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Research Article

LEADERSHIP, EMPLOYEE SUSTAINABILITY, AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

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Abstract

Ineffective leadership practices can be counterproductive to an organization's goals. This issue is important to executives because ineffective leadership practices can contribute to employee disengagement, increased turnover, and reduced organizational performance. Grounded in transformational and servant leadership theories, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore leadership practices used by executives to promote employee sustainability and organizational resilience in private sector organizations within the Washington metropolitan (District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia [DMV]) region. The participants were 10 executives from private sector organizations in the DMV region who served in CEO, senior management, and operational leadership roles and had a minimum of 8 years of professional leadership experience. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and secondary sources. Member checking was used to enhance credibility. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-step approach yielded four themes: (a) vision-driven and transformational leadership practices, (b) servant leadership and employee-centered behaviors, (c) ethical leadership and trust-building, and (d) adaptive leadership and organizational resilience. A key recommendation is that executives implement leadership development programs that integrate transformational and servant leadership practices to improve employee engagement and retention. The implications for positive social change include the potential to foster ethical, inclusive, and supportive workplace cultures that enhance employee well-being and strengthen long-term workforce stability in the DMV.

Keywords: Transformative leadership, Servant leadership, Employee sustainability, Organizational resilience, Workforce retention, and Ethical leadership.

INTRODUCTION

In the groundwork of this study, the context was outlined by research topic, purpose, and the conceptual framework that guided the investigation of leadership behaviors and employee sustainability within the DMV private sector. The information accentuated the study's topic, substantiated the significance of the problem, and aligned the research with pertinent leadership theories. Rooted in transformational and servant leadership theories, how private sector executives in the DMV region implement leadership practices that will foster employee engagement, retention, and long-term sustainability was investigated. In this section, I provided background and context for the research problem, highlighting the importance of analyzing transformational and servant leadership behaviors to understand employee sustainability in private sector organizations. In the business climate of 2025, employee sustainability and retention remain major obstacles, particularly when leadership strategies fail to foster engagement and well-being. When companies overlook the physical, emotional, and professional needs of their employees, they risk experiencing low performance, high employee turnover, and disengagement. Employee loyalty is strongly influenced by leadership commitment and sustainable practices, as research indicates that ethical and values-based leadership must begin with leaders being genuine and clear in communicating their values and by also acting on and demonstrating the components of ethical leadership (Hegarty & Moccia, 2018). Recent empirical research reveals that transformational leadership is closely linked to employee sustainability outcomes when leaders foster meaningful work and psychological capital. R. S Ali et al. (2023) stated that a transformational leadership approach and a positive work environment have a significant, positive effect on employee retention. Similarly, compassionate leadership behaviors have been shown to reduce fatigue and enhance employee commitment, particularly in competitive corporate environments (Pansini *et al.,* 2024). These findings underline the need for leadership practices that extend beyond transactional retention methods toward sustainability-oriented engagement models. Moldavanova and Goerdel (2018) asserted that social connectivity is an essential component of organizational sustainability and longevity, and that a well-connected organization is ultimately sustainable. Thus, Nevena *et al.* (2025) observed that employees who are devoted to the organization are motivated to make a significant personal contribution, go above and beyond their obligations, and have a genuine desire to continue working under the company's auspices. On the other hand, as evidenced by senior living facilities between 2022 and 2023, persistent understaffing, inadequate communication, and ineffective leadership responses indicate that deficiencies in leadership strategies can lower morale and retention. These patterns point to a larger organizational issue: traditional leadership techniques are insufficient to address the changing challenges of maintaining a dedicated workforce. The specific business problem under study was that some executives in private sector organizations within the DMV area lacked leadership practices that effectively support organizational resilience and employee sustainability. The purpose of the qualitative pragmatic study was to explore leadership practices that promote organizational resilience and employee sustainability in private sector companies in the DMV area. In this study, the lived experiences of business executives who implemented employee engagement and retention strategies to understand how their leadership behaviors influence long-term workforce sustainability was examined.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides a critical evaluation of current academic and practical research pertinent to the study topic. To provide an academic background and support the study's focus, this section synthesizes fundamental theories, current empirical evidence, and emerging perspectives. Hence, it illustrates how earlier research informs, validates, and distinguishes the current study. This literature review defined the study approach by rigorously assessing the impact of leadership behaviors on employee sustainability and retention within private sector businesses. The review integrates fundamental leadership theories with modern empirical research to maintain academic rigor and relevance.

Foundational theories underpinning the study include transformational leadership (Eaton *et al.,* 2024) and servant leadership (Campbell & Domene, 2024). Modern academic research has expanded these concepts through empirical studies on leadership, employee engagement, and organizational well-being (Eva *et al.,* 2019). Transformational leadership demonstrates that leaders who cultivate meaningful work environments are more successful at sustaining employee engagement and retention (Rabiul *et al.,* 2025), positioning it as a critical driver of employee sustainability rather than short-term performance alone.

The review was systematically categorized into four themes: (a) transformational leadership and employee retention; (b) servant leadership and organizational well-being; (c) employee engagement and workforce welfare; and (d) ethical leadership, trust, and sustainability. This framework enables a comprehensive examination of the impact of leadership behaviors on employee retention and organizational outcomes. Gaps persist in the literature on sustainable leadership practices explicitly designed for private sector enterprises, particularly in the DMV area.

The search strategy involved the use of academic databases, including ProQuest, SAGE, ABI/INFORM, ScienceDirect, and Business Source Complete, to maintain methodological integrity.. Boolean operators, truncations, and filters (peer-reviewed, full text, last 5 years) are used. More than 83% of the sources were peer-reviewed and published within the last 5 years, while foundational works provide theoretical support (see Appendices B and C). This literature analysis established a consistent basis for situating the study within existing scholarships and underscores evidence-based strategies to improve employee sustainability and organizational resilience in the private sector in the DMV.

