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Journal of Intercultural
Management

Vol. **16** | No. **2** | **2024**

pp. **74–96**

DOI **DOI 10.2478/joim-2024-0007**

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Cultivating Sustainable and Ethical Practices in Public Service: The Role of Employee Ethos in Shaping Public Sector Culture

ABSTRACT

Objective: The article points to the importance of a culture of sustainability in the public sector, emphasising the role of democratic governance and civic participation in promoting openness, transparency and accountability as key elements in building the resilience of public institutions and in adapting to changing external conditions. It also explores how integrating the concepts of humanisation of work and corporate social responsibility into public sector activities can promote sustainable leadership and shape employee moral attitudes. In conclusion, the article recommends encouraging and supporting sustainable practices and attitudes, crucial to effectively addressing contemporary environmental and social challenges. It draws attention to the need for further research, particularly of an empirical nature, to better understand the impact of global trends on local sustainability strategies in the public sector.

Methodology: The focus is on theoretical analysis of literature on sustainability and work ethos in the public sector. This study is based on a broad interpretation of available sources, aiming to identify the key factors influencing the development of a culture of sustainability in public organisations.

Findings: The main conclusions of the article concern the importance of the ethos of the public servant in building a culture of sustainability in the public sector, the role of democratic governance and civic participation in promoting sustainable practices, and the impact of sustainable leadership and humanisation of work on developing a responsible organisational culture.

Value Added: A culture of sustainability in the public sector is critical in shaping resilient and ethical institutions. The article highlights the importance of democratic governance, civic participation, and integrating humanising work with public action. It also highlights how sustainable leadership and employee involvement in decision-making processes can contribute to effectively addressing contemporary environmental and social challenges. It also points to the need for further empirical research to better understand the impact of global trends on sustainability strategies in the public sector context.

Recommendations: This comprehensive exploration of sustainability culture in the public sector underscores the transformative power of ethical governance, participatory democracy, and sustainable leadership in fostering resilience and moral integrity within public institutions.

Key words: culture of sustainability, public servant ethos, democratic governance, sustainable leadership, humanisation of work, corporate social responsibility, public sector

JEL codes: M14, Q01, H83

Introduction

Considering the increasingly noticeable effects of climate change, growing public awareness of the need to protect the environment, and the importance of addressing social and ethical issues, the public sector faces the challenge of defining new sustainable development paths. These paths should incorporate environmental concerns, social responsibility, ethical practices and the well-being of employees and communities. This requires public institutions to implement pro-environmental policies and shape an organisational culture that promotes sustainable and ethical attitudes among employees. In such an environment, a culture of sustainability in the public sector becomes critical to building resilience, adapting to changing external conditions and promoting the common good.

This article explores the role of the public servant's ethos in shaping a sustainable culture in the public sector. Focusing on the relationship between employees' professional ethos and public institutions' management strategies, this work seeks to identify the critical determinants of success in implementing sustainable activities. Particular attention is placed on the role of democracy and its influence on management processes in fostering pro-environmental, pro-social and ethical attitudes in public organisations.

These considerations are based on the belief that the democratisation of public management, through a model of public co-management, enables greater citizen participation and employee involvement in decision-making processes. Such an approach fosters mutual trust between institutions and the public, and shapes an environment where sustainability is treated as a shared goal. The article also explores how the humanisation of work and corporate social responsibility can be integrated into public sector operations to promote sustainable leadership and build citizenship among employees. The public servant's ethos and a culture of sustainability can work together to create strong, resilient and morally responsible public organisations. Recommendations will be made on how institutions can promote and support the development of sustainable practices and attitudes, which are crucial to effectively addressing contemporary environmental and social challenges.

In the context of our research on the culture of sustainability related to CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), a comprehensive analysis of the EBSCO database was conducted from 2003 to 2023. This analysis revealed a significant body of literature, totalling 120 peer-reviewed articles that align with the predefined search criteria, focusing specifically on the intersection of sustainability culture within CSR frameworks.

