

# **An Empirical Research to Study the Impact of Leadership styles on Organizational Politics to create Sustainable HRM in Organization**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates how different leadership styles—transformational, transactional, servant, and ethical—affect organizational politics and support the implementation of sustainable human resource management (HRM) practices. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey design, primary data were collected from 65 faculty members of DAVV-affiliated colleges using structured questionnaires. Data were analyzed through correlation and regression techniques. The study finds that transformational, servant, and ethical leadership styles significantly reduce organizational politics and enhance sustainable HRM practices. Conversely, transactional leadership is positively associated with organizational politics and negatively impacts HR sustainability. These insights offer both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, the study extends leadership and HRM literature by highlighting mediating effects of organizational politics. Practically, it guides organizations in adopting leadership styles conducive to long-term HR sustainability.

***Keywords: Sustainability, Sustainable HRM, Transformational leadership, Transactional leadership, Servant leadership, Ethical leadership, Organizational politics.***

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the contemporary business environment, the concept of sustainability has expanded significantly beyond ecological concerns. Organizations are increasingly acknowledging that sustainability also involves fostering resilient and adaptable human resource systems. As noted by Ehnert (2009), Sustainable

Human Resource Management (HRM) involves designing HR strategies that support not only organizational success but also the long-term well-being of the workforce. The human capital within an organization is integral to its sustained success, necessitating HR practices that emphasize employee development, retention, and wellness. Therefore promoting Sustainable practices is essential for retaining a healthy workforce in the organization. Leadership significantly shapes company culture, affects employee retention, and ensures continuous growth and success. Northouse (2021) describes leadership as the ability to guide a group towards achieving a shared goal. However, organizational politics can interfere with these leadership efforts, hindering the implementation of sustainable HRM. Vigoda-Gadot (2007) defines organizational politics as actions intended to gain influence or advantage, often through informal or unethical means, which can undermine leadership initiatives and impede the implementation of sustainable HRM practices.

This empirical study, analyses the impact of different leadership styles — transformational, transactional, servant, and ethical—affect organizational politics and, subsequently, sustainable HRM. Transformational leadership, as described by Bass and Riggio (2006), transforms individuals by motivating them to exceed expectations. In contrast, transactional leadership, defined by Northouse (2021) is based on "exchanges between leaders and followers, where rewards are given for good performance and penalties for poor performance" (p. 165). The research also examines Servant Leadership, which Greenleaf (1977) characterizes as a style where "the leader prioritizes serving others, especially employees, over self-interest" (p. 7), and Ethical leadership, as Brown et al. (2005) note, involves moral behaviour and decision-making.

Mintzberg (1983) characterizes organizational politics as informal, divisive actions not sanctioned by formal structures. While existing literature has explored leadership's impact on culture and performance, fewer studies have empirically assessed how different leadership styles influence political behavior and sustainable HRM. This research addresses this gap by analyzing the relationships among leadership styles, organizational politics, and sustainable HRM outcomes.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **a. Sustainable HRM**

According to Griep, Y., Hansen, S. D., Kraak, J. M., Sherman, U., & Bankins, S. (2024), there has been a transformation in employment, moving away from

traditional full-time positions towards more flexible work, including gig economy jobs and short-term contracts. These changes provide advantages such as increased flexibility. Still, as every coin has two faces it also has some difficulties for workers, including job instability and reduced access to employee benefits. The researchers prioritize sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM), which prioritizes enduring, positive relationships between employees and employers. The author suggests guidelines for successfully implementing Sustainable HRM in the organization, they are Aligned with Global Goals, Inclusive Contracting, and Leading by Example.

Faisal (2023) described sustainable HRM as an evolving domain that has grown significantly in recent years, especially since 2019. The study noted that most research originates from European and Asian contexts, particularly the UK and Australia. The core focus areas include sustainability, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and sustainable development. Faisal emphasized the scarcity of empirical studies and advocated for broader research beyond just indexed databases like Scopus to gain a well-rounded understanding.

Likewise, Pfeffer (2023) examined the role of health-focused HRM in sustainability discourse, suggesting that psychological safety and wellbeing should be central to sustainable HRM models

Kramar (2022), also emphasized the strategic integration of sustainability into HRM, particularly through resilience-building post-COVID-19.

Manzoor et al. (2019) explored the role of sustainable HRM practices—such as inclusive hiring and shared decision-making—in enhancing employee performance. Their work highlights the effectiveness of motivational strategies and training over punitive approaches, showing how such practices contribute to long-term organizational viability.