Transformational Leadership and Employee Retention

Transformational leadership remains a fundamental framework for explaining how leaders foster commitment, engagement, and sustain employee retention in competitive private sector contexts. Organizations achieve their long-term goals by cultivating a pool of skilled, motivated employees who are dedicated to the organization's success, as well as nurturing their employees' potential and investing in their development, which creates a positive work culture that fosters innovation, creativity, and adaptability, allowing the organization to remain competitive in an ever-changing business environment (Shneikat *et al.,* 2023). Thereby, indicating that recent empirical research underscores its significance in contemporary organizational dynamics. According to Cheng et al. (2025), employees' involvement in corporate social responsibility strengthens their loyalty to their company and improves their opinion of its reputation. This highlights the important role that employees' organizational identification plays in increasing corporate social responsibility engagement and strengthening organizational commitment. Additionally, Hariyani et al. (2025) explored the transformative significance of digital technologies in enhancing resource optimization, decision-making, and service delivery, and in achieving various sustainable goals. Transformational leadership theory, originally articulated by Burns (1978) and extended by Bass (1985), remains one of the most significant frameworks for understanding how leaders motivate and sustain employee engagement in contemporary businesses. Transformational leaders identify credibility, resilience, optimism, integrity, clinical expertise, honesty, strong interpersonal skills, advocacy, organization, and dependability as their leadership qualities; and describe themselves as energetic, authentic, patient, innovative, self-confident, committed, and persistent visionary leaders who negotiate and initiate the future (Ward, 2002). These behaviors encourage employees to transcend self-interest and align their ambitions with broader business objectives. Chen & Chen (2026) highlighted the reciprocal nature of leader-follower relations and proposed that employee voice is systematically linked to employees' psychological resources and transformational leadership within the Taiwanese research base, thereby explaining the triangular relationship among voice behavior, psychological capital, and transformational leadership. Their findings also have practical implications for developing psychologically safe communication channels, engaging in leadership development, and cultivating employee psychological capital to promote organizational creativity and flexibility.

Contemporary empirical studies demonstrate the growing relevance of transformative leadership in dynamic and technology-driven workplaces. (Weber *et al.,* 2022) noted that transformational leadership behaviors are particularly beneficial in contexts characterized by digital transformation and organizational change, as they foster flexibility and learning. Similarly, Aristana et al. (2025) argue that transformational leadership empowerment is highly important for motivating people to perform according to their talents and for helping them feel psychologically empowered, knowing that their job is vital to the organization. In technology-intensive sectors, ensuring equal access, ethical digital behavior, and environmental sustainability is vital to fully harnessing digital technology to achieve sustainable development goals (Hariyani *et al.,* 2025). From a sustainability standpoint, transformational leadership contributes to long-term workforce stability by encouraging meaningful work and emotional attachment among employees. Leaders who articulate a shared vision and demonstrate genuine concern for staff development foster a sense of purpose and belonging within firms. This relational interaction improves intrinsic motivation and promotes resilience during periods of organizational change (Rabiul *et al.,* 2025). Within the competitive labor markets of the DMV private sector, transformational leadership approaches are consequently expected to play a vital role in sustaining employee engagement and lowering voluntary turnover. As a result, transformational leadership provides a core theoretical framework for analyzing how leadership behaviors promote employee sustainability and organizational resilience.

Transformational leadership enhances retention by meeting employees heightened psychological needs. Wherein, transformational leaders establish a sense of purpose and belonging by articulating a collective vision and demonstrating commitment (Eaton *et al.,* 2024). This relational perspective enhances intrinsic motivation and links personal goals with organizational objectives, thereby reducing turnover. The model's emphasis on intellectual stimulation also stimulates creativity and autonomy, creating resilience and self-efficacy, attributes related to sustainable workforce engagement (Rabiul *et al.,* 2025). In the private sector, firms contend with competitive labor markets and rapid technological change, making these dynamics especially pertinent. The ability of transformational leaders to align organizational vision with staff development will foster organizational stability and innovation. The literature confirms that transformational leadership is a significant predictor of employee engagement and retention across many sectors and cultures. In the private sector of the DMV, transformational approaches will be crucial to mitigating burnout, disengagement, and attrition by fostering purpose-driven engagement and adaptation. Consequently, transformational leadership served as a fundamental theoretical pillar of this study's conceptual framework, explicitly linking leadership behaviors to employee sustainability and organizational success.

Employee engagement and workforce welfare

Employee engagement and workforce wellness reflect the human-centric outcomes of effective leadership and directly impact organizational sustainability, performance, and retention. Employee engagement implies the level of employees' emotional and cognitive investment in their work and organization (Kahn, 1990). Recent leadership studies commonly highlight involvement as a mediator between leadership actions and organizational results (Rabiul *et al.,* 2025). Hence, Dong et al. (2026) show that ethical leadership helps overqualified individuals with high public service motivation better utilize their strengths, thereby boosting work engagement. According to Katsikas (2025), combining managerial and transformational techniques, encouraging cooperation, adopting dispersed and participative leadership, and maintaining ethical integrity are essential components of the success of educational institutions. According to Vrcelj et al. (2024), servant leaders are adept at attending to the spiritual, emotional, and subtle needs of their followers, enabling their personal development and transformation.

Engagement and well-being serve both ethical obligations and strategic purposes, enhancing retention and fostering innovation. Transformational leaders foster engagement by clearly communicating vision and purpose, whereas servant leaders enhance well-being via empathy and compassion. Collectively, these leadership styles foster environments of trust and inclusivity that bolster employee commitment and diminish attrition. In the private sector DMV, characterized by significant workforce diversity and intense talent competition, leaders who align engagement tactics with employee well-being demonstrate a twofold commitment to both performance and sustainability. This evidence substantiates the assertion that leadership behaviors directly influence both staff performance and retention within an organization. Research indicates that employee engagement and well-being are essential mediating factors linking leadership behavior to organizational sustainability. By investing in engagement and well-being initiatives, DMV private sector leaders can bolster employee loyalty, enhance resilience, and foster a positive organizational culture that supports long-term sustainability. This section connects leadership theory with practical workforce outcomes, underscoring the significance of the study's emphasis on sustainable leadership methods.

Servant Leadership and Organizational Well-Being

Servant leadership prioritizes service to others, ethical accountability, and employee development as fundamental pillars of organizational health and sustainability. By fostering an integrated leadership approach, servant leadership can significantly enhance employees' psychological well-being amid organizational challenges (Kim *et al.,* 2024). They are leaders who can significantly enhance employees and act as stewards who cultivate trust, empathy, and community within organizations. Contemporary empirical research consistently corroborates these ideas within corporate environments. Eva et al. (2019) analyzed more than two decades of servant-leadership research. They concluded that servant leadership enhances employee well-being, work happiness, and long-term commitment by cultivating moral and relational trust. Servant leadership further supports employee sustainability by emphasizing compassion, empowerment, and ethical responsibility. An integrative review by van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) identified compassion as a defining mechanism through which servant leadership enhances long-term employee well-being and commitment. The findings were validated by a recent empirical study that linked servant leadership to employee engagement. Servant leadership philosophy, first articulated by Greenleaf (2023), emphasizes the leader's responsibility as a steward who prioritizes followers' growth, well-being, and development. Unlike hierarchical leadership paradigms that emphasize authority and control, servant leadership concentrates on service, empathy, humility, and ethical responsibility. van Dierendonck et al. (2026) indicate that the results show that people's sense of meaningfulness is strengthened by servant leadership, which supports a positive spiral that makes one more perceptive to a leader's encouraging conduct, adding to a better experience of empowerment and flow. The servant leader will consistently foster employees' growth and self-actualization. In this favorable climate, employees will feel empowered to grow and self-actualize in their duties. (Kiker *et al.,* 2019). This attitude shifts leadership focus from corporate domination to collective well-being, recognizing people as valued contributors to organizational success.