The search methodology was meticulously designed to exclude any duplicates, ensuring that each identified article provided a unique perspective on the subject matter. The review period noted an exceptionally high concentration of relevant publications in the final year of the study, signalling an increasing academic interest in this area as of 2023. This trend suggests a growing recognition of the importance of sustainability practices within corporate structures, highlighting the evolving dynamics of CSR as a critical element of organisational strategy and operational execution. This dataset enriches our understanding of the current academic discourse on sustainability and serves as a foundational base for further empirical studies. It underscores the critical need for ongoing research in this area, reflecting broader shifts in corporate governance towards more sustainable and ethically oriented practices. The findings from this review will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how corporations can integrate sustainability into their core strategies to foster a culture that supports long-term ecological, social and economic growth. The culture of sustainability is closely related to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in various ways. Organisational culture has a significant role in shaping how companies approach and implement CSR initiatives. Research shows a strong connection between organisational culture and CSR practices, with cultural values influencing the essence of CSR within enterprises (Chmielewska-Muciek & Zinzuk, 2023; Dzage & Pierog, 2023; Aleksander & Patience, 2023; Ille, 2021). When companies prioritise sustainability as part of their culture, they are more likely to integrate CSR into their core business strategies and operations. The implementation of CSR is influenced by internal factors such as organisational culture. Organisational culture shapes companies' CSR activities, including values, norms and employee satisfaction (Chmielewska-Muciek & Zinzuk, 2023; Marek et al., 2023). Fostering a culture that supports sustainability initiatives is essential for companies, as it can lead

to a more authentic and effective integration of CSR practices. CSR and sustainability are interconnected concepts that can drive organisational innovation and creativity. By embracing CSR practices, companies can develop new ideas and products prioritising sustainability and environmental responsibility (Alauddin, 2023). CSR can also motivate employees to act as stewards of the environment and society, leading to the development of green products and services (Alauddin, 2023). The culture of sustainability is crucial in driving CSR initiatives within organisations. By embedding sustainability values into their organisational culture, companies can enhance their CSR efforts, drive innovation and contribute to long-term social and environmental impact.

Manifestations of a Sustainable Culture in Organisations

Organisational culture encompasses the shared values, beliefs, norms and behaviours that shape the identity and commitment of an organisation's members deeply embedded within an organisation, guiding how tasks are executed and problems are perceived (Morelli & Wang, 2020; Kumar, 1999; Sun & Milosevic, 2024). It reflects the collective mindset that differentiates group members and includes the values, norms, beliefs and customs shared among individuals within a social unit (Sun & Milosevic, 2024). It is often likened to the organisation's personality, influencing how employees perceive and respond to their environment (Balling, 2005).

Additionally, organisational culture represents the pattern of beliefs, values and learned coping mechanisms that have evolved throughout the organisation's history, manifesting in its physical arrangements and members' behaviour (Sun & Milosevic, 2024). Essentially, it shapes employees' thoughts, emotions and actions in the workplace, acting as the social adhesive that maintains organisational cohesion and control through shared values, beliefs, understandings and norms (Akpa et al., 2021). Understanding and enhancing organisational culture is critical to successful implementation of change and adaptation, as it shapes the communication process and influences the outcomes of organisational activities; this aspect is particularly vital in management processes, especially within supranational institutions (Dziedzic, 2020).

A sustainability-oriented organisational culture refers to shared values, beliefs and practices that prioritise and integrate sustainability principles into

its core operations and decision-making processes (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2009). This culture emphasises balancing economic, social and environmental objectives to achieve long-term organisational success and positively impact society and the planet; it encourages behaviour and strategies that support sustainable development, including responsible resource management, stakeholder engagement and continuous improvement towards reducing ecological footprints and enhancing community well-being (Nurse, 2006). A sustainable culture can be defined as an organisation's recognition of the impact of its activities on society and the environment and the commitment to minimise this impact. It involves embedding sustainability issues and values into the firm's core philosophy and decision-making processes. A sustainable culture is reflected in the practices adopted by the organisation, where everyday conversations and decisions are driven by a triple-bottom-line approach (considering economic, social and environmental aspects) rather than solely focusing on financial goals (Marshall et al., 2015).