#### **b. Leadership styles:**

Motsoeneng et al. (2024) examined the connection between leadership styles and HR competencies. Their research showed a strong link between transformational leadership and enhanced HR skills, particularly in strategic planning and people management. Meanwhile, transactional and laissez-faire styles were less effective in developing these capabilities.

Lorinkova et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of adaptive leadership in navigating dynamic HR challenges, further supporting the value of ethical and servant-based approaches.

Dinibutun, S. R. (2020). Leadership: A comprehensive review of literature, research, and theoretical framework. It highlights that transformational leadership aims to inspire the employees while transactional leadership focuses on performance-based rewards and penalties. Servant leadership, on the other hand, centers around prioritizing employee needs. The study advocates an integrated leadership framework that harmonizes organizational goals and employee well-being. Through the integration of various leadership models, author advocates a comprehensive framework for harnessing a harmonious work environment.

Al Khajeh (2018) highlighted that leadership style significantly affects organizational performance. Transformational, democratic, and autocratic styles tend to enhance performance by involving employees in decision-making, fostering a sense of belonging. Conversely, transactional, bureaucratic, and charismatic styles may reduce performance by limiting employee autonomy.

### **c. Organizational Politics:**

Singh and Rathi (2023) also observed a correlation between workplace politics and employee burnout in Indian academic institutions, emphasizing the moderating role of leadership empathy.

Ismail et al. (2021) studied the role of transformational leadership among female school leaders and its relation to teacher commitment, mediated by perceived organizational politics. They observed that while transformational leadership improved motivation, its full effect was influenced by the political atmosphere within the school setting.

Mishra et al. (2020) discussed how perceptions of organizational politics (POP) influence workplace behavior and overall organizational performance. They noted that POP tends to reduce satisfaction and increase stress, but its impact varies based on individual factors like self-efficacy and organizational factors such as fairness and procedural justice. The authors recommended enhancing transparency and equitable practices to mitigate the adverse effects of workplace politics.

Kumari and Saradadevi (2016) examined how organizational politics contributes to employee stress and declining productivity. They found that unofficial behaviors, such as power struggles and resource hoarding, are common sources of conflict. The authors advocated for transparent evaluation systems and decentralized management to reduce these negative outcomes.

Vigoda, E. (2000) found that workers are less likely to feel dedicated to their organizations and less satisfied with their jobs when they witness a lot of politics

at work. Additionally, these workers are more prone to start ignoring their work or, more frequently, consider quitting. According to the study, employees' attitudes about workplace politics have a greater influence on their conduct than their personal traits or level of job satisfaction. According to the research, workplace politics should be taken seriously by public organizations since they have the potential to negatively impact employee performance and job satisfaction.

#### **d. Leadership styles and Sustainable HRM:**

Khurana and Joshi (2024) showed that ethical leadership enhances green HRM practices and CSR performance in manufacturing sectors, highlighting the growing integration of sustainability and leadership ethics.

Garcia Martin et al. (2023) studied two aerospace companies and found that transformational and servant leadership enhance long-term sustainability, while transactional leadership primarily supports operational efficiency. They recommended a hybrid leadership model combining transformational and servant traits to foster sustainable practices.

Alafeshat and Tanova (2019) analyzed the relationship between servant leadership and high-performance work systems in the Jordanian airline industry. The findings revealed that both factors positively affect employee retention and engagement, which are crucial for sustainability. The study proposed that servant leadership could be a key driver of sustainable HRM.

Macke, J., & Genari, D. (2018). Systematic literature review on sustainable human resource management. The study concluded that organizations that use sustainable HRM will have more satisfied and engaged employees. Furthermore transformational leadership plays a significant role in improving the well-being of employees, promotes social responsibility, and promotes the overall success of the organization. The study also suggested that organizations that use sustainable HRM will have more satisfied and engaged employees.

### **OBJECTIVES**

This empirical study is guided by the following key objectives:

- To examine the influence of different leadership styles—transformational, transactional, servant, and ethical—on the dynamics of organizational politics.
- To assess how organizational politics affects the application and success of sustainable human resource management practices.

- To identify which leadership styles are most successful in minimizing organizational politics and fostering sustainable human resource management.
- To provide recommendations for organizations on implementing leadership styles that foster sustainable human resource management practices.