Recent empirical research reveals that servant leadership strongly influences employee engagement, organizational commitment, and psychological well-being. Eva et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive systematic evaluation of servant leadership literature and concluded that servant leadership behaviors promote relational trust, increase work satisfaction, and improve employee retention. These findings indicate that servant leaders promote inclusive psychologically safe work cultures in which people feel appreciated and supported. These environments increase collaboration, reduce emotional tiredness, and enhance employee resilience, particularly in firms undergoing technological or structural change. Servant leadership also contributes to a company's sustainability by emphasizing ethical stewardship and long-term staff development. Leaders who display compassion, sincerity, and

humility develop organizational cultures built on trust and mutual respect (Ali & Yusof, 2011). Such cultures increase employee loyalty and strengthen corporate engagement, lowering the chance of burnout and attrition. In competitive private sector situations such as the DMV region, servant leadership may be particularly effective because it balances organizational performance. The closest to an advocacy of the ideal way, based on empirical evidence and a literature assessment, is that leaders need to consider the core (vision and mobilization) and the context (sectoral, organizational, and societal) of leadership to attain efficacy (McDermott & Flood, 2011).

Consequently, servant leadership contributes a vital human-centered dimension to the study's conceptual framework. While transformational leadership stresses vision and inspiration, servant leadership emphasizes empathy and ethical stewardship. Together, these complementary leadership theories help explain how leadership behaviors promote employee sustainability, engagement, and long-term organizational resilience. Ali and Yusof (2011) stated that servant leadership combines theory and practice through a pragmatic perspective, boosting resilience and ethical alignment in enterprises. Research indicates that servant leadership promotes social responsibility, inclusivity, and innovation (McDermott & Flood, 2011).

Servant leadership promotes employee sustainability by emphasizing intrinsic motivation and ethical stewardship over hierarchical authority. Leaders who exhibit compassion, humility, and personalized support foster psychologically secure environments that improve retention and engagement (Eva *et al.,* 2019). This style differs from transactional leadership by prioritizing moral authenticity and long-term human development, both of which are associated with reduced turnover and enhanced loyalty. In the competitive private sector of the DMV, servant leadership is especially pertinent, as it integrates corporate performance with community ideals and social responsibility. By cultivating trust and ethical decision-making, servant leaders create a culture of care that alleviates fatigue and enhances collective commitment.

Research repeatedly demonstrates that servant leadership enhances sustainable business performance by fostering employee well-being and ethical cultures (Kiker *et al.,* 2019). In the private sector, servant leadership offers a feasible approach for executives to reconcile revenue with compassion, prioritizing staff engagement and retention as essential to organizational sustainability. These observations directly strengthen the study's conceptual framework by emphasizing human-centered, sustainability-oriented leadership. Recent leadership research consistently shows that transformational and servant leadership behaviors play complementary roles in enhancing employee sustainability and organizational resilience. Servant leadership emphasizes relational and ethical aspects of leadership, focusing on employee well-being, empowerment, and trust-building (Eva *et al.,* 2019). Servant leadership has a stronger impact on job satisfaction than on organizational commitment (Vrcelj *et al.,* 2024). Although the leadership methods differ in focus, both frameworks underscore the need to build psychologically supportive environments that increase employee engagement and commitment. Contemporary empirical research increasingly demonstrates that firms gain when leaders mix inspirational vision with ethical stewardship, so establishing cultures that support both performance and employee well-being (Aristana *et al.,* 2025). This convergence of leadership approaches underscores the vital role of sustainable leadership techniques in preserving workforce stability and organizational efficiency in modern business conditions.

Ethical Leadership, Trust, and Sustainability

Ethical leadership serves as a moral guide that fosters trust, transparency, and fairness, all of which are crucial for maintaining employee engagement, retention, and organizational resilience. Thus, ethical leadership is based on the notion that leaders exemplify honesty and fairness, therefore influencing followers' moral reasoning and dedication (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Empirical studies indicate that ethical leadership improves employee well-being and promotes sustainable work environments. Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) discovered that ethical leadership mitigates workplace stress and turnover intentions by enhancing perceived organizational justice. Zhang and Guo (2022) indicate that servant leadership directly increased employee-based brand equity through the mediating role of interpersonal trust. Beikzad and Razmjou (2024) state that strategic leadership, an innovative organizational climate, organizational voice, and work ethic interact to collectively improve organizational performance, increase employee job satisfaction, and build a healthy organizational culture. Strategic leaders can strengthen the firm's work ethic culture by defining and advocating ethical principles and corporate values. These executives serve as excellent role models for employees by demonstrating ethical and responsible behavior. With his ethical leadership and pragmatic vision, President Obama spearheaded the Affordable Care Act, which resulted in the most significant expansion of healthcare since the founding of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965 (Bose, 2024). This recognizes a leader's vision during periods of uncertainty. This recognizes a leader's vision during situations of uncertainty.

Ethical leadership fosters employee sustainability via two intersecting mechanisms: trust and moral illustration. Through exhibiting fairness and authenticity, ethical leaders foster trust, enhancing employees' psychological contracts and emotional commitment (Zhang & Guo, 2022). Trust also enhances transparency, which in turn encourages open communication and innovation, both critical factors in retaining high-performing employees (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). In private sector entities throughout the DMV region, where competition and technological advancements may heighten stress, ethical leadership will serve as a stabilizing force, fostering integrity-based decision-making and social responsibility. This leadership approach enhances transformative and servant leadership by emphasizing moral authenticity over mere charisma or service, thereby establishing sustainability grounded in ethical consistency and equity. The research emphasizes that ethical leadership is a crucial factor in organizational longevity as it creates the moral framework that underpins trust, loyalty, and participation. In the private sector, ethical leadership techniques enable executives to reconcile stakeholder expectations with human-centered ideals, ensuring corporate growth aligns with ethical responsibilities. This focus on ethical leadership enhances the study's conceptual framework by connecting moral decision-making to employee sustainability and long-term

organizational resilience. Although extensive research has examined transformational and servant leadership as drivers of employee engagement and organizational performance, important gaps remain in understanding how these leadership practices specifically contribute to employee sustainability and long-term workforce stability within private sector organizations. While these outcomes are useful markers of leadership success, they do not fully capture the broader concept of employee sustainability, which encompasses long-term well-being, resilience, and workforce retention.