Furthermore, a sustainable culture also encompasses preserving tangible and intangible cultural elements of society to promote environmental, economic and social sustainability. It involves efforts to integrate culture into sustainable development strategies and policies, advancing a human-centred and inclusive approach to development (Opoku, 2015). Integrating cultural aspects into research, decision-making and policy frameworks for environmental sustainability is crucial when addressing cultural and social consequences of ecosystem's change (Opoku, 2015).

A sustainable culture is conceived as a central pillar of sustainable development. It includes the protection of cultural identity and the promotion of cultural industries. In the sustainability debate, cultural diversity is also recognised as equivalent to genetic diversity. Sustainable culture is fundamentally linked to social justice, self-reliance and ecological sustainability. It emphasises the preservation of cultural identities and the promotion of cultural industries as important transitional objectives towards sustainable development (Opoku, 2015).

A sustainable culture is one in which individuals are aware of environmental challenges, behave sustainably and are committed to a sustainable lifestyle (Marans et al., 2015). Self-construals and human values influence this, and there

is constant searching and self-reflection (Packalén, 2010). The importance of intergenerational responsibility in sustainability should be considered in current usage (Yudhishtir, 2006). These perspectives collectively highlight the need for a cultural shift towards sustainability driven by awareness, values and a commitment to future generations.

It is recognised that cultural goods and services are not mere commodities but key catalysts for identity formation, nation-building and the strengthening and broadening of the cultural self-confidence of post-colonial societies and their diasporas (Nurse, 2006). Additionally, a sustainability culture is positively associated with organisational performance and success, making it crucial to achieving long-term goals sustainably (Galpin et al., 2015). Cultural industries are considered worthy of investment because of the benefits they bring in new forms of employment, production and exports, thereby supporting economic diversification and promoting a more competitive platform for development (Nurse, 2006). A sustainable culture involves a holistic approach to incorporating sustainability values, practices and principles into an organisation's core operations and values, focusing on achieving long-term economic, social and environmental viability.

Public Interest in the Context of Democratic Attitudes

The legal, systemic and civic environment in which the organisation operates determines the quality of the organisation's functioning in the context of developing ethical, pro-ecological and pro-social attitudes. This is particularly evident in the context of the level of development of democracy in the countries where the institution is based, as institutions in more developed democracies tend to have higher expectations and standards for corporate social responsibility due to more robust regulatory frameworks and greater public accountability. Democratisation makes a system or organisation more democratic in structure, operations and decision-making processes. This often involves increasing the participation

of individuals in the decision-making processes, promoting transparency and accountability and ensuring the protection of human rights and civil liberties. Democratisation can also involve the decentralisation of power, the establishment of democratic institutions and the promotion of a culture of democracy within society (Birkin, 2003).

Specific measures demonstrating the promotion of transparency and accountability in a democratisation process include developing an ethical code of conduct, monitoring health and safety compliance and auditing sustainability compliance. This modern view determines participation times, which guarantee public organisations' interactivity. They do not impose actions but seek co-participants or organisations involved in creating the world. Relations in the field of participation in public management should be based on dialogue, inclusiveness of activities and rationalisation of the effects of participation.

In corporate social responsibility, the concept of public interest often appears as a pivotal element. This term has different semantic dimensions and derives from philosophical thought, denoting a kind of driving force. However, it is possible to distinguish two primary views on the concept of interest. These views shape the public discourse and have significant implications for the business sphere, reflecting how enterprises engage with and contribute to societal expectations and norms. Interest in this context recalls concepts such as interest group, golden interest or conflict of interest. The meaning of each of these commonly known phraseological compounds suggests the question of profit and loss. Nevertheless, the term interest originally referred to the driving force in the context of state policy and gained importance in considering human nature. The concept of *homo economicus* refers to a person who is focused on the realisation of their interests, and in the sense of *homo sociological*, they are entangled in the life of culture and functions within its norms, values and patterns of behaviour.

