Article

The Importance of Sustainable Leadership amongst Female Managers in the Spanish Logistics Industry: A Cultural, Ethical and Legal Perspective

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Abstract: At present, the logistics industry in Spain is one that is mostly male-dominated, and women middle and top managers make up less than 10% of the workforce at these management levels. There is therefore an obvious lack of parity in this sector. Spanish regulation at present supports and promotes gender parity in different sectors including the logistics industry. Our article uses as a basis the fifth Sustainable Development Goal, "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Twenty-four female middle and top managers of the logistics sector were interviewed via a questionnaire of 52 questions. The research for this study was based on Avery and Bergsteiner's 2011 Honeybee and Locust Sustainable Leadership Model and strived to determine how female middle and top managers in the logistics sector in Spain perceived leadership in their workplace and whether these perceptions were aligned with Avery and Bergsteiner's sustainability leadership model. Findings showed interesting results, indicating that the Spanish logistics industry seemed to be a mixture of bee- and locust-type leadership. Respondents agreed that organizations were not very open to knowledge sharing and indicated that there is still a considerable need for improvement with regard to leadership practices in the logistics sector. Finally, our study is innovative in the sense that sustainable leadership and gender equality are two elements that have not been researched together.

Keywords: sustainable leadership; sustainable development goals; sustainability; locust leadership; honeybee leadership

1. Introduction

According to different researchers, leadership is among the key elements for a successful organization [1]. According to [2], leadership (1) enables the creation of a vision, (2) leads to the setting up of a high-performance team, (3) keeps the team motivated, (4) maintains a good rapport and ensures that team members are aware of the information needed, and (5) helps maintain the satisfaction of employees.

The concept of leadership in itself is a concept that has very varied interpretations [3], and to date, no single definition has been accepted by all [4]. However, it must be said that despite the great body of literature on leadership, it continues even now to be one of the most misunderstood business phenomena [2]. Therefore, different leadership definitions are not common for leaders in all contexts, and it has been shown that individual personality aspects are of considerable importance for effective leadership, such as dominance, sociability, and self-confidence [5]. A leader is defined as a person with a responsibility to influence one or more followers who is able to direct them to achieve an objective [6].

However, what can be agreed upon is that leadership is important [7]. When leadership is ineffective or absent, the results may sometimes be devastating at all levels, affecting stakeholders both inside and outside of the company [2]. Therefore, the leader in question will consequently need to adopt different leadership styles, in order to move the organization to a desired future state [7]. Modern organizations now are constantly changing and are not averse to potential changes. A refusal to change would undoubtedly affect a

company's operational effectiveness [8,9]. Leaders and leadership are therefore necessary to enable the organization to adapt to these changes (i.e., potential threats) and to promote the generation of organizational opportunities [8]. Furthermore, organizations need to stop believing that leadership should be undertaken from a control perspective [10,11] and start working on a type of leadership based on dialogue between leaders and their followers [12,13].

With regard to sustainability, leading an organization toward the achievement of the United Nations' seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) necessitates a long-term vision, as well as a capacity for resilience and an ability to adapt to changes. Often corporations prioritize and gear their efforts toward attaining short-term objectives and profit targets, and a long-term and durable vision of sustainability is nowhere to be seen. Furthermore, analysts of corporate action on sustainable development issues are calling for more leadership for sustainability to tackle a range of social and environmental issues that still need to be progressed [14].

Leadership to achieve such long-term objectives effectively and cohesively should not be performed in a restricted single-governance manner, but instead exercised collectively in groups, organizations, societies, and networks calling on resources both internal and external to the company. In this respect, the authors Hargreaves and Fink (2006) highlight the importance of practicing a sustainable type of leadership. The goal of sustainable leadership is to lead an organization and its members towards sustainable development through the adoption and implementation of activities and strategies that are socially responsible [15], and this is also so with companies. This type of leadership is based on fairness and aims to benefit stakeholders in the longer-term future as well as in the present and the immediate future.