Furthermore, although recent studies highlight the growing importance of sustainable leadership in modern organizations, relatively few empirical investigations have examined how executives integrate transformational and servant leadership practices to support employee sustainability in competitive private sector environments (Campbell & Domene, 2024). This gap is particularly critical in the Washington metropolitan (DMV) business sector, where organizations face greater workforce diversity, technological transformation, and intense competition for talent. As firms adapt to these dynamic conditions, understanding leadership techniques that preserve employee engagement and retention becomes increasingly vital. Addressing this gap involves a qualitative examination of executives' leadership experiences and behaviors that enhance workforce sustainability. By analyzing how leaders apply transformational and servant leadership behaviors in real-world organizational settings, this study sought to provide fresh insights into leadership approaches that enhance both employee well-being and long-term organizational resilience. The literature review provides a scientific framework for understanding leadership practices and employee sustainability in corporate contexts. Building on this theoretical and empirical background, the following section applies these findings to real-world business practice, emphasizing their relevance to decision-making and leadership strategies in private sector firms.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two theories were used as lenses to identify potential causes of organizational failure. The first theory was transformational leadership theory, which Burns (1978) and Bass (1979) developed. Current understanding of the theory emphasizes democratization, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration to build employee trust and intrinsic motivation (Eaton *et al.,* 2024). The second was the servant leadership theory, which shows that positive workplace well-being and employee creativity enhance psychological availability (Eva *et al.,* 2019; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Song *et al.,* 2024). When combined, this empirical framework offered a structural approach to understanding cultural influences on quality improvement initiatives and findings and served as a roadmap for creating interview questions, analyzing data, grounding, complementing, and incorporating leadership techniques into sustainability plans and job satisfaction. By aligning theoretical constructs with the study's objectives and methodologies, the combination of transformational and servant leadership enhanced the research's conceptual integrity. The focus on moral, visionary, and people-centered tactics in transformational leadership enables the study to examine how leaders foster participation and trust. Especially in complex areas, like the DMV, a valuable foundation for understanding how leaders maintain internal unity while adapting to external demands was essential. By applying suitable conceptual frameworks to the study, enabling elements, such as challenges and organizational outcomes, are interrelated (Munir & Watts, 2026). Technological and organizational readiness appeared as significant internal factors affecting human resources and the interplay between creativity and the ability to navigate (Munir & Watts, 2026). Ultimately, organizational effectiveness and impact, as well as environmental issues, are destructive variables that significantly affect the workplace, thus hindering the process, where environmental issues present as a destructive factor for insignificantly harming the workplace productivity (Munir & Watts, 2026). Accordingly, the conceptual framework for this study incorporated transformational and servant leadership theories to evaluate how leadership behaviors promote employee sustainability, engagement, and organizational resilience within private sector businesses.

4. METHODS

A qualitative research methodology and pragmatic inquiry research design was used to conduct the research. The qualitative research approach was best suited to this study, as it enabled the investigation of the intricate, situation-specific relationship between employee sustainability and leadership practices in private sector businesses. When examining workplace dynamics, organizational behaviors, and motivating factors that are difficult to evaluate numerically, qualitative research is ideally suited (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, Campbell and Domene (2024) highlighted that qualitative methods offer the flexibility to capture the subtleties of participants' viewpoints and enable in-depth analysis of human experiences. The pragmatic inquiry research design provided the opportunity for understanding the practical applications of the strategies presented.

Data were collected using semistructured interviews. Participants were provided the researchers' interpretations of their responses to confirm its accuracy before the final analysis. An interview protocol was used to ensure consistency in the data collection process. To preserve methodological rigor, a seven-step process was followed during data collection: (a) interview scheduling and confirmation, (b) informed consent, (c) open-ended interviewing, (d) field note taking, (e) authorized audio recording, (f) verbatim transcription of interviews, (g) member checking, and (h) safe storage of data in password-protected systems. Each stage ensured methodical and reproducible data collection while also upholding ethical consistency. Reflexive journaling and maintaining an audit trail further enhanced credibility. Data saturation was reached by 10 participant interviews.

A data tracking system was used to organize and track the data as it was collected. The data for each participant, including field notes, audio files, and verbatim transcripts, were categorized and labeled with pseudonyms (e.g., "P1") to maintain anonymity and ensure orderly organization. Reflexive journaling was employed to document the researcher's positioning and prevent bias throughout the analytic process. These methods align with recommended procedures to enhance openness and minimize bias in qualitative research (Nowell *et al.,* 2017). The eligibility criteria comprised being a business executive or senior manager in a private sector company and having at least 5 years of leadership experience and practices that effectively supported organizational

resilience and employee sustainability. Purposeful sampling was used to select 10 eligible participants for the study. purposive sampling is a popular technique for selecting participants with a thorough understanding of a phenomenon, thereby ensuring rich and pertinent data (Palinkas *et al.,* 2015).

Ethical recruitment procedures were followed. Each participant received and signed an informed consent form prior to the interview. The participants' identity was masked using pseudonyms, and confidentiality protections were strictly followed. Participants were recruited through professional networks and were informed of the procedures for withdrawing from the research at any time. Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis process was used to analyze the data. Thematic analysis, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2021), is a flexible yet rigorous method for identifying, analyzing, and summarizing patterns in data. Saldaña's (2021) heuristic, sequential coding was used for coding. Using Saldaña's (2021) heuristic, sequential coding ensures a systematic, discovery-oriented examination. To ensure rigor, the data analysis procedures were conducted sequentially; transcripts were reviewed several times to become acquainted with the information; inductive open coding was conducted to capture participants' insights and salient phrases; codes were grouped into broader axial categories, and higher order themes were derived from these categories to reflect patterns in participants' experiences.