The Ethos of Public Service

The ethos of public service employees is built on a commitment to serving society, integrity and accountability for decisions and actions. Compliance with the highest ethical standards is essential, translating into citizens' trust in state institutions. In addition, public service employees should be exemplary integrators, promoting transparency and openness in action, which is the foundation for sustainable development and the common good. What is essential in the ethos of public service are the values presented by members of public administration organisations because they perform a service that requires ethical attitudes. On the other hand, public organisations can create the attitude of morally responsible institutions.

Table 1 presents key aspects of ethics from the perspective of public administration employees and the organisations they operate in. It focuses on mutual expectations and ethical standards, essential for building trust and accountability in public service. The presented dimensions of the work ethics of employees and the organisation's attitudes towards them emphasise the mutual dependence between individual values and organisational culture. An analysis of these aspects allows for a deeper understanding of how ethical values affect the functioning of public administration and how they can shape the attitude of institutions as morally responsible.

The ethical behaviour of public administration personnel is crucial to fostering trust and confidence in the government (Fejzullahu & Batalli, 2019). This is particularly important in combating corruption and ensuring efficient public services (Tanjević, 2016). The transition from public administrator to public servant requires a solid ethical foundation (Jie, 2002), and public personnel management must prioritise ethical implications to ensure responsible administration (Kellogg, 1999).

The public co-management model was born as part of the public governance concept. An essential problem of managing public administration personnel has arisen here. This model has a clear shift from bureaucratic and centralist management towards the participation and involvement of public authorities' clients. Their activation in the management process may impact

the decision-making process. From a public governance perspective, employees contribute more to creating a participatory working climate. This is represented in many dimensions of the performance of the service and the approach to the profession of a public official.

As part of improving the competencies of employees of sustainable organisations, it is essential to direct the attention of management staff to the communication processes in the organisation. It is necessary to support engagement, the ability to conduct dialogue and to build trust in the organisation's brand, which is sustainable and responsible. For this reason, there is also a growing interest in responsible and sustainable development concepts in local government units. The Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development requires the strengthening of natural and social capital, on which the future opportunities of local governments to flourish and the development of the region in which they operate depend.

Adopting appropriate ethical attitudes in public administration is not only a response to the requirements of modern management and directing attention to communication processes but also the implementation of international guidelines for strengthening natural and social capital. Responsible development and care for ethical principles are becoming critical in shaping the attitudes of the management staff of local government units.

Table 1, which shows the ethical attitudes adopted in public administration, reflects these aspirations. It contains a compilation of values and moral standards essential for building social trust and effective management in the public sector. The presented ethical attitudes, such as public service, reliability and justice, are the foundation for shaping a responsible, committed and professional administration capable of carrying out tasks in a manner consistent with the expectations of citizens and the challenges of the 21st century. This table is a valuable source of knowledge on developing ethical competencies in public administration while emphasising their universal character and importance in global management and business ethics trends.

Table 1. Ethical attitudes in public administration

Attitude	Features
Accountability	Emphasises transparency, responsibility towards the public and fulfilling duties with integrity.
Professionalism	Adherence to ethical codes, specialisation in skills, unbiased service delivery.
Civic Responsibility	Fostering trust with citizens, role-modelling ethical behaviour and engaging with the community responsibly.
Justice and Fairness	Maintaining impartiality, avoiding conflicts of interest and ensuring equal treatment under the law.

Source: Own study after Fetajllahu & Batalli, 2019.

In the management literature, employees’ values and interpersonal skills are soft skills, critical determinants of building efficient and responsible work teams. A socially accountable employee is a person who has a set of qualities and skills, i.e. responsibility for the team and the organisation, logical and analytical thinking, high competence, precision and prudence in actions and respect for universal values. The image of a responsible employee is determined by high professionalism, credibility, politeness in behaviour, inspiring respect and the ethos of a specialist.