Based on the existing literature on leadership styles, organizational politics, and Sustainable HRM the following hypotheses are put forward:

1. **H<sub>01</sub>:** Transformational leadership has no significant impact on organizational politics.  
**H<sub>11</sub>:** Transformational leadership has a significant impact on organizational politics.
2. **H<sub>02</sub>:** Transactional leadership has no significant impact on organizational politics.  
**H<sub>12</sub>:** Transactional leadership has a significant impact on organizational politics.
3. **H<sub>03</sub>:** Servant leadership has no significant impact on organizational politics.  
**H<sub>13</sub>:** Servant leadership has a significant impact on organizational politics.
4. **H<sub>04</sub>:** Ethical leadership has no significant impact on organizational politics.  
**H<sub>14</sub>:** Ethical leadership has a significant impact on organizational politics.
5. **H<sub>05</sub>:** Organizational politics has no significant impact on sustainable HRM practices.  
**H<sub>15</sub>:** Organizational politics has a significant impact on sustainable HRM practices.
6. **H<sub>06</sub>:** Transformational leadership has no significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.  
**H<sub>16</sub>:** Transformational leadership has a significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.
7. **H<sub>07</sub>:** Transactional leadership has no significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.  
**H<sub>17</sub>:** Transactional leadership has a significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.
8. **H<sub>08</sub>:** Servant leadership has no significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.  
**H<sub>18</sub>:** Servant leadership has a significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.

**9. H<sub>09</sub>:** Ethical leadership has no significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.

**H<sub>19</sub>:** Ethical leadership has a significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

This research adopts a quantitative, causal-comparative design to examine the relationships among leadership styles, organizational politics, and sustainable HRM. A cross-sectional survey method was used to collect primary data from respondents at a single point in time.

### 3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population included faculty members from DAVV-affiliated colleges in Madhya Pradesh. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that only respondents with relevant exposure to leadership and HR practices participated. Out of 80 questionnaires distributed, 65 valid responses were received, achieving an effective response rate of 81.25%. The sample consisted of faculty members across various designations, departments, and years of experience to ensure representation.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Data was gathered using a **structured questionnaire** organized into five key sections

**Section A:** Demographic Information - Collects data on gender, organizational tenure, and position level.

**Section B:** Assessment of leadership styles—transformational, transactional, servant, and ethical.

**Section C:** Measurement of organizational politics in decision-making and leader behaviour.

**Section D:** Evaluation of sustainable HRM practices, emphasizing long-term employee welfare.

**Section E:** Perceived impact of leadership on organizational politics and HR sustainability.

Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Data were entered and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic data.

- **Pearson Correlation Analysis** was applied to determine the direction and strength of relationships between variables.
- **Multiple Regression Analysis** was conducted to assess the impact of leadership styles on organizational politics and sustainable HRM.
- **Reliability Analysis** using Cronbach's alpha ensured internal consistency of the questionnaire. Values exceeding 0.70 were considered acceptable.

## RESULTS & FINDINGS

For analysing the data gathered Ms-Excel has been used to find Correlation and Regression between variables. The results are as following:

**Correlation analysis:** To examine the relationship between variables Pearson's correlation has been used. The results are as following:

**Table 1:Correlation Matrix**

Variables	Organizational Politics (role in decision-making)	Organizational Politics(action of leaders)	Sustainable HRM
Transformational Leadership	-0.33	-0.30	0.75
Transactional Leadership	0.54	0.50	-0.31
Servant Leadership	-0.31	-0.32	0.66
Ethical Leadership	-0.39	-0.31	0.45
Organizational Politics (role in decision-making)	--	--	-0.34
Organizational Politics(degree of politics)	--	--	-0.34

Source: The correlation coefficients in this table were computed based on data collected from questionnaire responses administered to participants.

The findings show that:

- Transformational leadership finds a negative correlation with Organizational Politics i.e. ( $r = -0.33$  and  $r = -0.30$ ) which indicates that Transformational leadership significantly reduces Organizational Politics, while a positive correlation with Sustainable HRM i.e. ( $r = 0.75$ ) indicating that



Transformational leadership promotes Sustainable HRM practices in organization.

- Transactional leadership finds a positive correlation with Organizational Politics i.e. ( $r = 0.54$  and  $r = 0.50$ ) which indicates that Transactional leadership significantly promotes Organizational Politics, while a negative correlation with Sustainable HRM i.e. ( $r = -0.31$ ) indicating that Transactional leadership hinders Sustainable HRM practices in organization.
- Servant leadership finds a negative correlation with Organizational Politics i.e. ( $r = -0.31$  and  $r = -0.32$ ) which indicates that Servant leadership significantly reduces Organizational Politics, while a positive correlation with Sustainable HRM i.e. ( $r = 0.66$ ) indicating that Servant leadership promotes Sustainable HRM practices in organization.
- Ethical leadership finds a negative correlation with Organizational Politics i.e. ( $r = -0.39$  and  $r = -0.31$ ) which indicates that Ethical leadership significantly reduces Organizational Politics, while a positive correlation with Sustainable HRM i.e. ( $r = 0.45$ ) indicating that Ethical leadership promotes Sustainable HRM practices in organization.
- Organizational Politics finds a negative correlation with Sustainable HRM i.e. ( $r = -0.34$  and  $r = -0.34$ ) which indicates that Organizational Politics significantly reduces promotion of Sustainable HRM practices in an organization.