5. FINDINGS

The goal of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry research study was to answer the overarching research question, What leadership practices do executives in private sector organizations in the DMV area use to support organizational resilience and employee sustainability? The diverse occupations and organizations represented in this research project played an important role, without narrowing the field to a single occupation or organization. Analysis of the data collected led to the identification of four key themes: (a) vision-driven and transformational leadership practices, (b) servant leadership and employee-centered behaviors. (c) ethical leadership and trust-building, and (d) adaptive leadership and organizational resilience. The themes aligned with the study's conceptual framework and suggested similar leadership experiences among participants (see *Theme Recurrence Matrix* below).

As shown in the *Theme Recurrence Matrix*, the matrix showed that each identified theme emerged across several participants' responses, indicating a high level of consistency in leadership practices. This consistency enhanced the dependability of the findings. Participants frequently described leadership methods that blended components of transformational and servant leadership. Participants recognized the importance of vision, motivation, empathy, and individualized support as significant drivers of employee engagement and retention. These leadership practices were generally connected to higher employee commitment, improved morale, and enhanced organizational resilience. In addition, ethical leadership emerged as a significant factor impacting employee sustainability. Participants stressed the relevance of transparency, fairness, and responsibility in developing trust within their businesses. These ethical activities contributed to a strong workplace culture and encouraged long-term employee well-being. Employee sustainability practices were also frequently highlighted across participant replies. Leaders described introducing initiatives such as employee development programs, flexible work arrangements, and well-being support systems. These measures were seen as vital for maintaining workforce stability and addressing contemporary organizational challenges. P10combined servant and transformational leadership, stating that "employees remain marketable through technology learning, retention through growth, and new skills and knowledge transfers."

Across all 10 interviews, ethical adaptive leadership and trust-building emerged as the most consistent theme. Honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, fairness, and trust recurred in nearly every case as foundational leadership practices that influenced commitment, stability, and retention. As an example, most participants emphasized themes 1 through 4 as ethical and servant leadership practices; for example, P1 stated that "honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, trust, and leading by example" were very important.

Across all 10 interviews, ethical adaptive leadership and trust-building emerged as the most common theme. Honesty, integrity, openness, accountability, fairness, and trust recurred in nearly every case as basic leadership principles that influenced commitment, stability, and retention.

Theme Recurrence Matrix

Theme 1: Vision-Driven & Transformational Leadership Practices		Theme 2: Servant Leadership & Employee-Centered Behavior	
Recurring Code	Participants	Recurring Code	Participants
Clear Expectations & Role Clarity	P1, P3, P8	Relationship-Building	P1, P2, P4, P5
Shared Goals & Direction	P1, P4, P7, P8	Mentorship & Development	P1, P3, P10
Strategic & structured Leadership	P2, P8, P9	Whole-person support	P2, P4, P5, P6
Empowerment & Growth Orientation	P3, P5, P10	Work-life balance	P5, P6
Internal Advancement & Future Leaders	P5, P10	Family-like & Caring culture	P2, P5
Collaboration & Hands-on Leadership	P6, P10	Listening & Accessible Leadership	P5, P7
		Employee Growth Opportunities	P3, P5, P10

Theme 3: Ethical Leadership & Trust-Building Leadership		Theme 4: Adaptive Leadership & Organizational Resilience	
Recurring Code	Participants	Recurring Code	Participants
Honesty	P1, P2, P3, P6, P8, P9, P10	Technology adaptation	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Integrity	P1, P3, P7	Training for change	P2, P4, P5, P10
Transparency	P1, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P10	AI & Digital systems	P5, P8, P9
Accountability	P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P10	Flexibility & Responsiveness	P3, P6, P8
Fairness & Respect	P3, P6, P8	Stability during uncertainty	P1, P8
Trust & Loyalty Connection	P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P9	Mobility & Transfer & Progression	P5, P10
Leading by example & Ownership	P1, P2, P5,	Organizational relevance &Staying Current	P4, P8, P9

This theme was evident in both the clearest and the most limited transcripts. Overall, integrating the themes revealed a complete approach to fostering employee sustainability. The convergence of transformational, servant, and ethical leadership behaviors with realistic sustainability initiatives indicated a comprehensive leadership model that addressed both business goals and employee needs. The next sections give a full explanation of each theme, supported by participant responses and related research, to further highlight how leadership behaviors promote employee sustainability and organizational resilience. Many themes were consistently seen among participants, reinforcing the alignment between leadership behaviors and employee sustainability outcomes.

Theme 1: Vision-Driven and Transformational Leadership Practices

Across the 10 interviews, vision-driven and transformational leadership practices remained present throughout, though slightly less dominant than the other three themes. This theme was most often reflected through clarity of expectations, shared goals, leadership development, growth pathways, empowerment, and creativity. Several interviewees described leadership as helping employees understand expectations, align with organizational direction, and see future opportunities for advancement. Other responses highlighted collaborative, hands-on, and strategic leadership styles that supported creativity, innovation, and development. Although this theme was somewhat less dominant than the ethical and servant leadership themes, the data suggested that transformational leadership practices contributed to employee sustainability by promoting clarity, purpose, and long-term growth within the organization. P1, P3, P5, P7, and P8 had strong opinions on this theme whereas P2, P4, P6, P9, and P10 had moderately strong opinions. The participants emphasized that transformational leadership involved more than setting goals. The participants described the need for leaders to inspire confidence, encourage innovation, and foster a work environment where employees believe their contributions matter. For example, participants discussed practices such as regular communication, team meetings, recognition of employee contributions, and intentional efforts to connect individual performance with organizational success. These findings indicated that vision-driven leadership supported employee sustainability by strengthening motivation, engagement, and commitment.

These results confirm existing literature on transformational leadership, which emphasizes vision, inspiration, individualized consideration, and motivation as important drivers of employee engagement and performance. Fuller and Dennis (2009) found that transformational leadership supports employee sustainability by strengthening meaningful work and psychological capital. Similarly, leadership effectiveness is connected to organizational alignment and digital transformation practices. The findings also extended the literature by showing how executives in private sector organizations in the DMV region used vision-driven communication as a practical strategy for sustaining employee engagement during organizational change. The findings are tied directly to the conceptual framework of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership theory emphasizes the leader's role in inspiring followers, developing shared purpose, and encouraging employees to exceed basic performance expectations. The participants' descriptions reflected these principles, identifying communication, motivation, vision alignment, and employee recognition as practices that supported organizational resilience and employee sustainability.

