

**INFLUENCE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP
ON CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY AT THE
HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES OF
SAUDI ARABIA WITH AFFECTIVE
COMMITMENT AS MEDIATOR AND
WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY
AS MODERATOR**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EMS	Environmental Management System
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
KAUST	King Abdullah University of Science and Technology
LMX	Leader-Member Exchange
PSU	Prince Sultan University
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SET	Theory and Social Exchange Theory
SGI	Saudi Green Initiative
THE	Times Higher Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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- Appendix A Translation of Research Instrument
- Appendix B VIF Values
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**PENGARUH KEPIMPINAN AUTENTIK TERHADAP KELESTARIAN
KAMPUS DI INSTITUT PENGAJIAN TINGGI ARAB SAUDI DENGAN
KOMITMEN AFEKTIF SEBAGAI MEDIATOR DAN SPIRITUALITI DI
TEMPAT KERJA SEBAGAI MODERATOR**

ABSTRAK

Tesis ini mengkaji peranan kepimpinan autentik dalam menggalakan kelestarian kampus di institusi pengajian tinggi Arab Saudi, dengan memberi tumpuan khusus kepada peranan mediator komitmen afektif dan peranan moderator spiritualiti di tempat kerja. Berlandaskan Wawasan 2030 Arab Saudi dan Inisiatif Hijau Saudi, kajian ini meneroka bagaimana amalan kepimpinan, perhubungan emosi, dan nilai spiritual di tempat kerja mempengaruhi usaha kelestarian dalam konteks pendidikan yang kaya dengan budaya. Kajian ini mengintegrasikan dimensi emosi, hubungan, dan etika dalam kepimpinan untuk memperluas kefahaman terhadap kepimpinan autentik dalam konteks kelestarian. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk meneliti pengaruh kepimpinan autentik terhadap kelestarian kampus, di samping menilai tahap spiritualiti di tempat kerja, komitmen afektif, dan kepimpinan dalam persekitaran universiti. Kajian ini turut menilai kesan mediator komitmen afektif dan kesan moderator spiritualiti di tempat kerja terhadap hasil kelestarian. Reka bentuk penyelidikan kuantitatif rentas keratan telah digunakan. Data telah dikumpul daripada 346 pensyarah di tiga universiti awam: Universiti King Faisal, Universiti Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal, dan Universiti Hafr Al Batin menggunakan persampelan rawak berstrata. Responden melengkapkan soal selidik berstruktur yang diukur menggunakan skala Likert 5 mata. Data dianalisis menggunakan kaedah Pemodelan Persamaan Struktur Kuasa Dua Terkecil Separa. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa

