaders motivate, communicate and empower their staff to inspire and drive organizational performance (Lin *et al.*, 2020). This concept fosters responsible development and constructive transformations by boosting their drive to achieve their professional objectives. According to Hallinger (2020) these leaders encourage the exchange of important knowledge and the adoption of sustainable practices that support long-term financial, environmental and economic success (Xuecheng *et al.*, 2022).

## 2. Purpose of the Study

The current study was aimed to analyze sustainability ethics in social work education by nurturing ethical leaders for a sustainable future. The study was drawn upon the latest research in the field to analyze three main factors of a leader's sustainability which are sustainable economic growth, sustainable environmental protection and social inclusion. The first objective was to analyze sustainability ethics in social work education to nurture ethical leaders for a sustainable future and second was to determine leaders' attitudes towards social work education. To achieve these objectives, a survey was conducted for heads of Federal Secondary Schools and a focus group discussion was held

for secondary school teachers (SSTs). It included a self-developed questionnaire based on above - mentioned factors. The collected data was analyzed through statistical techniques to analyze the factors of sustainable leaders. For this purpose, a conceptual framework was made by utilizing the Utilitarianism Theory by Bentham (1861), by following two main elements, action and rule. The current study was a mixed-methods study which would be beneficial for educational sectors to implement on the suggestions given by the teachers, also the recommendations of heads that would make a huge improvement in educational settings.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nurturing ethical leaders for a sustainable future addresses the pressing issue of sustainability ethics by inadequate integration into social work curricula. A significant gap in curriculum design, instructional strategies and teacher preparation is evident in the contemporary landscape, impeding the growth of moral leaders capable of addressing the intricate interactions between environmental concerns and social issues. In addition, a gap between academic understanding and practical implementation hinders students' capacity to implement sustainability concepts in authentic settings. These issues are made worse by shortage of thorough research and assessment, which hinders the development of evidence-based solutions.

In an increasingly complicated world of social and environmental challenges, it is critical that we address these concerns in order to develop a generation of professionals who are both environmentally and socially sensitive and who will guide us toward a sustainable future.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of current study were as follow:

- i. To analyze sustainability ethics in social work education to nurture ethical leaders for a sustainable future.
- ii. To determine leaders' attitudes towards social work education.

### **Research Questions**

Following research questions were made to achieve the objectives:

RQ1: How do teachers actively promote social work education by emphasizing sustainability ethics within their instructional practices?

RQ2: Why is there any need to nurture ethical leaders for a sustainable future?

### **Null Hypotheses**

Ho1: There is no significant statistical effect of a leader's attitude on social work education.

Ho1a: There is no significant statistical effect of a leader's attitude on sustainable economic growth.

Ho1b: There is no significant statistical effect of a leader's attitude on sustainable environmental protection.

H01c: There is no significant statistical effect of a leader's attitude on social inclusion.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The study was delimited to the following points:

- i. Only Federal Government Secondary Schools of Urban II area, Islamabad were taken as population.
- ii. Only heads of selected institutes and secondary school teachers were chosen for data collection.

### **Review of Related Literature**

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). Rebro University in Sweden, for instance, has a long history of working with service user organizations, such as, through hosting workshops on ethical challenges. According to Drolet *et al.* (2015), social work and social work education are crucial to sustainable development.

### **Sustainable Development**

According to the studies conducted in the United Kingdom (UK), sustainable development aims to provide justice, a healthy and good environment and economic and social well-being for both present and future generations. The IASSW (2014) and IFSW-CSWE (2018) Global Concept of the Social Work Profession emphasizes the value of "principles of human rights, solidarity, social equity and respect for diversity", which is in line with the objectives of sustainable development. Social workers can make a variety of contributions to the growth and transformation of society towards a more sustainable one by working with disadvantaged groups (Drolet, 2015). Social professionals must consider complicated, connected, and systemic issues as part of their work (Drolet *et al.*, 2015). It is crucial to develop social work education in a way that gives students the skills which they need to handle these challenging situations (Collén, 2019).

## **3. Sustainability Ethics**

### **3.1. What is Sustainability?**

Sustainability is supposed to be a very complicated topic. People from different backgrounds and opinions should work together to get answers for major problems. To help address challenges regarding sustainability, there is one method to make sure that all of these voices, specifically those that are tricky to consider such as plants, animals and future generations are perceived to use ethics.

### **3.2. Ethics**

Ethics can probably be utilized to make sure that no perception is ignored within the three essential elements of sustainability that are; social, environmental and economic. When it comes to directly tying ethics to sustainability, a logical mentality

and the application of system thinking are most cooperative methods to make sure that a shared effort will take into account, with everyone's requirements. The modest way to define ethics is an individual's morals and sense of being right and wrong. It proposes an optical prism by which society can measure its moral scope and direct its decision-making.

The common topics of sustainability involve interconnection of the world and decision making in one location that can have an impact on communities around the world. Sustainability aims to support present and future societies while upholding the environment on which we depend, by taking an ethical attitude of assistance for all participants. Previously, ethics were not taken into account while taking decisions for sustainable development, it is often observed in situations such as tight budgets and underrepresentation of specific groups.