Theme 2: Servant Leadership and Employee-Centered Behaviors

Servant leadership and employee-centered actions emerged as a second important topic. Participants noted the importance of empathy, relationship-building, support for work–life balance, mentorship, training, active listening, accessibility/open-door access, and tailored help. Servant leadership is a multidimensional concept that begins with a desire to serve (Greenleaf, 2023; Vrcelj *et al.,* 2024). Several interviews emphasized family like cultures, personal care amid crisis, and specific initiatives to help employees grow into future leaders. Other interviewees stressed that staff remained devoted when they were respected, supported, and offered meaningful opportunities for development. Collectively, these data revealed that employee-centered leadership practices enhanced engagement, retention, and long-term workforce sustainability. They showed that employees were more likely to remain loyal to the organization when leaders demonstrated genuine concern for their well-being and professional development. Participants stressed that leaders needed to understand employees' needs, remove performance barriers, and build a culture in which people felt acknowledged and appreciated. Interviewees P5 and P10 strengthened this topic.

P1, P2, and P4 had very strong opinions, while P3 and P9 had strong opinions. The most prominent opinions came from P5, P6, P7, P8, and P10. The participants discussed the importance of building relationships with employees. Hence, they described leadership practices such as checking in with employees, providing mentoring, offering flexibility when possible, and supporting professional growth. These behaviors were considered important because they helped employees build trust in leadership and remain engaged with the organization. The participants' responses suggested that employee-centered leadership improves retention by fostering a workplace climate where employees feel supported rather than overlooked.

Therefore, these findings confirmed servant leadership literature. Eva et al. (2019) described servant leadership as a people-centered approach that emphasizes humility, empowerment, empathy, and follower development. The findings also supported literature linking employee-centered leadership with engagement, trust, and organizational commitment. The participants' experiences extended the literature by showing how servant leadership practices were applied in private sector business settings to address employee sustainability and workforce stability.

Finally, the participants' findings are tied directly to the conceptual framework of servant leadership. Servant leadership theory emphasizes that leaders serve employees by prioritizing their development, listening to their concerns, and creating conditions that help them succeed. The participants' responses reflected this framework because they identified empathy, listening, mentoring, and individualized support as leadership practices that promoted employee well-being and long-term organizational commitment.

Theme 3: Ethical Leadership and Trust-Building

Ethical leadership and trust-building were the most prevalent and constant themes throughout all 10 interviews. Interviewees regularly highlighted honesty, integrity, transparency, justice, responsibility, and trust as crucial leadership practices. Some replies highlighted leading by example and taking responsibility for mistakes, while others focused on openness, ethical consistency, and treating people fairly and transparently. Throughout the interviews, trust was intimately tied to employee commitment, loyalty, and long-term organizational stability. These findings suggested that ethical leadership may be important to both employee sustainability and organizational resilience.

Three of the participants (P4, P5, and P9) had strong opinions, while the other seven had the most prominent opinions on this theme. The participants discussed trust-building as a daily leadership practice rather than a single action. They described the importance of honest communication, confidentiality, fairness in decision-making, and consistency between what leaders said and what they did. Several participants indicated that employees lost confidence when leaders failed to communicate clearly or applied organizational expectations inconsistently. These findings suggested that adaptive leadership helped create psychological safety and strengthened employees' willingness to remain committed to the organization.

Therefore, these participant findings confirmed existing research on ethical leadership and employee outcomes. The ethical leadership literature shows that fairness, accountability, and integrity are associated with higher levels of trust, engagement, and retention. Demirtas and Akdogan (2021) connected ethical leadership with employee trust and positive organizational outcomes. The findings extended existing literature by showing that executives viewed trust not only as a moral responsibility but also as a practical business strategy for sustaining employees and strengthening organizational resilience. The findings are also connected to both transformational and servant leadership theories. Transformational leadership includes idealized influence, which requires leaders to model ethical conduct and serve as examples for employees. Servant leadership also emphasizes humility, stewardship, and concern for others. The participants' emphasis on fairness, transparency, and accountability reflected both frameworks and demonstrated how ethical behavior supported effective business practice.

Theme 4: Adaptive Leadership and Organizational Resilience

Transformative leadership and organizational resilience became more prominent as interviews accumulated. Pandemic disruption, remote work, AI, digital tools, changing expectations, and technology training all appeared repeatedly. This theme is now stronger than it looked in the first few interviews. The participants discussed training, one-on-one technology support, digital hiring processes, multilingual AI tools, and the importance of helping employees remain marketable and productive in changing environments. Participants described the need for leaders to remain flexible, responsive, and prepared to adjust leadership strategies during periods of change. They indicated that organizational resilience depended on leaders' ability to guide employees through uncertainty, communicate changes clearly, and provide support during transitions. Participants also emphasized the importance of continuous learning, problem-solving, and innovation. In a recent study, the author stated, "the clarity and leadership created by a leader plays a vital part in the stimulation of employees' potential." (Murphy, 2024). These responses revealed that transformative leadership improved resilience by helping firms remain relevant, technologically responsive, and able to sustain employees through shifting situations.

P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, and P7 had strong opinions; P5 and P10 had very strong opinions; and P8 had the most prominent opinion in this theme. The participants discussed transformative leadership practices, including communication styles, responding to employee feedback, using technology to improve workflow, and helping employees manage changing business demands. They indicated that employees were more likely to remain engaged when leaders helped them understand change and provided resources to adapt successfully. These responses suggested that transformative leadership supported employee sustainability by reducing uncertainty and helping employees remain productive during organizational shifts.

According to research, transformational leadership not only fosters a successful work environment but also cultivates the psychological and emotional conditions necessary for workers to perform at their best (Iddrisu & Mohammed, 2025). The findings aligned with resilience literature, which emphasize flexibility, learning, and responsiveness as important factors in organizational survival and workforce stability. The findings extended existing research by showing how executives connect adaptability with employee sustainability, not only with organizational performance. The findings are tied to the conceptual framework by extending transformational and servant leadership into changing organizational contexts. Transformational leadership supported resilience by helping leaders communicate their vision and motivate employees during periods of change. Servant leadership supports resilience by ensuring employees receive support, empathy, and resources during periods of uncertainty. Together, the findings showed that transformative leadership practices strengthened organizational resilience when leaders combined vision, employee-centered support, ethical behavior, and flexibility.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Across the 10 interviews, the findings suggested that employee sustainability and organizational resilience are supported by an integrated leadership strategy that combines ethical conduct, employee-centered support, strategic clarity, and adaptability. Ethical leadership and trust-building emerged as the strongest and most consistent themes, particularly through a recurring emphasis on honesty, integrity, transparency, responsibility, and trust. Servant leadership and employee-centered behaviors also emerged significantly, particularly through relationship-building, mentorship, support, work–life balance, and employee growth opportunities. Transformational leadership methods contributed through communication, shared goals, innovation, and leadership development, while increasing organizational resilience through technology adoption, training, and responsiveness to workplace change. Overall, the findings revealed that employee sustainability depended on leaders who were trustworthy, helpful, growth-oriented, and flexible. accountability structures.