#### Table 2: Regression Matrix

To gain deeper insights, an additional regression analysis was performed. The outcomes are presented below.

**Table 2.1: Organizational Politics**

Variables	$\beta$ (Beta Coefficient)	t-Value	p-Value	Significance
Transformational Leadership	-0.36	-2.74	0.008	Significant
Transactional Leadership	0.67	5.12	.00	Significant
Servant Leadership	-0.35	-2.58	0.01	Significant
Ethical Leadership	-0.43	-3.37	.00	Significant

Source: The values in this table were computed based on data collected from questionnaire responses administered to participants.

**Table 2.2: Organizational Politics**

<b>Variables</b>	<b><math>\beta</math> (Beta Coefficient)</b>	<b>t-Value</b>	<b>p-Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	-0.28	-2.46	0.02	Significant
<b>Transactional Leadership</b>	0.54	4.64	.00	Significant
<b>Servant Leadership</b>	-0.32	-2.71	0.01	Significant
<b>Ethical Leadership</b>	-0.29	-2.58	0.01	Significant

Source: The values in this table were computed based on data collected from questionnaire responses administered to participants.

**Table 2.3: Sustainable HRM**

<b>Variables</b>	<b><math>\beta</math> (Beta Coefficient)</b>	<b>t-Value</b>	<b>p-Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	0.77	8.9	.00	Significant
<b>Transactional Leadership</b>	-0.36	-2.57	0.01	Significant
<b>Servant Leadership</b>	0.70	7.04	.00	Significant
<b>Ethical Leadership</b>	0.47	4.04	.00	Significant
<b>Organizational Politics (role in decision-making)</b>	-0.32	-2.86	0.01	Significant
<b>Organizational Politics (action of leaders)</b>	-0.37	-2.89	0.01	Significant

Source: The values in this table were computed based on data collected from questionnaire responses administered to participants.

**Table 3: Hypothesis acceptance / rejection based on Correlation and Regression**

Hypothesis		r -value	p-value	Conclusion	Interpretation
<b>H<sub>01</sub></b>	Transformational leadership has no significant impact on organizational politics.	r = -0.33 (role in decision-making), r = -0.30 (action of leaders)	p = 0.008	Rejected	The negative correlation and significant regression indicates that Transformational leadership reduces organizational politics.
<b>H<sub>02</sub></b>	Transactional leadership has no significant impact on organizational politics.	r = 0.54 (role in decision-making), r = 0.50 (action of leaders)	p = 0.00	Rejected	The positive correlation and significant regression indicates that Transactional leadership promotes organizational politics.
<b>H<sub>03</sub></b>	Servant leadership has no significant impact on organizational politics.	r = -0.31 (role in decision-making), r = -0.32 (action of leaders)	p = 0.01	Rejected	The negative correlation and significant regression indicates that Servant leadership reduces organizational politics.
<b>H<sub>04</sub></b>	Ethical leadership has no significant impact on organizational politics.	r = -0.39 (role in decision-making), r = -0.31	p = 0.00	Rejected	The negative correlation and significant regression indicates Ethical

		(action of leaders)			leadership reduces organizational politics.
<b>H<sub>05</sub></b>	Organizational politics has no significant impact on sustainable HRM practices.	$r = -0.34$ (role in decision-making), $r = -0.34$ (action of leaders)	$p = 0.01$	Rejected	The negative correlation and significant regression indicates that Organizational politics significantly reduces Sustainable HRM practices.
<b>H<sub>06</sub></b>	Transformational leadership has no significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.	$r = 0.75$	$p = 0.00$	Rejected	The positive correlation and significant regression indicates that Transformational leadership significantly promotes Sustainable HRM practices through reduction of Organizational Politics.
<b>H<sub>07</sub></b>	Transactional leadership has no significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.	$r = -0.31$	$p = 0.01$	Rejected	The negative correlation and significant regression indicates that Transactional leadership significantly

					hinders Sustainable HRM practices through promotion of Organizational Politics.
<b>H<sub>08</sub></b>	Servant leadership has no significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics. Servant leadership has no significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.	$r = 0.66$	$p = 0.00$	Rejected	The positive correlation and significant regression indicates that Servant leadership significantly promotes Sustainable HRM practices through reduction of Organizational Politics.
<b>H<sub>09</sub></b>	Ethical leadership has no significant impact on sustainable HRM practices through organizational politics.	$r = 0.45$	$p = 0.00$	Rejected	The positive correlation and significant regression indicates that Ethical leadership significantly promotes Sustainable HRM practices through reduction of Organizational Politics.