### ***3.3. Ethics in Sustainability***

Sustainable development is reliant on ethics in sustainability. Thinking about how people should live although taking into account their associations with other people, and the environment and forthcoming generations is also one of the purposes of ethical sustainability. Deprived of taking these factors into account, some groups feel that they are treated unfairly or being excluded. Even though a substantial portion of ethics is concerned about how we treat other people, we should also talk about how we should respect nature. Preserving the current natural zones that we have and safeguarding future natural areas are fundamental to the idea of ensuring a brighter future for future generations, this has to do with the welfare of non-human nature, which contains a lot of things that enable existence. These variables span from biodiversity and species health to clean water and air and if they are not taken into account during sustainable development, it might have severe unfavorable effects.

It is infrequently essential to choose the less attractive or more challenging path in order to achieve changes that are beneficial to everyone who is involved. Even though it can take more time or money to advance changes that follow moral standards, they will have a more favorable effect and contribute to the greater good in the long run.

### ***3.4. Pillars of Sustainability***

Furthermore, there are three pillars that are frequently used to describe sustainability:

- i. Economic growth;
- ii. Environmental protection and
- iii. Social inclusion.

All three sustainability pillars can be applied to ethics that should be considered during collaborative decision-making procedures. It is vital to take sustainability ethics into account through these measures even though examining all potential stakeholders that are in a problem. Moreover, it is important to keep ethical principles in mind and weigh the ideas of all parties involved in light of any potential obstacles or consequences while developing a solution. According to Kibert *et al.* (2012) the presence of ethics in sustainable decision making can create a more varied development in that, as it bonds the boundaries between stakeholders who would not otherwise communicate with each other. This probably needs some social, political or even cultural detriments, nevertheless it is ultimately valuable in the outstanding scheme of things. As mentioned

above these goals cover the three dimensions of sustainable development which are economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.

### **Core of Leadership**

The core of leadership in these three areas is ethics (Johnson, 2012). When someone upsurges to the leadership position, they begin to disrespect the ethical responsibilities that go along with it. This argument is well-defined from an organizational standpoint. Conventionally, increasing organizational success has been the primary objective of the organizational leaders. The leaders' dishonest and uncaring actions can harm an organization's reputation and public trust. As an outcome, this culture might perform worse in terms of social and environmental accountability overall, which is a warning sign for long-term business growth (Wesarat & Yazam, 2017). In order to create a sustainable environment for the institution and achieve long-term success, ethical leadership is crucial in this regard. A collection of ideas and concepts known as "ethical leadership" serve as a roadmap for people to choose a morally righteous and socially responsible course of action. It emphasizes the value of honesty, justice and accountability and goes beyond merely following rules and regulations. A culture of trust, openness and respect is fostered by ethical leaders inside their organizations and communities in addition to prioritizing their own ethical behavior (Tushar, 2017).

### **Theoretical Background of the Study**

In order to develop moral leaders for a sustainable future and to ascertain leaders' views toward social work education, the purpose of this study was to analyze sustainability ethics in social work education. In order to establish the principles of responsibility that are appropriate and applicable to action in daily life, ethical theories obviously make an effort to provide unambiguous and consistent descriptions of what our ethical obligations are or what we are required to do. This paper followed utilitarianism theory in this setting, to assess how well it might help people grasp moral difficulties and make moral decisions in certain situations.

### **Utilitarianism Theory**

Utilitarianism theory was first proposed by David Hume (1711-1776) and later crystallized in the works of English philosophers Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). It is one of the most often taught ethical theories, in addition to being a significant and influential moral theory (Kanu & Ndubisi, 2023).

It has two main subtypes which are:

- i. Rule utilitarianism and
- ii. Act utilitarianism.

The first one is about a certain course of action that is morally appropriate if it can result in the greatest amount of benefit for the greatest number of people in a particular circumstance. For the benefit of the populace, it enables the highest standards of moral behavior.

Mainly the act utilitarianism serves as an example of the idea that the ends justify the means, since it places more emphasis on the good deeds themselves than on the ways by which they are accomplished.



According to rule utilitarianism, the correct actions are those that must be taken in order to uphold the greater good for the greatest number of people. Whereas, act utilitarianism puts emphasis on actions that are not unavoidably related to any rules, while rule utilitarianism talks about actions that are not just any kind of action but ones that must be taken in order to comply with the rule.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study was drawn up with the help of utilitarianism theory of ethics and the elements of sustainability in context of future leaders to achieve the objectives of the study.