kepimpinan autentik memberi kesan positif yang signifikan terhadap kedua-dua komitmen afektif dan kelestarian kampus. Komitmen afektif memberi pengaruh positif terhadap amalan kelestarian tetapi tidak menjadi mediator dalam hubungan antara kepemimpinan autentik dan kelestarian. Sebaliknya, spiritualiti di tempat kerja secara signifikan memoderasi hubungan antara kepemimpinan dan kelestarian, menunjukkan kesan penguatan nilai spiritual dalam menyokong komitmen institusi terhadap matlamat kelestarian. Kajian ini memberi sumbangan teori dengan merapatkan konsep kepemimpinan dengan tingkah laku organisasi dan kelestarian. Kajian mencadangkan supaya kepemimpinan autentik diterapkan dalam dasar, mewujudkan persekitaran yang selaras dengan nilai spiritual, serta melaksanakan kajian masa hadapan merentasi pelbagai institusi dan konteks budaya untuk meluaskan kebolegunaan model ini.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the role of authentic leadership in promoting campus sustainability within Saudi Arabian higher education institutions, with a particular focus on the mediating role of affective commitment and the moderating role of workplace spirituality. Framed by Saudi Vision 2030 and the Saudi Green Initiative, the study explores how leadership practices, emotional attachment, and spiritual workplace values influence sustainability efforts in a culturally rich educational context. Underpinned by Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory and Social Exchange Theory (SET), this research integrates emotional, relational, and ethical dimensions of leadership to extend Authentic Leadership Theory in the context of sustainability. The main objective is to examine the influence of authentic leadership on campus sustainability, while specifically evaluating the levels of workplace spirituality, affective commitment, and leadership in the university setting. The study also assesses the mediating effect of affective commitment and the moderating effect of workplace spirituality on sustainability outcomes. Across-sectional quantitative research design was employed. Data were collected from 364 lecturers in three public universities: King Faisal University, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, and the University of Hafr Al Batin using stratified random sampling. 346 Respondents completed structured questionnaires measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Findings revealed that authentic leadership has a significant positive effect on both affective commitment and campus sustainability. Affective commitment positively influenced sustainability practices but did not mediate the relationship between authentic leadership and sustainability. In contrast, workplace spirituality significantly moderated the relationship between leadership and sustainability, highlighting the amplifying effect of spiritual values in fostering institutional commitment to sustainability goals. This study offers theoretical contributions by bridging leadership theory with organizational behavior and sustainability. The study recommends embedding authentic leadership in policy, developing spiritually aligned environments, and conducting future research across varied institutional and cultural contexts to broaden the model's applicability.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Leadership is a responsibility that must be managed to create a positive and productive organization. This type of leadership is known as authentic leadership, which includes dimensions such as self-awareness, balanced information processing, appreciation of moral values, and transparency in relationships. Organizational leadership is widely regarded as an essential means to achieve organizational goals as employees look to their leaders for direction and guidance (Ribeiro et al., 2021). Leadership is a key factor in building stakeholder engagement; enabling the community to carry out their roles to their best ability.

As such, leadership from the management team is required to implement a sustainable campus. The style of leadership plays a major role in influencing stakeholder behaviour towards creating a sustainable campus environment in a Higher Education Institution. Some case studies in the literature on leadership assume that an organizations' main aim is to achieve financial values rather than goals related to equity, democracy and sustainability (Fry & Egel, 2021).

Besides that, leadership in the context of higher education institutions are increasingly recognized as fundamental platforms for championing sustainability and leadership development. Authentic leadership has gained recognition as a successful leadership strategy for promoting sustainability in educational institutions because it places an emphasis on self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced information processing, and moral perspectives. Authentic leadership, underpinned by Cultural

Integrity, Inclusive Decision-Making, and Visionary Leadership, has emerged as a cornerstone for fostering environments that support sustainable practices and initiatives (Williams et al., 2022). These dimensions are crucial for ensuring higher education institutions contribute meaningfully to the social and environmental well-being of their communities.

However, the World Commission on Environment and Development, for example, emphasizes that sustainability is a widely accepted and well-established concept (Shi et al., 2019). It is defined as “meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” In Saudi Arabia, Cultural Integrity ensures respect for local customs and steers institutions towards progressive outcomes like sustainability. Aligning with the national blueprint of Saudi Vision 2030, it is tasked with articulating a sustainability vision that matches the nation's ambitious goals (Leal Filho et al., 2020; Gavin, 2019).

In this context, higher education institutions play an important role in promoting environmental awareness, social equity, and economic resilience. The incorporation of sustainability into campus operations, curricula, and research programs reinforces their role in developing future leaders capable of addressing global sustainability concerns. Environmental Stewardship addresses the role of higher education institutions in reducing carbon emissions and advancing renewable energy use. Social Responsibility embodies societal shifts envisioned in national policies, while Economic Viability integrates sustainable practices with economic diversification and innovation, essential for long-term prosperity (Lehigh University, 2020).

Besides that, the relevance of authentic leadership and sustainability in Saudi higher education is underscored by the nation's commitment to transformative goals, such as those outlined in Vision 2030. This vision highlights the role of universities as change agents in fostering a culture of sustainability and leadership that aligns with broader societal and developmental objectives. Higher Education Institutions in Saudi Arabia are working to integrate sustainable practices across various operations and encouraging the adoption of sustainability in curricula. These efforts are in line with global sustainability agendas and the need to prepare students to meet the demands of a sustainable future. The push for sustainable leadership is also vital in ensuring that higher education institutions contribute effectively to environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic viability, key components of campus sustainability.