The organisation’s goals can influence job applicants’ moral competence assessment (Fousiani et al., 2022). Ethical signals from the organisation can also play a role in this assessment, affecting recruitment outcomes (DeGrassi, 2009). However, the use of pre-employment tests to evaluate competence may be limited by the candidates’ test-taking skills (Weksler & Zik, 2022). Finally, the fit between the moral values of the organisation and the applicant can significantly impact the applicant’s decision to apply (Scott, 2000). These findings highlight the complexity of assessing moral competence in job applicants and the need for a multifaceted approach.

Each industry and profession determines exemplary features, which consist of the predispositions of its representatives, requirements and a specific workshop of values, which can be defined as a professional ethos. According to the Oxford English Dictionary ethos is “the moral ideas and attitudes that belong to a particular group, society or person” (<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190262542.013.0001>).

oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/ethos). The ethos of an entrepreneur is reminiscent of an attitude based on respect for employees, the environment and customers, and the ethos of an employee is based on respect for the boss, customers and co-workers.

Table 2. Desired Employee Ethics Profile

Scope	Characteristics
Knowledge	Developing mental competence and innovative mindsets Originality of dealing with problems Knowledge sharing Sensitivity to problems
Abilities	Shaping tolerance, sensitivity and empathy Flexibility and understanding in the process of operation Turning skills into values
Interoperability	Team solidarity, team protection Taking care of the community and its reputation Commitment and openness to others and ideas

Source: Own study after Grabus & Zasadzka, 2012.

As illustrated in Table 2, the key aspects of the desired employee ethics profile are essential for fostering a culture of sustainability in public sector organizations. Different organisational cultures define the value of an employee in various ways. Kanchana (2013) emphasises the importance of value congruence between individual and organisational values, while Bhattacharya (2015) highlights the significance of a match between an employee's dominant values and organisational arrangements. McKinnon et al. (2003) further explore the association between organisational cultural values and employee responses, finding that these values may be more influential than the fit between culture and employee preferences. Kucharska and Włodzicz-Giegiel (2017) underscore the role of organisational culture in enhancing employee loyalty, commitment and job satisfaction, which in turn can improve overall organisational performance. Values are a conscious idea of what is desirable and what a person may consider valuable. Therefore, objects are helpful in the economic dimension, patterns of behaviour and rules in a philosophical sense, or norms in a sociological context.

Table 3. Employee-to-value relations

Attitude	Employee reaction
Positive	Employees are the bearers and implementers of the central values, automatically fulfilling expectations resulting from their own will and treating values as their own.
Socialising	A sense of duty drives employees to pursue values. They do not treat them as their own, but social coercion provides them with a sense of obligation to specific values.
Negative	Employees fear sanctions, forcing them to act with respect for values. However, they are instead characterised by a lack of internal identification with them or even an aversion to them. Social autonomy is a phenomenon that manifests itself in the face of employees not recognising the obligation to accept social sanctions, and they do not even feel fear of not complying with them.

Source: Own study after Bodanko, 2002.

The employee’s relationship to the organisation’s values may be associated with deeply identifying with its moral codes. Still, it may also take on other attitudes, such as complete negation and rejection. However, in sustainable organisations, employees need to understand the intellectual achievements of civilisation based on respect and care for social issues.

Ethical issues in the workplace affect both the individual attitudes of employees and entire management structures. Everything within the organisation – from decision-making through stakeholder relations to the execution of tasks – reflects the values and ethical norms adopted in each corporate culture. Employees who do not base their actions on solid moral foundations can contribute to developing undesirable practices that harm the organisation and society. Suppose they do not have a solid ethical foundation. In that case, they may engage in pathological practices, reap their benefits at the organisation’s expense or not care about the general good, ecological or social issues. Several factors can trigger these behaviours.

Table 4 presents several factors that can lead to unethical practices in the workplace. These include bullying, patronising, professional fears, opportunities for abuse, greed and even justifying one’s actions – all of which have deep roots in the human psyche and organisational structure. Understanding and addressing them is crucial in building an organisational culture based on ethics

and responsibility. Based on the research of K.S. Pickett and J.M. Pickett (2002), this table is an essential tool for managers and HR employees for identifying and counteracting unethical behaviour, strengthening the organisation's integrity.