A systemic approach must therefore be undertaken regarding the decision-making processes of the company to create additional value. This is very much aligned with the seventeenth Sustainable Development Goal, "partnerships to achieve the goals", namely, to "enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries" [16]. For example, at the procurement level, sustainable leaders will select suppliers based not only on low prices, but also on other indicators such as a long-lasting trustworthy relationship of the company with its suppliers. Researching how a holistic approach to leadership can affect organizational effectiveness is necessary, as very little has been done in this respect. Much research to date has been carried out on the outcomes of such leadership for individuals, but not at the organizational level [17], thereby revealing an area of research still to be tackled in real depth on how organizational leadership may be improved and transformed to benefit the organization, as well as the wider society, not just in the short but also in the long term. Such societally conscious approaches with respect to leadership have in the past been largely ignored or bypassed [12], with leadership success being largely measured simply by the pursuit of maximizing profit [10,12,18,19]. Therefore, a different type of leadership is needed that builds upon the organization's present context to achieve a socially responsible and successful future with a long-term focus that is socially responsible and not solely based on maximizing profit [20].

There are numerous corporate examples that have demonstrated that sustainability can be key to corporate success in the sense of creating and developing long-term value for all organizational stakeholders. Large companies such as Unilever and Inditex have adopted and included sustainability strategies in their overall business vision. The adoption of such strategies has not hindered in any way the economic performance of both companies, both being present in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI). Inditex, for example, for three years running was declared to be the most sustainable retailer according to the DJSI and was affirmed to be a benchmark in the field. Furthermore, Unilever was named in 2020 to

be the industry leader according to the DJSI achieving a high score (90/100) according to DJSI's environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria [21].

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. The Sustainable Leadership Concept

There are those who think that there should be another form of leadership, a "sustainable leadership" style [22]. As is implicit in the term itself, sustainable leadership implies a type of leadership that is carried out over the long term and that is based on acting in a fair and ethical manner with all stakeholders (i.e., both internal and external to the company). The adoption of a long-term perspective has aided companies to survive times of hardship such as economic depressions, recessions, and intense global competition [23], and situations such as, for example, the whole of the COVID-19 context, which we are experiencing at the moment. According to Avery and Bergsteiner, sustainable leadership is "reflected in the system of principles, processes, practices and values that a firm adopts in pursuing its future" [23] (p. 7) and "sustainable businesses should pursue to meet the needs of the present without affecting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" [23] (p. 9). There is therefore a need for new leadership styles. Leaders have shifted from leadership styles that are often more reflective of individual personality or self-interest to ones that are more people and societally oriented. Often, sustainable leadership has multiple advantages such as collegial management with wider people involvement, lower costs, and a better brand reputation and societal respect.

According to the Cambridge Institute of Sustainable Leadership, sustainable leadership should not be considered as a different school of leadership, but as a particular type of leadership within a specific context, a context that understands the sustainability challenges facing the world and our aspirations as humans for a more sustainable future [24]. Furthermore, sustainable leadership should also consider equity, environmental justice, intergenerational equity, and governance [25]. However, it must be noted that sustainable leadership should not be considered to be a business model based on altruism or charity, but on the notion of making companies more competitive and resilient, and at the end of the day, more attractive to clients [23].

Research has analyzed sustainable leadership in several different settings, such as educational contexts and organizational structures [12,26,27]. The first sustainable leadership framework dates back to 2006 and was developed by Hargreaves and Fink who analyzed sustainable leadership at the organizational level in the educational sector. According to these authors [22], there are seven key characteristics of sustainable leadership (SL), which are listed below. According to these authors, sustainable leadership enables the nurturing of an educational context that promotes the interchange of opinions and ideas. According to these authors, sustainable leadership possesses a futuristic commitment to the powers that influence it and develops an educational environment of corporate multiplicity that stimulates the interchange of valuable opinions and effective exercises in societies of common learning and development [22]. The seven principles of sustainable leadership as presented by Hargreaves and Fink are listed below:

1. Sustainable leadership develops and maintains sustainable learning; it is a type of lasting learning that is based on learning about and caring for others.
2. Sustainable leadership ensures future success; this will be achieved through the effective transfer of sustainable leadership knowledge and skills from today's to tomorrow's leaders.
3. In complex corporate scenarios, it is extremely difficult for a leader to manage all problems without the support of other stakeholders such as members of the specific organization. Leadership must therefore be disseminated among all members of the company and adopt a more systemic type of approach.
4. Sustainable leadership focuses on social justice; it must not cause any type of environmental damage (i.e., both inside and outside of the organization).