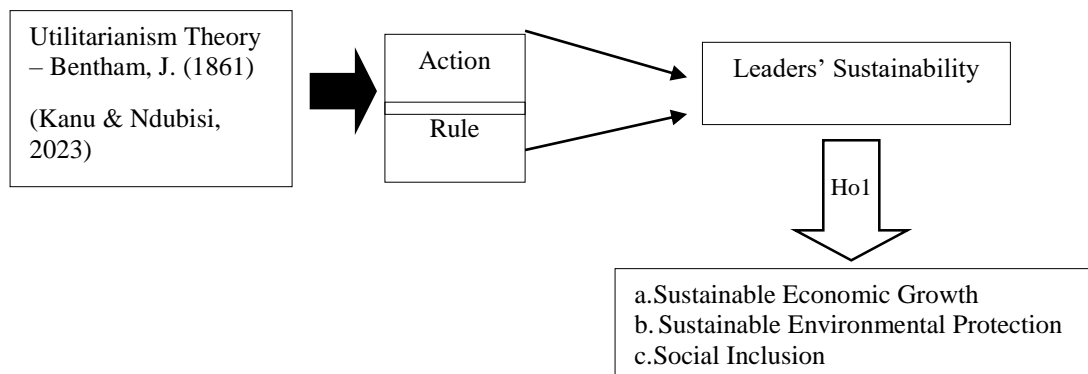


Figure 1. Conceptual Frame Work

## 4. Materials & Methods

### 4.1. Philosophical Paradigm & Approach

The study followed a parallel mixed methods approach while highlighting philosophical underpinning. The post-positivist paradigm which is used to get comprehensive reality, practical implementation of subjectivity. The post-positivist paradigm encourages the combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to investigate the variety of facts that can be investigated through different types of research, while also accepting and appreciating all discoveries as crucial elements in the advancement of knowledge.

### 4.2. Population

The population of the study was all Secondary Schools that are working under the Federal Directorate of Education, which are located in urban areas of Islamabad. More specifically, only Urban-II sector was chosen where there are 17 secondary schools, among which 10 secondary schools are of girls and 07 secondary schools are of boys.

### Sampling Technique

In regard to the current study, it required the purposive sampling techniques to select sample size of the study. Purposive sampling techniques, also known as nonprobability sampling, intentional sampling or "qualitative sampling" are necessary

for the current investigation since they allow the sample size to be determined. According to Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003a), purposeful sampling strategies entail choosing particular units or cases "based on a specific purpose rather than randomly". There are primarily four forms of purposive sampling, but the author of this study has opted for sequential sampling. The gradual selection concept is present in each of these methods. Four other sequential sampling methods include the following:

- i. Theoretical sampling,
- ii. Confirming and disconfirming cases,
- iii. Opportunistic sampling (also known as emergent sampling) and
- iv. Snowball sampling (also known as chain sampling).

This study was most related to the theoretical sampling, Theoretical sampling which allows the researcher to look at specific cases of the phenomena of in test in order to describe and expound on its numerous manifestations, is an example from this vast category. Wherever the theory directs the study, the investigator samples individuals, institutions, records or other areas (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher has used a self-developed questionnaire (5-point Likert scale) that was applied to Heads of 5 Federal Government Secondary Schools in Islamabad from Urban-II sector of Islamabad. While including a focus group discussion for the SST teachers, was conducted that has given an insight into sustainability ethics with reference to ethical leadership.

### **Sample Size**

The sample size of the study was drawn with the help of purposive sampling technique. Where only Federal Government Secondary Schools from Urban-II were taken to get study's sample. Population and sample size of study were as follow:

**Table 1.** Population and Sample size of the study

SN	Population & Sample size	
1	Population Set-I (Heads of the Institutes)	
	Population size	Sample size
	05	05
2	Population Set-II (SST Teachers)	
	Population	Sample size
	115	25

Also, the document analysis was done to get in-depth information about social work education. This study would give an implementable platform to the educational institutes to nurture ethical leaders by promoting social work education.

## **5. Results & Findings**

The study was following a mixed-methods approach, following are the quantitative and qualitative results and findings of the current study:



### 5.1. Analysis of Quantitative Data of the Study

**Table 2.** Reliability Test

Parameter(s)	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
<b>Sustainability Ethics</b>	0.85	22

The items in the questionnaire evaluated that sustainability ethics have a high degree of internal consistency and reliability, as indicated by their high Cronbach's Alpha rating of 0.85. This suggested that the 22-item set measures the desired construct of sustainability ethics sufficiently, advancing the validity of the study's scale.

**Obj. 1: To analyze sustainability ethics in social work education to nurture ethical leaders for a sustainable future.**

**Table 3.** Mean Score and Percentage of the Variable Sustainable Leader

SN	Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
1	I let my staff work in the way they thought best.	36	-	16	48	-	4.20
2	I trust my staff to exercise good judgment.	28	60	08	04	-	4.12
3	I demonstrate awareness of social work in my organization.	16	84	-	-	-	4.16
4	I keep track of my staff's mistakes.	40	56	04	-	-	4.36
5	I have a clear view/vision what we need to do as an organization.	68	32	-	-	-	4.68
6	I rarely backdown when I am truly passionate about something.	32	52	16	-	-	4.16
<b>Total</b>							<b>25.68</b>

Table 3 revealed that every item of sustainable leader demonstrates that the majority of Heads of Federal Gov. Secondary Schools responses (84%) are in agreement, suggesting that sustainable leaders are a significant signal when it comes to sustainability ethics in social work education.