In the evolving educational landscape of Saudi Arabia, the convergence of leadership and sustainability initiatives is increasingly highlighted in response to global and national priorities. The hosting of the Times Higher Education (THE) Global Sustainable Development Congress by King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) exemplifies a significant commitment towards fostering sustainable development within the region (Times Higher Education, 2023). Furthermore, Prince Sultan University (PSU)'s alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 underscores the critical role of higher education institutions in driving sustainable and transformative agendas (Times Higher Education, 2022).

These efforts not only reflect the urgency of addressing sustainability challenges but also showcase the pivotal role of universities in integrating sustainability principles across research, curriculum, and operations. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has initiated ambitious efforts to transform its education sector and

environmental landscape, closely aligning these endeavors with the objectives outlined in Vision 2030 and the Saudi Green Initiative (SGI). These policies and initiatives illustrate the comprehensive approach Saudi Arabia is taking toward education reform and environmental sustainability.

Based on Baker (2024), a sustainable campus is a community that. “acts upon its local and global responsibilities to protect and enhance the health and well-being of humans and ecosystems” and advances ways of addressing our present and future ecological and social challenges. By integrating these efforts, the Kingdom not only aims to transform its economic and social landscape but also to foster a culture of sustainability within its higher education institutions, providing a rich context for exploring the influence of authentic leadership on campus sustainability. Thus, campus sustainability is related to environmental and social goals that relate to productivity. The elements of campus sustainability will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

1.2 Background of the Study

1.2.1 Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership has been increasingly linked to the pursuit of sustainability in organizations due to its transformative impact on personal and professional development. Authentic leadership encourages personal transformations and enables new strategies to be introduced into behaviours and organizational change (Ribeiro et al., 2021). Authentic leadership represents four major themes; namely self-understanding, acceptance to objectively recognise ontological realities, behaviour and orientation towards interpersonal relations (Gardner et al., 2021). It also has a positive impact on related outcomes such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment and organisational performance (Gardner et al., 2021).

Besides that, authentic leadership requires the owning of one's individual experiences, be it feelings, emotions, desires, beliefs or preferences, a process captured by the injunction to 'know oneself' and consequently take actions in compliance with the 'true self'. As such, there is an important relationship between authentic leadership and the attitudes and behaviours of employees and other stakeholders. Leaders assign roles and direct the actions of employees towards meaningful achievements (Rukh et al., 2018).

In the context of Higher education institutions, authentic leadership is related with trust, morality, and high levels of integrity in management practices, aligning with the demands of global development today. It serves as an enhancement to the characteristics found in ethical leadership and transformational leadership styles. Authentic leadership fosters a positive work environment and encourages employees to think critically (Roncesvalles & Gaerlan, 2021).

However, authentic leaders are described as optimistic, hopeful, development-oriented and highly moral. Thus, to create a supportive organisational environment, leaders play a central role in producing quality employees. This is because an authentic leader demonstrates integrity, provides sustained performance, creates trust, is open-minded and helps employees realise their extraordinary potential (Kumar & Israel, 2019). Hence, they propose that authentic leadership draws upon a positive ethical climate.

Authentic leadership is important in influencing campus sustainability because it is a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organisational context. This enhances self-awareness and encourages self-

regulated positive behaviors among leaders and associates, promoting positive self-development (Srivastava et al., 2020).

The role of authentic leadership in higher education in Saudi Arabia is multifaceted, reflecting the complex interplay between cultural traditions, societal transformations, and global trends in education and sustainability. As Saudi Arabian universities strive to position themselves as leaders in sustainability and innovation, the demand for authentic leaders those who can inspire trust, foster inclusivity, and articulate a compelling vision for the future has never been higher.

Thus, integrating a sustainable culture inside universities and influencing institutional policies depend heavily on authentic leadership. Authentic leaders are able to successfully close the gap between traditional values and contemporary educational goals, making sustainability programmes both internationally competitive and culturally meaningful (Leal Filho et al., 2019). By placing a high value on moral decision-making, communication, and teamwork, real leaders may foster an atmosphere in which stakeholders, students, and faculty are encouraged to make significant contributions to sustainability initiatives, resulting in long-term progress.