5. Sustainable leadership must nurture and replenish human and financial resources rather than deplete them. This is very much aligned with the depletion of resources, a major potential risk for companies with regard to their survival.
6. Sustainable leadership creates an environmental mindset in the company. It identifies and rewards the leadership capacity of the company and its members. It has a creative and long-term vision to ensure the sustainability of the human and financial resources.
7. Sustainable leadership respects and builds on experience to find ways to create a better world.

Similarly, the authors Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Davies (2007), and Lambert (2011) also developed sustainable leadership frameworks at the organizational level in the education sector both in the United Kingdom and the United States [22,26,27]. According to Davies (2007), sustainable development entails key elements that determine the long-term development of the school. Such leadership is based on a moral purpose that provides success that is accessible to all. According to Lambert (2011), sustainable leadership necessitates the commitment at all levels of the organization to developing a culture in which leadership skills may be developed [27].

The Cambridge Institute of Sustainable Leadership—CISL [24] has developed a sustainable leadership model that is based on three main elements: (1) the internal and external leadership context; (2) the leader's style, skills, traits, and knowledge; and (3) leadership actions. It could be argued that none of these characteristics apply exclusively to sustainable leadership; however, taken together, they can respond to the challenges of sustainability. According to Kouzes et al. (2007), good leaders should be honest, forward-looking, competent, inspiring, and intelligent, in addition to having the ability to be flexible and adapt to the specific context of the organization [28]. In this sense, a sustainable leader should also be concerned for the well-being of humanity and all forms of life.

In 2010, Casserley and Critchley developed a model that aimed at promoting sustainable leadership through the development of sustainable leaders, thereby not operating at the organization level but at the individual level. They described the performance of sustainable leaders as being based on three core elements: (1) reflection on action, (2) psychological intelligence, and (3) physiological well-being. These three elements would need to be accompanied by the engagement of the individuals to the culture of the organization. According to these authors, sustainable leaders were more likely to create sustainable organizations [10].

Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) developed a sustainable leadership model that is based on 23 key factors that underlie sustainable leadership, which, if undertaken together, will contribute over time to organizational performance improvement. Compared to Davies' (2007) and Lambert's (2011) models, Avery and Bergsteiner's sustainable leadership framework has been applied to a more ample variety of contexts and not just the educational sector.

Avery and Bergsteiner's (2011) framework divides organizations into two main categories, which are known as (1) "locust leadership" and (2) "honeybee leadership". The locust leadership philosophy is very much based on the concept of making profit, and at the very extreme, of making profit at any cost, even if it involves harming the natural environment [23]. This philosophy can be summarized as being an attitude that one's own advantage can be achieved only by making others suffer [23]. On the other hand, the honeybee leadership approach undertakes a "stakeholder-oriented, social and sharing approach to leadership . . . Honeybee leadership assumes that a company can be sustainable only if the basic needs of all stakeholders are considered" [12]. Moreover, it is more holistic in nature and is based on generating stakeholder value. This is again very much aligned with the seventeenth Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations. Although the honeybee model has been found to be more sustainable and profitable in the long term, many companies still persist with the more conventional locust model, which is based on short-term evidence-lacking decision making [23]. Due to its more ample potential applica-

bility, Avery and Bergsteiner's framework will be used as a basis for the methodological approach undertaken (i.e., as will be later described in the Purpose section of this article).

2.2. Female Leadership in the Corporate and Public Sector

At present, women have scarce representation in management positions both in the private and public sectors in the Western world. Over the years, the participation of women in the workforce has increased considerably (i.e., in lower and medium level positions), which is a very positive result [29]; however, women are still poorly represented in higher positions. The European Commission (EC) has over the years developed a database on the participation of women in decision-making bodies so as to be able to analyze the evolution of the role of women in different sectors [16]. The corporate information included in these analyses carried out by the EC derives from data pertaining to major companies that are quoted on the stock markets of each country.

In 2016, the EC analyzed the presence of women in senior positions in some of the most important companies in Europe. It is possible to observe that the percentage of women in senior positions increased considerably between 2006 and 2016 in all countries; however, there are still marked differences between European countries, such as for example the percentage of senior positions held by women has reached 41% in Norway but only 9% in Greece. According to another European Commission report from 2013, the larger increases recorded in countries such as Norway and France are due to the fact that these countries have adopted binding legislation in this regard. As regards executive director or managing director roles, only 5% of these roles were held by women in 2016. More recent data from 2020 point out that women account for just 7.8% of Board Chairs and just 8.2% of CEO positions in the EU [30].