**Table 4.** Mean Score and Percentages of the Variable Sustainable Economic Growth

SN	Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
1	I go beyond self-interest for the good of the organization.	44	56	-	-	-	4.44
2	The best decision is the one with the largest consensus.	12	60	16	12	-	3.72
3	I tend to overcome barriers to reach goal.	36	64	-	-	-	4.36
4	I turn off air-conditioner and lights of the classroom after the class is over/finished.	04	24	44	24	04	3.00
5	I am good at finding practical solutions to the problems.	24	56	20	-	-	4.04
6	I prefer public transport rather than a private one.	08	56	28	08	-	3.64
7	I switch off electrical appliances at school that are not used.	24	44	32	-	-	2.92
<b>Total</b>							<b>26.12</b>

Table 4 showed the mean values and percentages of the study participants. The majority of Heads of Federal Gov. Secondary Schools (64%) agreed with every item on sustainable economic growth, indicating that sustainable economic growth is an important signal when it comes to sustainability ethics in social work education.

**Table 5.** Mean Score and Percentages of the Variable Sustainable Environmental Protection

SN	Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
1	I talk about environmental sustainability with my colleagues.	08	92	-	-	-	4.08
2	I am interested in paying more on environmentally friendly products.	16	72	12	-	-	4.04
3	I have introduced trainings related to environmental sustainability.	84	16	-	-	-	3.84
4	I always try to let people aware of discard recyclable material.	04	88	08	-	-	3.96
<b>Total</b>							<b>15.92</b>

Table 5 showed the mean values and percentages of the study's participants. The majority of Heads of Federal Gov. Secondary Schools (92%) agreed with every item of sustainable environmental protection, indicating that it is an important indication regarding sustainability ethics in social work education.

**Table 6.** Mean Score and Percentages of the Variable Social Inclusion

SN	Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
1	I treat the people from all caste, creed, and religion equally.	04	96	-	-	-	4.04
2	I consider moral and ethical consequences of my decisions.	04	84	12	-	-	3.92
3	I provide recognition when others reach their goals.	08	92	-	-	-	4.08
4	I help my employees to develop their strengths.	20	68	12	-	-	4.08
5	I welcome my staff to challenge my ideas and strategies.	-	72	20	08	-	3.64
<b>Total</b>							<b>19.76</b>

Table 6 showed the mean values and percentages of the study's participants. The majority of Heads of Federal Gov. Secondary Schools (92%) agreed with every item of social inclusion, indicating that it is an important indication regarding sustainability ethics in social work education.

**Obj. 2: To determine leaders' attitudes towards social work education.**

**Ho1: There is no significant statistical effect of a leader's attitude on social work education.**

**Table 7.** Linear Regression Analysis: Effect of Leader's Attitude on Social Work Education.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	β (Coefficient)	t	Sig.
Leader's Attitude	Social Work Education	.757	.870	8.455	.000

Table 7 represented the R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.757 that approximately 75.7% of the variance in social work education can be explained by variations in the leader's attitude. Whereas, β (Coefficient) 0.870 specified a positive and relatively strong relationship between a leader's attitude and social work education. Meanwhile, t-value of 8.455 suggested that the relationship between the leader's attitude and social work education

is statistically significant. As the p-value is .000 (which is less than 0.05), it is suggested that the relationship between the leader's attitude and social work education is statistically significant.

So, the null hypothesis (Ho1) was not accepted, as the leader's attitude has proved a statistically significant predictor of social work education, with a strong positive relationship, as indicated by the high  $R^2$  value and significant  $\beta$  coefficient.

**Ho1a: There is no significant statistical effect of a leader's attitude and sustainable economic growth.**

**Table 8.** Linear Regression Analysis: Effect of Leader's Attitude on Sustainable Economic Growth.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	$R^2$	$\beta$ (Coefficient)	t	Sig.
Leader's Attitude	Sustainable Economic Growth	.647	.804	6.488	.000

Table 8 indicated the R-squared value of 0.647, specified approximately 64.7% of the variability in sustainable economic growth that can be explained by variations in the leader's attitude. It suggested a moderate to strong explanatory power of the model. Whereas  $\beta$  (Coefficient) 0.804 represented a relatively strong positive association. Meanwhile, t-value (6.488) designated stronger evidence against the null hypothesis, which suggested that the relationship is statistically significant. Moreover, t-test is 0.000, which is less than the usually used threshold of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between a leader's attitude and sustainable economic growth.

The results provided evidence against the null hypothesis (Ho1a), as the leader's attitude appeared to be a statistically significant predictor of sustainable economic growth indicated by positive coefficient and R-squared value.

**Ho1b: There is no significant statistical effect of a leader's attitude and sustainable environmental protection.**

**Table 9.** Linear Regression Analysis: Effect of Leader's Attitude on Sustainable Environmental Protection.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	$R^2$	$\beta$ (Coefficient)	t	Sig.
Leader's Attitude	Sustainable Environmental Protection	.227	.477	2.603	.016

Table 9 revealed that the R-squared value (0.227) that approximately 22.7% of the variability in sustainable environmental protection can be clarified by variations in the leader's attitude. It suggested a moderate level of explanatory power. Whereas,  $\beta$  (Coefficient) 0.477 suggested a moderate positive association. Meanwhile, t (t-value) 2.603 indicated stronger evidence against the null hypothesis. In this case, a t-value of suggested that the relationship is statistically significant. Moreover, the significance level (p-value) associated with the t-test is 0.016, is less than the commonly used significance level of 0.05, showing a statistically significant difference between a leader's attitude and sustainable environmental protection.