1.2.2 Campus Sustainability

Campus sustainability involves the well-being of future generations and, in general, the protection of extremely valuable natural resources, as opposed to the sole fulfilment of current ‘well-being’ needs (Oliveira & Proença, 2025). Campus sustainability is linked to the fostering of sustainable citizenship among the university community that creates an environment conducive to growth and the setting of examples focusing on facility management, architectural design and leadership in

terms of energy demand reduction initiatives (Dawodu et al., 2022). Sustainable development should be integrated into higher education since universities have the power to educate leaders and encourage them to participate in the science, technology, economic and environment sectors.

Based on Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has actively worked on environmental needs, energy diversification, and sustainable development. To support this initiative, universities have launched green campus programs focusing on environmental challenges. These challenges also relate to leadership commitment, resource allocation, and staff engagement (Alshuwaikhat, 2022). Besides that, a sustainable campus or university is an academic community that shares responsibility to protect and improve the health and well-being of humans and the ecosystem. It includes recognising the need to address ecological and social challenges. A sustainable university should be a healthy environment with a prosperous economy achieved through energy and resource conservation, waste management and a well-organised environment (Putra & Ulkhaq, 2024).

However, campus sustainability in Higher Education Institutions convey, engage and advocate at the national or international level on the minimizing negative environmental, economic and social impacts. It also promotes well-being through the responsible use of resources to achieve their mission, vision of teaching, research, connection and outreach in a way that directs society towards sustainable lifestyles (Dawodu et al., 2022). Supporting sustainability research contributes positively to sustainable development by offering fresh insights and strengthening efforts among diverse stakeholders from various demographics and backgrounds.

Sustainability in higher education encompasses a wide array of programs, research activities, and institutional policies that reflect a commitment to the SDGs and sustainable development. Despite the growth in sustainability-focused educational programs and initiatives, challenges remain in translating these commitments into impactful actions beyond the academic community (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). Therefore, campus sustainability plays a significant role in ensuring that higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly recognized as key agents in promoting sustainable practices and nurturing future leaders who are environmentally conscious and socially responsible.

1.2.3 Affective Commitment

Authentic leadership has been discussed in relation to achieving sustainability in organisations due to its ability to transform self-development. Authentic leadership encourages personal transformations and enables new strategies to be introduced into behaviours and systems (Ribeiro et al., 2021). Leaders assign roles and direct the actions of employees towards meaningful achievements (Rukh et al., 2018). Authentic leaders rely on the followers' key traits to improve the efficiency of the organisation. They focus on the strengths of the followers and seek to remove their limitations. Authentic leaders have a positive impact on consistent performance by employees. Besides that, authentic leadership includes acting in compliance with the organisational philosophy, developing the organisational moral philosophy, helping individuals fulfil their potential, the possession of self-awareness skills, taking full responsibility for one's mistakes or failures and being one's 'real self'.

In addition, employee reactions and interventions contribute to the affective commitment awareness of sustainability and help employees identify and sustain well-being (Sappalà et al., 2018). The same study discusses that a lack of affective commitment leads to a failure in providing and creating a sustainable environment. Employee commitment is related to a change of mindset that links with organisational goals to support the implementation of a sustainable environment. Thus, human resource policies relating to sustainability and social responsibility should be developed that create awareness among organisational teams and groups.

Affective commitment is one of the categories of commitment according to Allen and Meyer (1993). This type of commitment refers to the emotional attachment an employee has toward identifying with and involving themselves in the organisation. Affective commitment can also be considered an important determinant of an employee's dedication and loyalty. This is because the knowledge among staff and employees is needed to build a green and sustainable environment and strong commitment helps create a sustainable campus atmosphere. Affective commitment can be identified through several key indicators. According to Allen and Meyer (1993), these indicators include the desire to remain a member of the organisation, a sense of involvement in achieving the organisation's goals, emotional attachment to the organisation, and pride in promoting the organisation to others. These elements reflect the emotional bond that employees develop with their organisation, which can significantly influence their dedication.