Women's employment rates have reached historically high levels in the European Union (EU), and women are more than ever in leadership positions; however, considerable work still remains to be achieved to attain gender equality. The participation of women in the labor market is still lower than that of men in the EU, and their average pay is still circa 16% lower. Women rarely reach high managerial positions, with only 6.3% of CEO positions [30].

These figures on gender inequality clearly illustrate the necessity for the fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which is "to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". We could extrapolate the following three specific targets [31]:

- Target 5.1—End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- Target 5.5—Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic, and public life.
- Target 5.c—Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Gender equality is considered by authors Miotto and Milajoana-Alejandre [32] to be a multifactorial concept that is based on specific normative principles such as those of anti-poverty, anti-exploitation, and income equality, just to mention a few. Furthermore, it has been shown that the inclusion of women in corporate leadership positions leads to more diverse and inclusive management teams and improved intangible benefits such as those of reputation and legitimacy [32]. Furthermore, it is also linked to another basic concept, which is corporate social responsibility [33].

2.3. Female Leadership in Spain

The European Commission results expressed above may be surprising when we compare between different countries and consider that most recent graduates in Spain are women and that presently 45% of the Spanish workforce are women [34].

In Spain, the percentage of women in senior positions reached 20% in 2016, which is still under the European average of 23%. The leading public companies on which this information is based comprise the main index of the Spanish stock exchange, the Ibex 35 [35].

The Spanish Organic Law 3/2007 of 22 March 2007 sets out as a fundamental principle the equality of men and women and expressly mentions the participation of women on the boards of directors of mercantile companies, especially those that are obliged by law to publicly disclose their accounts. The idea behind this law was to increase the presence of women on the boards of directors of companies over the following years to reach parity in this respect between men and women. It must be noted, though, that there is no obligation in this law for companies to achieve such parity, there being no "must" element; it is left to best intentions or, perhaps, pressure from shareholders to achieve results.

Let us highlight that this law develops and applies the principle of equality between men and women, based on the absence of any direct/indirect discrimination due to gender. Furthermore, this law advocates a principle of equal treatment and opportunities between men and women in both the public and the private labor markets.

Unfortunately, as shown by the European figures, this regulation from 2007 does not seem to have been enforced. There are still several different obstacles that seem to hinder women's professional development such as:

- The difficulties faced by women in reconciling the obligations of their personal and professional lives [36].
- In Spain, there are still a few companies that have a way of operating from years back when men worked outside and women inside the home. Some organizations are still more male-biased, in the sense that they make the professional progression of women to management positions more difficult [37].
- Promotions to senior management positions are usually decided by and managed by those already in senior positions, and these are usually men who tend to select human resources from amongst their acquaintances or trustworthy contacts who also tend to be male.
- Furthermore, overall, women often stay under the radar in the sense that they tend to focus more on just their own work than on building work-oriented and career-oriented personal relationships at work.

Specifically, in the logistics sector in Spain, women managers are not common, and the top management of logistics companies tend to be very largely male. According to a recent article from the Spanish online newspaper "El Mercantíl" dated from 6 March 2020, in a recent report, only 8.4% of managers in the logistics industry are women. Through time, the logistics sector has been very much thought of publicly as comprising only such stereotypically beefy activities as driving heavy trucks and heavy lifting and handling work in warehouses, but the growth of e-commerce, the automation of warehousing, and the advent of the digital transformation in recent years have created more and new opportunities for women in the logistics industry.

In this respect, the legislators have continued to edge companies towards gender equality through the so-called "equality plans", which are mandatory as established in article 45.2 of Organic Law 3/2007 of 22 March, which strives towards equality between men and women. This article establishes that in companies with fifty or more workers, the equality measures must be directed towards the conception and implementation of an organizational equality plan. It must be highlighted again, however, that giving practical effect to such plans remains voluntary for companies.

There is therefore a clear need for the authorities to continue regulating and developing legal frameworks and regulations to promote gender equality and sustainable corporate practices as established by the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations [38].