Source: The values in this table were computed based on data collected from questionnaire responses administered to participants.

The results indicate that **transformational, servant, and ethical leadership styles are inversely related to organizational politics** and positively associated with sustainable HRM. In contrast, **transactional leadership exhibits a direct relationship with organizational politics** and a negative influence on sustainable HRM outcomes.

## DISCUSSION

We will discuss the implications of the findings in detail.

### 1. Influence of Leadership Styles on Organizational Politics

- **Transformational Leadership:** The results reveal a clear negative correlation between transformational leadership and organizational politics. Leaders who inspire and engage employees contribute to an open and transparent work environment, discouraging political behaviour. These findings support previous research by Bunaiyan and McWilliams (2018), emphasizing the role of transformational leaders in cultivating trust and a positive organizational climate.
- **Transactional Leadership:** In contrast, transactional leadership exhibited a strong positive relationship with organizational politics. This suggests that a system based on rewards and penalties may inadvertently encourage employees to engage in political behaviour to secure personal gains or avoid repercussions.
- **Servant Leadership:** Servant leadership also demonstrated a negative relationship with organizational politics. This style prioritizes the needs of employees, which promotes fairness and reduces political maneuvering.
- **Ethical Leadership:** Ethical leaders, through their consistent moral conduct and integrity, also reduce the prevalence of political behavior. Their example encourages others to behave ethically, fostering a more principled workplace environment.

### 2. Effect of Organizational Politics on Sustainable HRM

The findings highlight a significant inverse relationship between organizational politics and sustainable HRM. High levels of internal politics appear to disrupt the implementation of long-term HR strategies by creating an atmosphere of distrust, short-termism, and inequality.

### 3. Leadership's Role in Enabling Sustainable HRM

- **Transformational Leadership:** Positively influences sustainable HRM by motivating employees, encouraging innovation, and reducing conflict. This aligns with Macke and Genari (2018), who argue that transformational leadership supports employee well-being and long-term organizational success.
- **Transactional Leadership:** Shows a negative association with sustainable HRM. Its focus on compliance and performance targets can discourage collaboration and ethical behavior, which are vital for sustainable HR practices.
- **Servant and Ethical Leadership:** Both styles were found to positively impact sustainable HRM by minimizing politics and promoting values such as service, equity, and long-term commitment. These findings are consistent with studies by Alafeshat & Tanova (2019) and García Martín et al. (2023), which advocate for value-driven leadership as a foundation for sustainable success.

### CONCLUSION

This study confirms that leadership style is a crucial factor influencing both organizational politics and the success of sustainable HRM practices. Transformational, servant, and ethical leadership approaches were found to reduce political behaviour and foster an environment conducive to sustainability. These leaders inspire trust, advocate for ethical conduct, and prioritize employee development, all of which contribute to long-term organizational health.

In contrast, transactional leadership was associated with heightened organizational politics and limited support for sustainable HRM. Its reliance on extrinsic motivators may inadvertently encourage behavior that undermines collaboration and ethical standards.

Ultimately, for organizations aiming to implement effective and sustainable HR strategies, the selection and development of appropriate leadership styles is essential. Leaders who minimize internal politics and foster inclusive, ethical workplaces are more likely to build resilient, high-performing organizations.

Overall, the study reinforces that sustainable HRM cannot thrive without the support of leadership that actively works to minimize internal politics and promote fairness, inclusion, and long-term employee engagement.

## IMPLICATIONS

- **Leadership's role in Organizational politics:** Transformational, Servant, and Ethical leadership helps in reducing Organizational politics, which in turn creates a healthy work environment that will enhance Sustainable HRM practices.
- **Promotion of Sustainable HRM:** Organizations should focus on leadership styles that will help in promoting Sustainable HRM practices to achieve long-term success.

## LIMITATIONS

- **Sample size:** The sample size is small, which may not fully represent diversity.
- **Cross-sectional design:** Since data was collected at a single point in time, causal relationships could not be fully established.
- **Lack of resources:** The study faced limitations in terms of time and financial resources.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Exploring other leadership styles:** This study has analyzed Transformational, Transactional, Servant, and Ethical leadership styles. Analyzing more leadership styles can provide broader knowledge.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** Further studies can conduct longitudinal research to have a better understanding.
- **Industry Specific:** This research has covered only DAVV-affiliated colleges of Indore, by covering other institutions research could provide more targeted insights into the challenges and best practices within different organizational contexts.

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