Based on Alqudah et al. (2022), the affective organisational commitment of employees increases when they perceive that their organisation's environmental values align with their own. Employees' awareness of environmental sustainability efforts also influences their organisational commitment. Focusing an organisation on

environmental sustainability can impact affective organisational involvement through value sharing.

The commitment of employees and students is important in achieving sustainability. Affective commitment is important for increasing the level of employee engagement and has a positive effect on their desire to contribute to organisational performance (Ng, 2023). Thus, affective commitment is one of the key elements of multi-commitment in the workplace. It is also relevant to various outcomes, such as quality of work, satisfaction with relationships, hobbies, health, and physical well-being.

1.2.4 Workplace Spirituality

The term spirituality means different things in different contexts, depending on the organisation and workplace. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) stated there are three main definitions of workplace spirituality, namely, the workplace understanding of personal meaning and satisfaction, awareness of the relationship with others and alignment with workplace standards. The organisation may be seen as a spiritual body since many individuals spend lots of their time in the workplace (Rezapouraghdam et al., 2019). Spirituality in the workplace requires the identification of one's ultimate goals in life; the development of strong relationships with colleagues and continuity or alignment between one's core beliefs and organisational principles (Milliman et al., 2003).

Spirituality in the workplace and employee commitment, showing that spirituality in the workplace plays an important role in achieving organisational goals. This statement has been supported by Al-Amin Mydin et al. (2018) who stated that

spirituality in the workplace may be seen as comprising two levels; the individual level and organisational level. Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) described workplace spirituality as a feeling related to having compassion for others and based on an attentive inner awareness in pursuit of meaningful work that facilitates transcendence.

Besides that, workplace spirituality includes efforts to find the ultimate purpose of life, develop close relationships with colleagues and people related to the job, and maintain consistency between one's core beliefs and the values of the organization (Rathee & Rajain, 2020). According to the same authors, workplace spirituality means feeling a meaningful connection between yourself and your workplace. In today's fast-paced world, many employees struggle with anxiety, fear, and depression. When a workplace allows employees to openly share their personal beliefs, it helps build stronger relationships, creates a sense of safety, and encourages employees to be more involved in their work. Because of these benefits, more organizations are starting to include spirituality in the workplace. A positive work environment not only helps employees, but also leads to better results in terms of quality, productivity, and profits.

In addition, workplace spirituality has a strong effect on how employees feel about their work, including their job satisfaction, commitment, involvement, and overall performance. The concept of integrating spiritual values in organizational settings is increasingly recognized as a vital component in fostering a positive workplace culture and enhancing employee engagement, especially in relation to sustainability initiatives. This integration involves aligning the individual spiritual or ethical values of employees with those of the organization, particularly values that emphasize ethics, integrity, and a commitment to the greater good. This alignment can significantly strengthen employees' affective commitment, ensuring that their work is

not only congruent with their personal values but also deeply fulfilling and motivating (Fry, 2003).

1.2.5 Higher Education Institutes of Saudi Arabia

In the domain of higher education within Saudi Arabia, the educational trajectory continues beyond three years of secondary education into institutions that include both governmental and private sectors, taking the form of universities, colleges, and academies. Saudi Arabia's higher education system encompasses three primary levels: bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctorates. Notably, governmental universities offer Saudi citizens complimentary bachelor's degree education.

Higher education provision in the Saudi Arabia's higher education has increased dramatically in the last decade. The Saudi Ministry of Higher Education reported that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) ranks Saudi Arabia as the fourth highest nation on student movement around the world, meaning Saudi Arabia is ahead of Japan and the United States in student movement (Alamri, 2023). The Kingdom has 25 public universities and 8 private universities situated in various geographical areas around the region (Hamdan, 2015). All the Kingdom's universities are regulated by the Ministry of Education. There are four main characteristics of HEIs that underlie education in the country, namely, Islamic instruction, a centralised system of control and educational programmes, Government funding (making education free at all levels) and basic gender separation legislation (Alharbi, 2016).

The Ministry of Education (Higher Education) was established in 1975 to monitor, plan and synchronise the higher education needs of Saudi Arabia's higher education with a focus on providing national executives specialised in organisational and social sciences and who continue serving the national development goals (MOE, 2020). The university system is based on the higher education system of the United States, although there are similarities with the public education systems of Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Egypt. In addition, the education system often integrates Islamic values and practices (Alharbi, 2016).