So, the null hypothesis (Ho1b) was not accepted, as the leader's attitude appeared to be a statistically significant predictor of sustainable environmental protection, also

positive coefficient suggested a positive relationship. Whereas R-squared value indicated a moderate portion of the variability in sustainable environmental protection which can be attributed to variations in the leader's attitude.

**Ho1c: There is no significant statistical effect of a leader's attitude and social inclusion.**

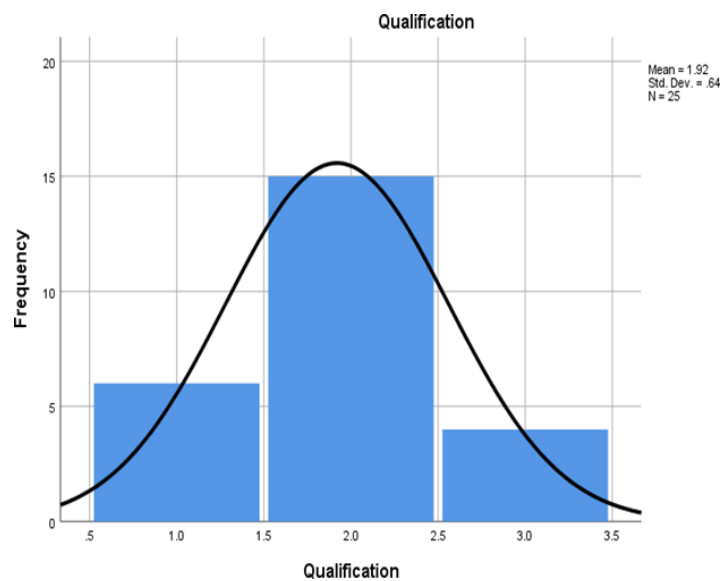
**Table 10.** Linear Regression Analysis: Effect of Leader’s Attitude on Social Inclusion.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	β (Coefficient)	t	Sig.
Leader’s Attitude	Social Inclusion	.612	.783	6.027	.000

Table 10 represented R-squared value 0.612 which indicated that approximately 61.2% of the variability in social inclusion can be described by variations in the leader's attitude. This suggested a relatively strong explanatory power. β (Coefficient) of 0.783 represented a positive relationship, by suggesting a strong positive association. The t-value (6.027) suggested that the relationship is statistically significant. Whereas, the significance level (p-value) associated with the t-test is 0.000, which was less than the significant level (0.05), indicating a statistically significant difference between leader’s attitude and social inclusion.

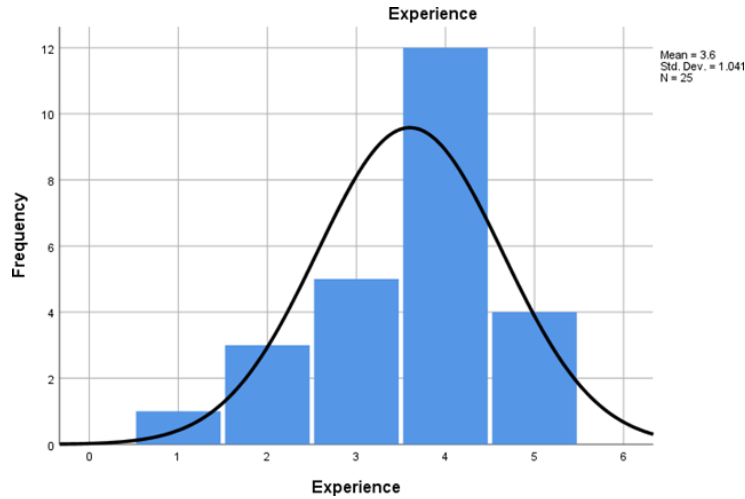
The results showed strong evidence against the null hypothesis (Ho1c). The leader's attitude appeared to be a statistically significant predictor of social inclusion, as indicated by the very low p-value (Sig.). Furthermore, the positive coefficient suggested a strong positive relationship, and the high R-squared value specified a substantial portion of the variability in social inclusion that can be credited to variations in the leader's attitude.

Figure 2 is indicating the demographics regarding qualification of respondents. The majority of Heads of Federal Gov. Secondary Schools (60%) are having M.Phil. degree and 24% are PhDs. Whereas 16% were qualified with a master's degree.



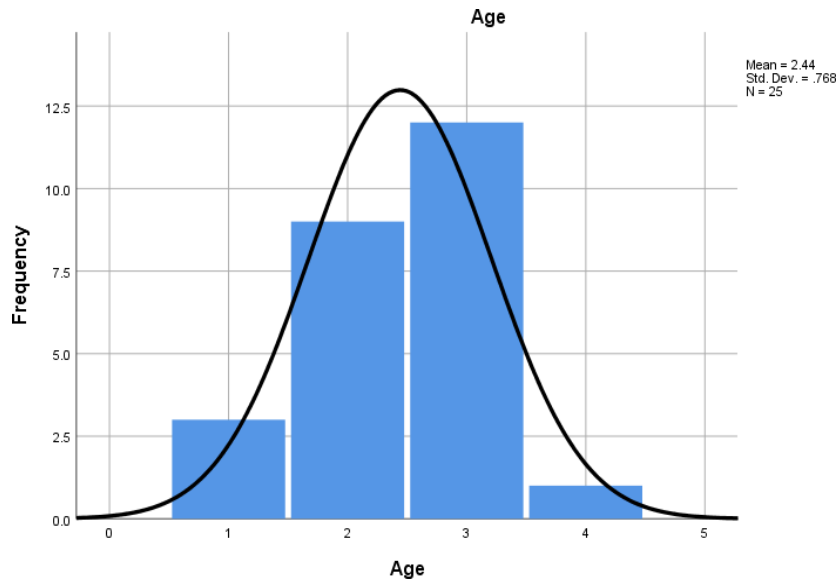
**Figure 2.** Demographics of Respondents Regarding Qualification