Table 4. Factors of unethical behaviour

Factor	Description
Bullying	Pressure from external or non-organizational individuals can be natural or imaginative
Protection	Engaging in promoting the interests of people outside the organisation (stakeholders, other organisations, institutions, business and lobbying communities, private individuals)
Occupational anxiety	Fear of losing positions, customers, contracts or criticism from the boss
Bargain	Belief in the weakness of the control system
Greed	Personality trait, addiction outcome, lack of self-control
Justification	Psychological motives, e.g. denying bad practices and looking for excuses

Source: Own study after Pendse, 2011.

Unethical behaviour of employees, caused by the lack of a solid moral foundation, can have far-reaching negative consequences, both for the organisation and the broader social good. Therefore, identifying and addressing unethical factors such as bullying, patronising, occupational anxiety and greed is a crucial challenge for managers and HR professionals. By leveraging the knowledge in Table 3, based on Pendse (2011) research, organisations can more effectively counteract unethical practices while shaping ethical attitudes in the workplace, which is essential for building trust, integrity and the long-term value of any organisation.

Organisations should focus on several integrated strategies to foster whistleblowing and combat nepotism effectively while promoting sustainability. Establishing anonymous whistleblowing mechanisms, such as secure hotlines or online platforms managed by third parties, ensures protection against retaliation, encouraging employees to report unethical practices without fear. Alongside this, defining and enforcing transparent recruitment and promotion policies based strictly on merit is crucial. This approach prevents nepotism and ensures

that all employment decisions are accountable and fair. Regular ethics training for all staff is essential, emphasising the importance of integrity and the negative impacts of unethical behaviours like nepotism. Independent audits should complement these training sessions to monitor policy compliance and assess the effectiveness of training programs. Additionally, integrating sustainability into organisational ethics can further enhance this framework. By linking ethical behaviour with sustainable business practices, organisations can demonstrate how fair employment and transparent management create a just workplace and contribute to long-term business sustainability. This holistic approach builds trust and enhances corporate reputation, fostering a culture of integrity and responsibility.

Ethical Practices in the Public Sector

Today's public sector faces significant challenges in integrating sustainable and ethical practices that reflect both societal expectations and environmental imperatives. While traditional business models, such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), have been scrutinized due to various economic disruptions and ethical lapses (Raczkowski et al., 2016), it is crucial to underscore the role of ethical practices within public institutions.

There are parallels and differences in how ethos manifests in the public and private sectors. Both sectors value principles like transparency, responsibility and sustainability. However, the public sector uniquely emphasises civic responsibility, reflecting its role in serving the community and managing public resources. This ethos is foundational in shaping public servants' attitudes and behaviour, promoting fairness, integrity and a commitment to the public good. In this context, sustainability is an environmental concern and an ethical imperative. It integrates into the organizational culture, fostering an ethos of responsibility among employees. For instance, the humanisation of work, which includes recognising the employee as a central subject and promoting work-life balance, aligns with sustainable leadership principles. This approach supports the development of

civic virtues such as altruism and conscientiousness, essential for public sector employees who serve the community (Choi & Hyun-Ju, 2021). When considering the future organisation, it is important to revisit the concept of the humanisation of work, which emphasises sustainable and responsible organisational management. This concept includes several key features: recognising individuals as central to the work process, overcoming the traditional divide between physical and mental labour, advocating for shorter working hours, promoting the continuous exchange of positions, encouraging employee participation in technological and social process controls, increasing leisure time and valuing work as a measure of human worth (Klimek, 2006 after Atamańczuk). This comprehensive view aligns with the ethical and sustainable ethos needed in the public sector, underscoring the importance of fostering a culture that respects both the workforce and societal values. An organisation's ethical culture significantly influences its employees' ethical behaviour, fostering a work environment that prioritises public value and responsible conduct (Sami et al., 2016). This ethical framework is increasingly being integrated into public sector operations, as seen in adopting sustainability policies and practices demonstrating a slow but emerging trend towards integrating environmental, social and economic dimensions. Furthermore, social responsibility (SR) is not only a moral obligation of organisations but also a strategic imperative that enhances employees' well-being and fosters a positive workplace environment, thereby supporting the overarching goals of ethical governance and public service (Bocean et al., 2022). The following table illustrates initiatives that underscore the public sector's commitment to sustainable and ethical practices, highlighting employee ethos's role in fostering a sustainability culture.