The findings of this study have substantial implications for professional business practice, particularly for CEOs and senior leaders trying to promote employee sustainability, engagement, retention, and organizational resilience in private sector businesses. The findings demonstrated that effective leadership practice was not limited to one leadership style. Instead, participants viewed leadership as an integrated approach that encompassed vision-driven communication, employee-centered support, ethical behavior, trust-building, and adaptability. These findings areimportant to professional practice because they offer company executives practical ways for resolving worker difficulties such as disengagement, turnover, low morale, and organizational instability.

The initial application in professional practice involves adopting vision-driven and transformational leadership methods. Participants reported that employees were more engaged when leaders clearly conveyed corporate goals and linked employees' day-to-day activities to the organization's broader mission. This finding is crucial for business practice because employees are more likely to remain committed when they understand the purpose of their work and recognize how their contributions support organizational success. Executives and senior managers shoulduse these results to improve communication, offer regular opportunities to discuss corporate goals, and recognize how employee contributions support long-term business success. These techniques can help leaders raise staff motivation, develop alignment, and improve retention.

The findings also support the professional value of servant leadership and employee-centered actions. Participants noted that empathy, active listening, mentoring, and individualized support helped employees feel valued and respected. This finding is useful to business practice because employee sustainability depends not just on salary or work design but also on the quality of the connection between leaders and employees. Leaders can use this finding to create employee-centered leadership development programs that train managers to listen effectively, provide constructive feedback, encourage professional growth, and respond to employee concerns. These techniques may increase trust, psychological safety, and organizational commitment. Ethical leadership and trust-building are also highly applicable to professional practice. Participants described trust as a foundation for employee engagement and organizational resilience. They suggested that employees are more likely to remain engaged when leaders demonstrate justice, transparency, responsibility, and consistency. This finding is significant for improving business practice because trust influenced employees' belief that leadership decisions were credible and that the organization is a place where they can grow and contribute over time. Organizations can use this conclusion by establishing explicit ethical standards, strengthening accountability systems, promoting transparent communication, and ensuring that rules are executed consistently. These techniques may reduce employee uncertainty, increase morale, and support retention.

The findings further demonstrate that transformative leadership is crucial for maintaining employee and company morale during transformation. Participants cited flexibility, continuous learning, technology use, and responsiveness to employee feedback as crucial leadership approaches for navigating changing company situations. This finding is useful for professional practice, as privatesector businesses regularly confront evolving workforce expectations, technological transformation, competitive labor markets, and operational unpredictability. Business leaders can use this finding to prepare managers to lead through change, foster innovation, support staff growth, and leverage data and technology to improve communication and decision-making. These approaches can help employees adjust to change while retaining engagement and productivity.

Collectively, the findings present a realistic framework for enhancing business practice by aligning leadership behaviors with employee demands and corporate goals. The study demonstrates that leaders can enhance employee sustainability and organizational resilience by combining transformational, servant, and ethical leadership styles. For privatesector firms in the DMV region, these findings are especially significant, as workforce diversity, technological innovation, and competitive employment conditions encouraged leaders to adopt flexible, human-centered leadership approaches. By applying the findings, corporate leaders will boost employee engagement, reduce turnover intentions, build trust, and foster more resilient organizational cultures. From a professional practice standpoint, the findings suggest that leadership development can be addressed as a strategic business goal rather than a secondary human resources role. Organizations may benefit from leadership training that stresses vision communication, emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making, employee support, and change management. Senior executives, human resource leaders, department managers, and organizational development professionals should pay attention to these findings, as they offer practical recommendations to boost staff stability and long-term organizational performance. The findings reveal that sustainable leadership practice requires leaders to balance corporate performance goals with genuine care for employees' well-being, development, and long-term commitment.

BUSINESS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Senior leaders and compliance teams should institutionalize ethical leadership practices by defining explicit norms of conduct, enhancing accountability systems, and supporting transparent communication across organizational levels. Organizations should establish formal ethics training, strengthen codes of conduct, and develop reporting channels that promote ethical decision-making. These activities were consistent with evidence demonstrating that ethical leadership promotes organizational trust and employee well-being. Human resource leaders and line managers should use employee-centered engagement techniques to ensure long-term workforce sustainability. Recommended actions include developing structured feedback systems, conducting frequent employee surveys, encouraging listening sessions, and extending recognition programs. Additionally, employers should encourage flexible work arrangements and wellness initiatives to boost employee satisfaction and retention. These strategies reflect the study's conclusions that leadership responsiveness to employees' needs correlates with sustained engagement and organizational stability. Organizational stakeholders should integrate leadership competencies into performance management and succession planning systems. Leaders should be assessed not only on operational accomplishments but also on their capacity to facilitate staff growth, display ethical behavior, and foster team engagement. Embedding these factors into performance evaluations will

support the consistent adoption of sustainable leadership techniques. The major stakeholders who need to act on these recommendations include C-suite executives, human resources leaders, organizational development practitioners, and line managers inside private sector businesses. Secondary stakeholders include professional associations, leadership development institutions, and academic scholars who contribute to leadership education and practice. The findings of this study should be shared through numerous channels to maximum impact. External dissemination will include peer-reviewed journal publications, academic and professional conferences, and leadership development workshops. Internal dissemination will encompass executive briefings, corporate training programs, and digital knowledge-sharing platforms. These dissemination tactics will enhance the adoption of evidence-based leadership practices across corporate and professional contexts. Together, these guidelines provide a realistic, evidence-based framework to boost leadership effectiveness, enhance employee sustainability, and strengthen organizational resilience in privatesector situations.

Implementation of Integrated Leadership Development Programs

Executives and human resources professionals, please design and implement leadership development programs that integrate transformational and servant leadership traits, such as vision communication, empathy, active listening, and individualized support. Implementation techniques include structured workshops, executive coaching, and mentorship programs toenhance emotional intelligence and ethical decision-making. Organizations may pilot these programs within selected departments, examine outcomes using engagement and retention measurements, and expand successful projects across the organization.