Figure 3 is highlighting the demographics regarding teaching experience of respondents. The majority of Heads of Federal Gov. Secondary Schools (48%) have teaching experience of more than 16 years and 20% have between 11-15 years of experience. Whereas 12% were revealed with 6-10 years of teaching experience and 4% were having 1-5 years of experience.



**Figure 3.** Demographics of Respondents Regarding Teaching Experience

Figure 4 is highlighting the demographics regarding age of respondents. The majority of Heads of Federal Gov. Secondary Schools (48%) were between the age of 55 and above and 36% were between 45-55 years of age. Whereas only 12% were found between 35-45 years of age.



**Figure 4.** Demographics of Respondents Regarding Age

## 5.2. Analysis of Qualitative Data of the Study: Thematic Analysis

### Obj. 2: To determine leaders' attitudes towards social work education.

The percentages in Table 7 are showing that 4% secondary school teachers have suggested that to promote social work education, teachers have to promote the sustainability ethics by adding it into the curriculum along with real-world examples. Whereas, 08% teachers have recommended that teachers should highlight the connections and importance of social and environmental concerns. 04% teachers have suggested that by organizing seminars and for other talks, subject specialist should be called on to share their view points and experiences to develop clear understanding. Furthermore, 16% have discussed about fostering critical analysis in education, 08% were in favor of collaborative learning of students and sharing solutions, shaping real-world competence. 12% teachers have suggested nurturing sustainable perspectives in social work education and 16% said by preparing students for sustainable communities, social work can be promoted. Moreover, 04% have recommended that nurturing sustainability through documentary insights can also be helpful, 12% gave suggestion regarding collaborative catalysts and 8% said that by bridging education and industry for sustainable social work sustainability ethics can be promoted.

**Table 7.** Thematic analysis of Focus-group discussion-question-1 from SSTs: How do the teachers promote social work education through sustainability ethics?

SN	Themes Observed	Respondents (SSTs)	%age
1	Curriculum for Real-world Impact	01	04
2	Harmony in Learning	02	08
3	Seminars and Talks in Knowledge Cultivation	01	04
4	Fostering Critical Analysis in Education	04	16
5	Collaborative Learning	02	08
6	Sharing Solutions, Shaping Real-World Competence	02	08
7	Nurturing Sustainable Perspectives in Social Work Education	03	12
8	Prepare Students for Sustainable Communities	04	16
9	Nurturing Sustainability through Documentary Insights	01	04
10	Collaborative Catalysts	03	12
11	Bridging Education and Industry for Sustainable Social Work	02	08
	<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 8 is showing the suggested ways given by SSTs who believe that sustainability outreach may be strengthen their organization. 20% SSTs have revealed that sustainability awareness is significant in this regard by conducting workshops, adding sustainability in curriculum and arranging discussions to share ideas. 16% teachers have mentioned that successful people must be invited and share their success stories to teachers to motivate them, which would led towards open discussions. Therefore, 16% teachers gave suggestion to make review committees in this regard and the organizations should offer courses and conduct awareness-based seminars for teachers. 20% have suggested to use social media as a platform. Whereas 28% SSTs have recommended engage students in sustainability activities so that participants can express their ideas and also create a feedback proforma to analyze the outcome of such activities.

**Table 8.** Thematic analysis of Focus-group discussion-question-2 from SSTs: Can you outline the THREE PRIMARY ways you believe sustainability outreach may be strengthened on your campus?

SN	Themes Observed	Respondents (SSTs)	%age
1	Sustainable Awarenesses: i. Conducting Workshops, ii. Curriculum Integration with Sustainability iii. Expressive Dialogues	05	20
2	Sustainovation Nexus: i. Collaborative Initiatives, ii. Shared Success Stories, iii. Arrange Open Dialogues	04	16
3	Sustainable Prospects: i. Introduce Review Committee, ii. Offer courses and conducting seminars, iii. Conduct Open Discussions	04	16
4	Mindful Sustainability: i. Nurturing Awareness through campaigns, ii. Broadcasting Change through social media, iii. Integrating Sustainability in Education	05	20
5	Inclusive Sustainability: i. Engage Students in sustainability activities, ii. Participants can Express Ideas, iii. Create a Feedback proforma for Analysis	07	28
<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 9 is highlighting to what extent the organization offer major staff development opportunities to nurture ethical leaders for a sustainable future, in this regard teachers have given various opinions. 12% SSTs suggested that the organization should focus on assessment and feedback patterns. 28% have suggested that the organizations should focus on empowering their staff and their learning through flexible settings. Moreover, 16% of SSTs discussed offering professional development and training programs for them. Furthermore, 16% suggested introducing collaborative programs for ethical guidance. Therefore, 12% suggested offering training modules aligned with organizational values and remaining 16% discussed about promoting continuous learning culture.