Table 5. Examples of fostering employee ethos in the public sector, crucial in developing a sustainable culture

Initiatives for Sustainable Practices	Description and Impact
Urban Forest Strategy (City of Melbourne)	According to the City of Melbourne (2021), Melbourne’s strategy to expand urban greenery addresses environmental issues like air quality and urban heat and actively involves city employees. By educating and engaging public servants in the strategy, the initiative fosters a sense of stewardship and responsibility towards the city’s ecological health. This involvement helps embed a robust environmental ethos within the workforce, which is crucial in nurturing a culture of sustainability within the public sector (City of Melbourne, 2021).
Green Fund for Warsaw	Launched by the Warsaw City Council, this initiative aims to enhance the city’s green infrastructure through various nature-based solutions. The fund supports projects like creating new parks, planting trees, establishing pollinator meadows and renovating existing parks to improve biodiversity, manage water sustainably and enhance soil permeability. This initiative is a part of Warsaw’s broader efforts to adapt to climate challenges and improve the ecological connectivity and liveability of the urban environment (Zarząd Zieleni Miejskiej m.st. Warszawy, 2022).
Public Sector Sustainability Plan (Singapore)	According to the National Climate Change Secretariat (2017), this initiative showcases how setting clear sustainability targets for energy, water consumption, waste reduction and green procurement within public sector operations can foster an environment of responsibility and awareness. The plan includes specific training for government employees, emphasising the critical role of each individual in achieving broader environmental goals. This helps cultivate a culture where sustainable practices are valued and integrated into daily activities, shaping the public sector’s ethos around ethical environmental responsibility (National Climate Change Secretariat, 2017).

Source: Own study.

As Table 5 demonstrates, sustainable public sector initiatives address immediate environmental challenges and have a crucial role in shaping organisational culture. These efforts are instrumental in building an ethos of responsibility and sustainability among employees, essential for long-term environmental and societal benefits. Integrating sustainable and ethical practices within the public sector addresses immediate environmental challenges and is critical in shaping a culture of responsibility. This ethos is vital for the long-term societal benefits and community well-being. Public sector organisations must continue developing

strategies that align with ethical and environmental objectives, ensuring a future where people and the environment are respected and valued.

Summary

The article presents the importance of a culture of sustainability in the public sector, emphasising the role that the ethos of a public service employee has in shaping ethical, pro-ecological and pro-social attitudes. The analysis showed that democratic governance and citizen participation can significantly contribute to developing sustainable practices in public institutions while promoting openness, transparency and accountability. Sustainable leadership and humanisation of work have been identified as critical elements in building an organisational culture that supports sustainable development and strengthens public trust in state institutions.

Nevertheless, this study faces some limitations. The first is that it focuses mainly on the theoretical analysis of literature, which may not fully reflect the complexity and diversity of the practical challenges of implementing sustainable actions in different institutional contexts. In addition, the lack of empirical case studies limits the ability to precisely understand how theories translate into practical actions and the actual effects of the changes.

Therefore, future research should focus on empirical analysis of specific use cases of sustainable practices in the public sector. It will be essential to examine how public institutions at different levels adapt and implement sustainable development strategies and what the effects of these actions are in the long term. In addition, it will be essential to understand how employees and managers perceive their role in fostering a culture of sustainability and what obstacles they face in achieving these goals. Finally, future research may also consider the impact of global trends and policies on shaping local sustainability strategies in the public sector, allowing for a better understanding of the international environmental and social action context.

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