Thus, appropriate strategy, management and implementation of Saudi Arabia's higher education are important to ensure the positive influences of authentic leadership on campus sustainability can be implemented effectively. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aims to foster knowledge related to campus sustainability among HEIs in the country. Universities still need to take sustainability in the context of HEI campuses and operations and leadership styles used by leaders into consideration.

1.3 Problem Statement

In recent years, higher education institutions (HEIs) have been striving to transform their campuses into green and sustainable environments, while also equipping individuals with the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to achieve sustainability goals. Sustainability has become a critical priority for HEIs worldwide, including those in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi Arabian Government and international organisations are encouraging research related to the environmental challenges faced by the Kingdom. However, many Saudi HEIs continue to face challenges in effectively implementing

and maintaining campus sustainability initiatives. Alghamdi (2018) stated that issues related to management and planning such as vision, policies, commitment, demographic changes, location, and physical infrastructure that must be considered when addressing sustainability in Saudi universities. These challenges also include a lack of leadership, weak organizational commitment, and broader issues related to sustainability.

The exploration of how authentic leadership influences campus sustainability within the Saudi context reveals significant research gaps. Specifically, the nuanced roles of affective commitment and workplace spirituality as a mediator and a moderator, respectively in the leadership and sustainability nexus remain largely unexplored. This oversight is critical, given the profound influence of Saudi Arabia's cultural values and Islamic ethical principles on organizational dynamics and outcomes.

Based on the research by Nakamura et al. (2023), to enhance effectiveness in working toward a sustainable atmosphere, new approaches to leadership are needed. Authentic leaders demonstrate a passion for benefiting others, consistently practice authentic leadership behaviors, and lead with both their emotions and their minds. Authentic leadership is needed to implement workplace spirituality towards campus sustainability. According to Sidani and Rowe (2018), authentic leadership is a relational structure in which followers also demonstrate an important role. Research suggests that followers have power to enter into implicit negotiations with their leaders about what leaders should do in a given situation.

Additionally, it shows that to determine the influence of workplace spirituality on campus sustainability in the KSA, further research should be conducted. The establishment of environmental sustainability criteria includes the identification of ecological themes and data that demonstrates the degree to which they are exceeded and cost analyses related to decreasing sustainability issues.

Further longitudinal study is needed, taking into consideration commitment to change, as well as its potential results. In particular, it may be important to consider the commitment to change and outcomes related to individual growth, such as the development of skills, expansion of social networks or the adoption of principles and standards suggested by the transformation (Sappalà et al., 2019). Previous research did not examine the affective, normative and continuity components of organisational commitment as mediator variables (Arsenich, 2018). Therefore, this research is important to investigate the moderating roles of workplace spirituality and affective commitment as mediators between authentic leadership and campus sustainability in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions..

1.4 Research Objectives (RO)

The main objective is to investigate the influence of authentic leadership on campus sustainability in the higher education context of Saudi Arabia, with affective commitment as mediator and workplace spirituality as moderator. The specific objectives can be stated as follows:

- RO1. To examine the levels of workplace spirituality, campus sustainability, authentic leadership, and affective commitment in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions.

- RO2. To determine the influence of authentic leadership on campus sustainability in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions.
- RO3. To assess the influence of authentic leadership on affective commitment in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions.
- RO4. To analyse the influence of affective commitment on campus sustainability in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions.
- RO5. To evaluate the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between authentic leadership and campus sustainability.
- RO6. To evaluate the moderating effect of workplace spirituality on the relationship between affective commitment and campus sustainability.

1.5 Research Questions (RQ)

- RQ1. What are the levels of workplace spirituality, campus sustainability, authentic leadership, and affective commitment in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions?
- RQ2. How does authentic leadership influence campus sustainability in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions?
- RQ3. How does authentic leadership affect affective commitment in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions?
- RQ4. How does affective commitment influence campus sustainability in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions?

RQ5. Does affective commitment mediate the relationship between authentic leadership and campus sustainability?