**Table 9.** Thematic analysis of Focus-group discussion-question-3 from SSTs: To what extent does your department offer major staff development opportunities to nurture ethical leaders for a sustainable future?

SN	Themes Observed	Respondents (SSTs)	%age
1	Focus on Assessment and Feedback	03	12
2	Focus on Staff Empowerment & learning through Flexible Settings	07	28
3	Offer Professional Development Training Programs	04	16
4	Collaborative Programs for Ethical Guidance	04	16
5	Offer Training Modules aligned with Organizational Values	03	12
6	Continuous Learning Culture	04	16
<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>



## 6. Discussion & Conclusion

The study suggests that sustainable leaders are the one who can recognize and hold world's rising complexity which is making them more flexible. Furthest, they are the long-term intellectuals who can see people and the environment and deal with them as essential parts of the organization. Most of the heads of the institutes (84%) responded in agreement by suggesting that sustainable leaders are a significant signal in promoting sustainability ethics in social work education. As mentioned in the study of Karvonen *et al.* (2023), a shift toward global sustainability is desperately needed. This shift must be cultural in nature, altering not only what we do but also the principles that guide our choices. The shift to sustainability necessitates focusing on both the people educating the next generation and the students themselves, as educators shape students' attitudes, values and knowledge. Consequently, in order to implement a sustainable transformation in schools, teachers must acquire new competencies. Sufficient self-efficacy beliefs are also necessary for teachers to have since they have a significant influence on their capacity to manage their work as sustainability educators.

Prior research (Mallick *et al.*, 2016; Marquez-Ramos & Mourelle, 2019; Chakraborty & Maity, 2020) has shown that education and training have a beneficial effect in both stable and unstable economies (e.g., during COVID-19). The foundations of society must be strengthened before there can be economic growth and development, and education and training are two of the most crucial ways to do this (Yang, 2020). Previous studies have looked at the connection between economic growth and government spending on education and have found a favorable effect. This study therefore viewed education and training as having a major role in both reaching the SDGs and promoting economic growth (Singh *et al.*, 2022). The findings of these studies were in favor of current study's findings regarding sustainable economic growth where, 64% respondents have highlighted the role of sustainable economic growth in sustainability ethics and social work education.

Beotto and Bell's (2015) suggested that purposefully educating social work students on environmental justice, a crucial social justice issue, can improve the profession's ability to address this issue and mitigate its negative effects on vulnerable communities. "Promoting decreasing poverty, economic growth and long-term socioeconomic stability" requires reducing and remediating environmental injustices, these suggestions were in favor of sustainable economic growth for which the respondents were agreed by 92% sustainable environmental protection is an important indication regarding sustainability ethics in social work education

In 2019, Boldermo and Ødegaard released a review that centered on the conceptualization of the social dimension for sustainability. While children's democratic participation and citizenship are a recurring theme, their work shows that, in relation to sustainability education, few articles have looked into the aspects of citizenship that relate to social inclusion and belonging or more broadly to "diversity, multicultural perspectives or migrant children's situation" (Boldermo & Ødegaard, 2019).

Jørgensen *et al.* (2020) stated in their study, since the nation ratified the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education in 1994, social inclusion in education has been on the agenda; nonetheless, the inclusion movement gained momentum mainly in the 2000s. Although secondary schools have been the subject of most inclusion talks, day care facilities have recently received greater attention due to inclusion (Larsen & Jørgensen, 2017). The current study revealed that there were

92% heads of the institutes who agreed with every item of social inclusion, indicating that it is an important indication regarding sustainability ethics in social work education.

The results of focus group discussion have revealed many themes which can contribute for the improvement of school teachers' professional development and empower to utilize their potential skills.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusion, followings recommendations are given:

i. Educational institutions should aggressively update and improve their social work education curricula to smoothly incorporate sustainability ethics in order to overcome the lack of integration.

ii. Fund extensive training courses for social work instructors must be conducted, to give them the know-how and abilities to successfully incorporate sustainability principles into their pedagogy.

iii. Include chances for experiential learning in the curriculum to close the knowledge gap between theory and practice.

iv. Promote and assist studies aimed at determining how sustainability ethics affect social work education. Invest in research projects that investigate the relationship between educating students about sustainability and helping them become moral leaders.

v. Encourage collaborations between sustainability organizations, social work professionals and educational institutions. Encourage cooperative projects that provide students the chance to interact with industry experts and offer networking and mentoring opportunities.