Furthermore, gender equality and female leadership education in corporate environments should also be promoted. The Sustainable Development Goals consider education to be a priority for sustainable development, leading to inclusive and equitable opportunities for all. In this sense, education plays a critical role in assuring gender equality, particularly to help women attain managerial and leadership positions [39].

2.4. Purpose of Research

The main aim of this study was to identify the level of sustainable leadership among female managers working in the logistics sector in Spain. The research for this study will take as a framework Avery and Bergsteiner's Honeybee and Locust sustainable leadership model and will consider the following research questions:

- How do female managers in the logistics sector in Spain perceive leadership in the companies where they work?
- Is their perception aligned with a more honeybee or a more locust type of leadership approach, or neither?

Over the years, the sustainable leadership approach has been gaining ground among a few scholars. This study will examine the concept in more detail via a qualitative analysis using as an empirical sample, a group of 24 female middle and top managers in the logistics industry. The logistics sector is one that is male-dominated, an industry where only 8% of senior-level management positions are occupied by women. It will therefore be interesting to analyze the applicability of the sustainable leadership concept in this industry that at first sight may seem to be neither flexible nor fair in its manner of operating at the organizational level.

Furthermore, sustainable leadership and gender equality are two elements that have not been researched together. The study itself is innovative in the sense that not often are sustainable leadership and female leadership combined in one article. Furthermore, it is not usual to apply this type of analysis to a sector that is male-dominated, as is the case of the logistics industry.

In the next few sections of this manuscript, the research methodology, the results, discussion, and conclusion of our study will be presented.

- The research methodology section describes the qualitative approach that was undertaken and presents the specific questions that were included in the questionnaire that was used to gather information from the respondents.
- The Discussion section analyzes in more detail the main study results as well, comparing the latter to the results obtained from past studies. The discussion also analyzes the results in more detail with regard to Avery and Bergenstein's sustainable leadership conceptual framework that was used to contextualize the present research.
- The conclusions mention briefly the main research results but highlights most importantly the study's limitations and future research.

As will be described hereon in the next section, the research methodology entails the carrying out of a qualitative analysis of the responses given by 24 middle and top female managers of the logistics industry in Spain.

3. Research Methodology

The main aim of this study was to identify the level of sustainable leadership among female managers working in the logistics sector in Spain, a fairly select target group, since only 8% of managers in this sector are women.

To accomplish this goal, a qualitative study was carried out entailing the development of a questionnaire composed of 52 questions, which were aimed at middle and top managers in the logistics sector in Spain.

This questionnaire was developed and based on the sustainable leadership framework of Avery and Bergsteiner. Furthermore, this type of questionnaire has already been used in a past paper developed by Kalkavan (2015) that analyzed the level of sustainable leadership amongst managers in the Turkish insurance industry. We took Avery and Bergsteiner's [23] framework as a model for our research and adapted it to our research context. Twenty-four female supply chain managers participated in our study and contributed their views on their current leadership situation in this sector.

The contents of the questionnaire may be found further down in this section. Of the 52 questions, 44 aim at analyzing the level of sustainable leadership, and 8 introductory

questions aim at getting to know a little more about the profile of each woman being interviewed. A five-point Likert scale (i.e., 1–5) was used in determining the answers to all 46 "sustainable leadership" questions. The questionnaires were created using Google Forms and were sent digitally via email and WhatsApp. The whole of the COVID-19 context forced us to select this method of data collection. It is important to note that all questionnaires were anonymous.

Overall, 24 middle- and top-level female managers completed our questionnaire and answered all 52 questions. We would have liked to carry out the surveys on a face-to-face basis; however, the COVID-19 situation hampered this initial plan for data collection.

The actual survey questions are listed below. They are divided into two parts: Part I, comprising 8 introductory questions whose objective was to find out more about the respondents, and Part II, which encompassed 44 questions aimed at evaluating the level of sustainable leadership of each of the 24 interviewees.

The supply chain sector is very ample in the sense that it may include stakeholders from the whole of the value chain from the production to the demand side and may include stakeholders such as producers, vendors, warehouses, transportation companies, distribution centers, and retailers. Therefore, the profile of the female managers interviewed (Table 1) was also varied as shown below with regard to the sectors in which they worked:

Table 1. Profile of female managers interviewed.