RQ6. Does workplace spirituality moderate the relationship between authentic leadership and campus sustainability?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives, the research hypotheses are as follows:

H_{a1}: There is a positive relationship between authentic leadership and campus sustainability in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions.

H_{a2}: There is a positive relationship between authentic leadership and affective commitment in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions.

H_{a3}: There is a positive relationship between affective commitment and campus sustainability in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions.

H_{a4}: Affective commitment moderates the relationship between authentic leadership and campus sustainability in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions.

H_{a5}: Workplace spirituality mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and campus sustainability in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its comprehensive examination of the interplay between authentic leadership, affective commitment, workplace spirituality, and campus sustainability within the context of Saudi Arabian higher education. This research is poised to make substantial contributions to both theoretical understanding and practical applications across several key areas:

1. **Enhancing Academic Scholarship:** By exploring the nuanced roles of authentic leadership, affective commitment, and workplace spirituality in promoting campus sustainability, this study fills a critical gap in the existing literature. It extends the theoretical frameworks of leadership and organizational behavior by integrating these constructs within the unique policy context of Saudi Arabia, thereby contributing to a more global understanding of sustainable leadership practices.
2. **Informing Policy and Practice:** The findings from this study are expected to provide actionable insights for policymakers, educational leaders, and administrators. By delineating the mechanisms through which authentic leadership influences sustainability initiatives, the study offers guidance for developing leadership training programs, policies, and practices that align with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 and the Saudi Green Initiative.
3. **Supporting National Development Goals:** This research directly supports Saudi Arabia's ambitious national development and sustainability goals. By identifying effective leadership behaviors and organizational cultures that foster sustainability in higher education, the

study contributes to the broader objectives of Vision 2030 and the Saudi Green Initiative, which include transforming the economy, advancing education, and promoting environmental stewardship.

4. The significance of this study extends beyond the academic domain, offering practical insights for educational leadership, policy formulation, and the advancement of sustainability goals within the Saudi Arabian context and beyond. Its findings are anticipated to serve as a foundational resource for future research and practice aimed at harnessing authentic leadership for sustainable development in higher education.

1.8 Scope and Limitations

This study is primarily focused on examining the influence of authentic leadership on campus sustainability within the higher education institutions of Saudi Arabia. It aims to explore the mediatory role of affective commitment and the moderating effect of workplace spirituality in this relationship, situated within the cultural and policy context defined by Saudi Vision 2030 and the Saudi Green Initiative. The scope encompasses large public universities in Saudi Arabia, considering these as pivotal platforms for leading and implementing sustainability initiatives aligned with national development goals.

While the study seeks to provide comprehensive insights into the dynamics of leadership and sustainability in Saudi higher education, several limitations are anticipated:

Data Collection Constraints: Given the focus on large public universities in Saudi Arabia, the study may not capture the experiences and practices of smaller institutions or private universities. Furthermore, reliance on self-reported data through surveys could introduce response biases.

Temporal and Environmental Changes: The rapidly evolving policy and sustainability landscape may outpace the research timeline. Initiatives and reforms introduced after the data collection period could influence the relevance and applicability of the findings.

Scope of Sustainability Initiatives: The study's focus on leadership's impact on sustainability may not fully encapsulate all dimensions of campus sustainability, such as infrastructural and technological innovations, student-led initiatives, and external collaborations.

Interdisciplinary Complexity: The interdisciplinary nature of sustainability involves complex interactions between environmental, economic, and social factors. While the study addresses these through the lenses of authentic leadership, affective commitment, and workplace spirituality, it may not comprehensively cover all interdisciplinary aspects.

By acknowledging these limitations, the study aims to contribute valuable insights while recognizing the areas that warrant further investigation. The findings are expected to spur ongoing research and dialogue among academics, policymakers, and practitioners, facilitating a deeper understanding and more effective implementation of sustainability initiatives in higher education.

1.9 Operational definitions

The described terms reflect words that require further explanation. This research was guided by the following definitions of these terms and each term links to various concepts that may be related to this research.