Institutionalization of Ethical Leadership and Accountability Systems

Senior management and compliance teams should establish clear ethical standards and maintain transparency across the organization. Implementation techniques will include adopting official codes of conduct, providing ethics training sessions, and establishing confidential reporting channels. Organizations can also integrate ethical leadership traits into performance evaluations to guarantee uniform application across leadership levels.

Adoption of Employee-Centered Engagement and Well-Being Practices

Human resources directors and managers should implement planned employee engagement and well-being supporting long-term workforce sustainability. These initiatives may include regular feedback systems, employee appreciation programs, flexible work arrangements, and wellness programs. Organizations may also undertake periodic employee surveys and listening sessions to assess employees' needs and adapt leadership methods accordingly.

Strengthening of Transformative Leadership Capabilities

Executives and organizational development teams should stimulate ongoing learning and adaptation to support organizational resilience. Implementation techniques may include cross-functional collaborative initiatives, leadership training in change management, and data-driven decision-making tools. Organizations may also invest in upskilling programs to equip leaders and employees for evolving business situations.

Embedding of Leadership Practices Into Performance Systems

Organizations should integrate leadership traits into performance management and succession planning systems. Evaluation criteria may include employee growth, ethical conduct, and team participation, with typical performance measures. This alignment encourages the continued adoption of sustainable leadership practices at all levels.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE

The findings of this study give substantial implications for positive social change by illustrating how leadership practices can foster ethical, inclusive, and sustainable workplace environments within privatesector businesses. Leadership behaviors focusing on empathy, transparency, and employee development contributed to enhanced employee well-being, psychological safety, and long-term workforce stability. These consequences extend beyond corporate performance, underscoring how leadership approaches can shape broader workplace norms and societal expectations regarding the treatment of employees and organizational responsibility. From a social change perspective, leaders who combine transformational and servant leadership approaches are more effective at building equitable, supportive work cultures. Transformational leadership strategies, such as articulating a shared vision and promoting innovation, help establish inclusive organizational cultures where people feel valued and motivated. Similarly, servant leadership practices, including active listening and tailored help, improve trust and enhance employees' sense of belonging. These findings align with recent studies suggesting that human-centered leadership approaches enhance employee well-being and foster inclusive workplace cultures (Fuller& Dennis, 2009; Eva *et al.,* 2019).

The findings also demonstrate that ethical leadership practices improve trust in the company and promote social responsibility. Leaders who prioritized fairness, accountability, and integrity produced transparent decision-making processes and supportive work environments. These approaches contributed to higher psychological safety, reduced workplace stress, and improved employee morale, consistent with prior studies relating ethical leadership to beneficial employee and organizational outcomes (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2021). As a result, firms that adopt ethical leadership approaches contribute to workplace environments grounded in respect, equity, and justice. At the community level, leadership techniques that encourage employee sustainability lead to greater social and economic stability. Organizations that focus on employee engagement, growth, and retention have helped reduce worker instability, which can negatively affect families and local economies. In the DMVarea, where workforce diversity and economic competitiveness are key, sustainable leadership approaches encourage more inclusive and resilient communities by fostering equitable job opportunities and long-term workforce engagement. Overall, the findings reveal that leadership strategies that encourage employee sustainability can contribute to positive social change by improving

workplace conditions, enhancing employee well-being, and fostering ethical and inclusive organizational cultures. These outcomes underscore the importance of business executives as agents of social change capable of affecting not only company performance but also the well-being of individuals, communities, and society at large.

Recommendations for Future Research

The objective of this section is to offer opportunities for future research that may extend understanding of leadership behaviors that encourage employee sustainability and organizational resilience. Although this qualitative pragmatic inquiry study provided useful insights into executive leadership behaviors, it also revealed various opportunities for further research due toits methodological and contextual limitations.

First, future researchers should investigate the adoption of quantitative or mixed methods designs to examine the links between leadership behaviors and employee sustainability outcomes. This study was hampered by its qualitative design, which focused on in-depth exploration rather than statistical generalization. Quantitative methodologies may enable researchers to quantify the strength and importance of correlations among leadership style, employee engagement, and retention, thereby eliminating constraints on generalizability.

Second, future research should broaden the geographic reach and industry coverage. This study was confined to privatesector firms in the DMV region, which may have limited the transferability of the findings to other contexts. Replicating the study across other geographies or industries, including healthcare, technology, and public-sector businesses, may boost external applicability and provide comparative insights into leadership methods.

Third, future academics should incorporate diverse organizational viewpoints, including those of employees and middle-level managers. This study focused exclusively on senior leadership viewpoints, which may have limited the depth of insight into how leadership behaviors are perceived across organizational levels. Including various participant groups may overcome this restriction by revealing potential gaps between leadership intent and employee experience.

Fourth, future researchers should leverage longitudinal research designs to assess the long-term effects of leadership methods. This study documented leadership practices at a particular point in time, which limited the ability to examine changes over time. Longitudinal techniques may provide greater insights into how leadership behaviors influence employee sustainability, engagement, and organizational resilience across extended periods.

Fifth, future researchers should address evolving organizational contexts, including digital transformation, remote and hybrid work environments, and diversity and inclusion programs. These changing characteristics were not the core focus of this study but may greatly influence leadership effectiveness. Examining these elements may provide a more comprehensive picture of how leadership adapts to modern organizational issues. Collectively, these recommendations addressed the study's limitations pertaining to research design, geographic breadth, participant selection, and time constraints. Continued research in these areas may strengthen the evidence base for leadership practices that encourage employee sustainability and improve organizational performance across varied business situations.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry study was to analyze leadership methods implemented by executives to increase employee sustainability and organizational resilience across privatesector enterprises in the DMV region. This study may contribute to both professional practice and scholarly understanding by identifying leadership techniques that encourage employee engagement, well-being, and long-term workforce sustainability. The findings revealed that leadership methods, including transformational, servant, and ethical behaviors, can be effectively combined to address contemporary workforce concerns. These leadership methods provided practical guidance for corporate executives seeking to promote employee retention, strengthen organizational resilience, and cultivate sustainable work environments. The contributions of this study extend beyond individual companies to broader social and economic circumstances. The findings, which evaluated leadership techniques that enhance employee well-being, ethical behavior, and inclusive workplace environments, underscored the crucial role of leadership in establishing more stable, resilient, and socially responsible firms. This study underlined the need to match business goals with employee demands through integrated leadership approaches. The results provide a practical and theoretical foundation for improving leadership methods that increase workforce sustainability and organizational performance. Ultimately, effective leadership that prioritizes employee sustainability is vital for developing long-term organizational resilience and driving significant, positive social change.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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