Sector	Number of Female Managers
Nutrition sector	1
Logistics and transport	3
Logistics	5
Internationalization (International logistics)	2
Education	2
Pharmaceutical industry	1
Entertainment	1
Industry	2
Trains	1
Mobility	1
Supply chain operators	1
Research	1
Technology	1
IT	1
Distribution	1

With regards to the actual managerial positions of the interviewees, 12.5% had CEO or General Management positions, 79.2% had middle managerial positions, and 8.3% were categorized as "other" (i.e., positions that were non-managerial). Most of the interviewees had considerable work experience: 3 had 1–10 years' experience, 11 had 11–20 years' experience, and 10 had 21–30 years' experience. When the interviewees were asked the percentage of female managers at their company, 62.5% of the women interviewed said that women occupied 30% or less of the managerial positions at their company (with 25% of the women highlighting that less than 10% of their managerial staff was female). In only 15% of the cases was there parity between women and men, and in only one case was the whole of the managerial staff female. The presence of women holding managerial positions is evolving positively. However, it is important to note that to continue such a trend, it will be necessary to promote university studies for women as well as the percentage of women hired in recent positions for new graduates [38].

The questionnaire was carried out in Spanish and consisted of the questions below, which have been translated into English.

PART I: Introductory questions:

- Sector:
- Role:

- Years of experience:
- You work in the organization X. Could you tell me a little more about your organization?
- Have you always worked here? Why did you join this company?
- What challenges do you currently face in your organization? Name one or two (the most relevant)
- Would you say that there are a lot of female managers in your organization? Could you give us a percentage estimate of how many women there are in your organization?
- How do you think the role of women managers in logistics could be improved?

    PART II: Sustainable leadership questions:

1. In terms of training and development, I aim to develop everyone continuously.
2. In terms of training and development, I aim to develop everyone selectively.
3. I value long tenure at all levels.
4. I accept high staff turnover.
5. I mostly make promotions from within an organization wherever possible.
6. I mostly appoint people from outside the organization wherever possible.
7. I care about employees' welfare.
8. For me employees are interchangeable and employee costs entail a significant part of the organization's overheads.
9. In my opinion, a CEO works as the top team member or spokesman
10. In my opinion, a CEO is a decision maker hero
11. "Doing the right thing" in the business is more important than profit.
12. For me, ethical behavior is negotiable, an assessable risk.
13. I prioritize long-term business objectives over those that are short-term.
14. I prioritize short-term profits and growth.
15. I think that change is an evolving process.
16. I think that change is something rapid, volatile, perhaps even ad hoc.
17. I think that people should work with maximum independence from others to increase their profits.
18. I think people should follow their managers and obey instructions.
19. When I set up business objectives, I always stress the importance of protecting the environment.
20. In my opinion, the environment is there to be exploited to increase profit.
21. I think that the interests of the people and of the community are a big part of the business environment and should be carefully considered when making business decisions.
22. I think the people and community that comprise the business environment should be exploited since they are there to help the business to make profit.
23. I think that everyone matters, independently of whether they are related to the business or not.
24. I think that the shareholders are the only stakeholders that matter.
25. I believe in vision statements embodying a shared view of the future as an important strategic tool.
26. I believe that a shared view of the future is an essential strategic tool.
27. I believe the decision making in the business should be consensual and devolved.
28. I believe the decision making in the business should be primarily manager centered.
29. I believe staff can manage themselves.
30. I believe managers should manage their staff.
31. I think team working should be extensive and empowered.
32. I think team working should be limited and manager centered.
33. I believe in fostering an enabling widely shared culture.
34. I think culture is weak except for an emphasis on a short-term focus.
35. I believe that knowledge should be shared throughout the organization.
36. I believe that knowledge-sharing is not important, in fact, possession of knowledge should be limited to a few gatekeepers.
37. In business, I need to foster a high degree of trust through relationships and goodwill.

38. In business, we must control and monitor to compensate for low trust levels.
39. In my opinion, strategic innovation is especially important and therefore should be encouraged at all levels of the organization.
40. In my opinion, innovation is risky and therefore should only be managed by managers.
41. I highly value emotionally committed staff.
42. In my opinion, financial rewards suffice as motivators, therefore I do not expect emotional commitment from the staff.
43. In my opinion, quality ought to be embedded within the culture of the business.
44. In my opinion, quality may only be achieved through mechanisms of control.