1.9.1 Authentic Leadership

In this research, authentic leadership is based those who are truly conscious of how others think and act and understand their own and others' values, experiences, intelligence and power. Authentic leadership in the context of this research comprises four dimensions, as mentioned below.

1.9.1(a) Self-Awareness

In this research, self-awareness refers to the awareness and perceptions of employees, including their own cognitive, emotional and moral development. knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses and the assorted variety of one's 'self'; including obtaining a view of oneself through sensitivity to others and knowledge of its effects on others.

1.9.1(b) Balanced Information Processing

Balanced processing refers to the evaluation of information prior to decision-making, including encouraging others to question or challenge prevailing standards. It also involves leaders demonstrating that all relevant data is thoroughly assessed. Such leaders are willing to consider opinions that challenge their own strongly held views. This balanced information processing dimension refers to a leader's ability to analyse data and information before making any decision. Additionally, this dimension also

serves as an indicator of a leader's willingness to seek input and ideas from employees regarding issues and problems that arise within the organization before making any decisions (Avolio et al., 2009). Next, the third dimension, moral perspective, explains the leader's orientation toward achieving moral standards and engaging in ethical practices (Aria et al., 2019). In this regard, authentic leaders are guided by moral values and ethical behavior (Kulophas & Hallinger, 2019). This view is also supported by Walumbwa et al. (2008), who state that this dimension represents a form of moral and ethical guidance that helps authentic leaders develop self-regulation. Besides that, it is the leader's role to ensure that these moral and ethical values are integrated into the group, organization, and society. It also relates to the leader's behavior of actively listening to different perspectives and analysing them based on relevant data and information sources before making decisions

1.9.1(c) Internalised Moral Perspective

In the context of this research, an internal moral perspective refers to the well-developed values of a leader, which guide their actions through an internal management locus, regardless of external influence. The leader is guided by this characteristic as inner moral values in turn drive the leadership style.

1.9.1(d) Relational Transparency

In this research, relational transparency refers to a leader's ability to express and share their beliefs and thoughts with employees, thereby fostering relationships based on respect and trust. It includes openly sharing one's thoughts and emotions in an honest manner.

1.9.2 Campus Sustainability

Campus sustainability in this research refers to a HEI that involves and promotes the minimisation of negative environmental economic, societal and health effects generated in the use of resources on a regional or global level, while fulfilling its functions of teaching, research, outreach and partnership. The campus sustainability measurement for this refers to the campus sustainability dimensions and comprises the three dimensions mentioned below:

1.9.2(a) University Environmental Management System (EMS)

In the context of this research, University Environmental Management System (EMS) refers to a system or database that merges structures and techniques for employee training, monitoring, analysing and ultimately reporting specialised environmental performance information to stakeholders of a company.

1.9.2(b) Public Participation and Social Responsibility

In this research, public participation and social responsibility involve collaborations with government agencies, other organisations, the private industry and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to promote sustainability on campus. The private sector and government agencies can collaborate in research and innovation with universities and NGOs can collaborate with universities in organising sustainability events and seminars

1.9.2(c) Teaching and Research Sustainability

In this research, teaching and research sustainability refer to research and development on how to foster sustainability, for example, by creating more efficient

ways to solve social and environmental problems. Conferences, workshops and seminars can promote research and provide platforms for international and academic institutions to analyse and examine environmental problems. This can help facilitate awareness and commitment for sustainable development.

1.9.3 Affective Commitment

In this research, affective commitment refers to the components of organisational engagement where employees stay in the company, regardless of whether they feel positive or negative about it. The commitment towards the organisation will determine the level of loyalty they experience. Employees who are highly committed to the organisation are the ones least likely to leave it.

1.9.4 Workplace Spirituality

In this study, the meaning and implications of workplace spirituality is considered within the context of the workplace. This is the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work taking place in the work community. This meaning is based on work by Millman et al. (2003), which concluded there are several dimensions to measuring workplace spirituality.

1.9.4(a) Meaningful Work

Meaningful work involves having a deep sense of meaning and purpose in one's work, which can be seen through work enjoyment, energetic work behaviours and work that gives personal meaning to employees. In this research, meaningful work is reflected by the engagement of employees with their routine tasks in relation to their