## References

- Boetto, H., Bell, K. (2015). Environmental sustainability in social work education: An online initiative to encourage global citizenship. *International Social Work*, 58(3), 448-462. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276472440\\_Environmental\\_sustainability\\_in\\_social\\_work\\_education\\_An\\_online\\_initiative\\_to\\_encourage\\_global\\_citizenship](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276472440_Environmental_sustainability_in_social_work_education_An_online_initiative_to_encourage_global_citizenship)
- Chakraborty, I., Maity, P. (2020). COVID-19 Outbreak: migration, effects on society, global environment and prevention. *Sciences of the Total Environment*, 728, 138882.
- Collén, K. (2019). Education for a sustainable future? Students' experiences of workshops on ethical dilemmas, *Social Work Education*, 38(1), 119-128, DOI: 10.1080/02615479.2018.1543391
- Drolet, J. (2015). Editorial. *International Social Work*, 58(3), 351–354. Sagepub.co.uk/journals
- Drolet, J., Wu, H., Taylor, M. & Dennehy, A. (2015). Social work and sustainable social development: Teaching and learning strategies for 'Green social work' curriculum. *Social Work Education*, 34(5), 528-543.
- Fernando, M., Fernando, M. (2016). Responsible leadership in theory. *Leading Responsibly in the Asian Century*, 71-101.
- Fredriksson, U.N., Kusanagi, K., Gougoulakis, P., Matsuda, Y. & Kitamura, Y. (2020). A comparative study of curriculums for education for sustainable development (ESD) in Sweden and Japan. *Sustainability*, 12(3), 1123. *Sustainability*. DOI: 10.3390/su12031123
- Hallinger, P. (2020). Analyzing the intellectual structure of the Knowledge base on managing for sustainability, 1982–2019: A meta-analysis. *Sustainable Development*, 28, 1493-1506.
- IASSW. (2014). *Global Definition of the Social Work Profession*. [www.iassw-aiets.org/global-definition-of-social-work-review-of-the-global-definition/](http://www.iassw-aiets.org/global-definition-of-social-work-review-of-the-global-definition/)

- IFSW. (2018). *Global Definition of the Social Work*. <https://www.ifsw.org/global-definition-of-social-work/>
- Iqbal, Q., Ahmad, N.H. & Halim, H.A. (2020). How Does Sustainable Leadership Influence Sustainable Performance? *SAGE Open*, 1-16. DOI: 10.1177/2158244020969394
- Jørgensen, N.J., Madsen, K.D. & Husted, M. (2020). Sustainability education and social inclusion in Nordic early childhood education. *ZEP: Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik*, 43(1), 27-34. DOI: 10.25656/01:20446.
- Kanu, I.A., Ndubisi, E.J. (2022). Utilitarian ethical theory vis-à-vis the contemporary society: an evaluation. *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.11393.33120>
- Karvonen, R., Ratinen, I. & Kemi, U. (2023). Promoting sustainability competency and self-efficacy in class teacher education. *Frontiers in Sustainability*, 4, 1-10. DOI: 10.3389/frsus.2023.1205680
- Kibert, C.J., Thiele, L., Peterson, A. & Monroe, M. (2012). *The Ethics of Sustainability*. Portal Rio.
- Larsen, V., Jørgensen, N.J. (2017). *Review of Danish Research on Social Inclusion in Early Childhood Education*. København.
- Lin, C.P., Huang, H.T. & Huang, T.Y. (2020). The effects of responsible leadership and knowledge sharing on job performance among knowledge workers. *Personal Review*, 49, 1879-1896.
- Mallick, L., Das, P.K. & Pradhan, K.C. (2016). Impact of Educational Expenditure on Economic Growth in Major Asian Countries: Evidence from Econometric Analysis. *Theoretical & Applied Economics*, 23, 173-186.
- Marquez-Ramos, L., Mourelle, E. (2019). Education and Economic Growth: An Empirical Analysis of Nonlinearities. *Applied Economics Analysis*, 27, 21-45.
- Muff, K., Liechti, A. & Dyllick, T. (2020). How to apply responsible leadership theory in practice: A competency tool to collaborate on the sustainable development goals. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 27, 2254-2274.
- Nasibulina, A. (2015). Education for Sustainable Development and Environmental Ethics. *Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1077-1082. DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.11.708
- Singh, H.P., Singh, A., Alam, F. & Agrawal, V. (2022). Impact of Sustainable Development Goals on Economic Growth in Saudi Arabia: Role of Education and Training. *Sustainability*, 14, 14119. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142114119>
- Sust 501 students (2017). *Sustainability Methods and Perspectives*. <https://pressbooks.pub/sustainabilitymethods/front-matter/titleandpreface/>
- Tashakkori, A., Teddlie, C. (2023a). *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*. SAGE publications.
- Teddlie, C., Yu, F. (2007). Mixed Methods Sampling: A Typology with Examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 77-100. DOI: 10.1177/2345678906292430
- Tushar, H. (2017). The role of ethical leadership in developing sustainable organization. *Australasian Journal of Law, Ethics and Governance (AJLEG)*, 2(2), 83-95. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3782780>
- UKÄ. (2017). *Universitetets och högskolors arbete med att främja en hållbar utveckling. En tematisk utvärdering, del 1. Rapport 2017: 2*. Stockholm: Author
- UNESCO. (2018). What is ESD? <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd>
- UNESCO. The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD 2005-2014). The First Two Years. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001540/154093e.pdf>
- Yang, X. (2020). Health expenditure, human capital and economic growth: an empirical study of developing countries. *International Journal of Health Economics and Management*, 20, 163-176.