Each of these questions was evaluated via a Likert scale with a range of 1 to 5 (i.e., each of these range levels is further explained in the table below in Table 2 below):

Table 2. Survey question range level explanation.

Range Level	Explanation
1	I completely agree
2	I agree
3	I do not agree or disagree
4	I disagree
5	I completely disagree

4. Results

The second part of the questionnaire was aimed at evaluating the level and application of key elements making up Avery and Bergsteiner's [23] framework that if undertaken together will contribute over time (i.e., and in the long term) to organizational performance improvement. The initial results are shown in Table 3. The results are presented in two different formats: firstly, as the number of respondents and secondly as the percentage of respondents that gave a specific answer (i.e., number of respondents divided by 24).

Table 3. Percentage results of respondents that answered each of the interview questions.

Research Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1			5 (20.8%)	6 (25%)	13 (54.2%)
2		2 (8.3%)	4 (16.7%)	11 (45.8%)	7 (29.2%)
3		1 (4.2%)	6 (25%)	9 (37.5%)	8 (33.3%)
4	1 (4.2%)	6(25%)	6 (25%)	8 (33.3%)	3 (12.5%)
5		1 (4.2%)		7 (29.2%)	16 (66.7%)
6	1 (4.2%)	6 (25%)	9 (37.5%)	5 (20.8%)	3 (12.5%)
7				3 (12.5%)	21 (87.5%)
8	7 (29.2%)	10 (41.7%)	4 (16.7%)	1 (4.2%)	2 (8.3%)
9	1 (4.2%)	4 (16.7%)	8 (33.3%)	4 (16.7%)	7 (29.2%)
10	2 (8.3%)	2 (8.3%)	2 (8.3%)	9 (37.5%)	9 (37.5%)
11		3 (12.5%)	5 (20.8%)	7 (29.2%)	9 (37.5%)
12		4 (16.7%)	7 (29.2%)	8 (33.3%)	5 (20.8%)
13		1 (4.2%)	11 (45.8%)	8 (33.3%)	4 (16.7%)
14	8 (33.3%)	12 (50%)	3 (12.55)	1 (4.2%)	
15			1 (4.2%)	4 (16.7%)	19 (79.2%)
16	3 (12.5%)	9 (37.5%)	7 (29.2%)	3(12.5%)	2 (8.3%)
17	5 (20.8%)	10 (41.7%)	5 (20.8%)	3(12.5%)	1 (4.2%)
18	3(12.5%)	10 (41.7%)	9 (37.5%)	2 (8.3%)	
19		2 (8.3%)	6 (25%)	9 (37.5%)	7 (29.2%)
20	20 (83.3%)	4 (16.75)			
21				7(29.2%)	17 (70.8%)
22	19 (79.2%)	5 (21.8%)			
23			3 (12.5%)	2 (8.3%)	19 (79.2%)

Table 3. *Cont.*

Research Questions	1	2	3	4	5
24	14 (58.3%)	8 (33.3%)	2 (8.3%)		
25				6 (255)	18 (75%)
26	13 (54.2%)	7 (29.2%)	2 (8.3%)	2 (8.3%)	
27		2 (8.3%)	5 (20.8%)	9 (37.55)	8 (33.3%)
28	4 (16.7%)	7 (29.2%)	9 (37.5%)	3 (12.5%)	1 (4.2%)
29	1 (4.2%)	4 (16.7%)	11 (45.8%)	7 (29.2%)	1 (4.2%)
30	1 (4.2%)	4 (16.7%)	7 (29.2%)	7 (29.2%)	5 (20.8%)
31			1 (4.2%)	3 (12.5%)	20 (83.3%)
32	11 (45.8%)	9 (37.5%)	3 (12.5%)		1 (4.2%)
33			2 (8.3%)	5 (20.8%)	17 (70.8%)
34		1 (4.2%)	2 (8.3%)	9 (37.5%)	12 (50%)
35				4 (16.7%)	20 (83.3%)
36	19 (79.2%)	4 (16.7%)	1 (4.2%)		
37		1 (4.2%)	3 (12.5%)	9 (37.5%)	11 (45.8%)
38	7 (29.2%)	8 (33.3%)	7 (29.2%)	2 (8.3%)	
39				5 (20.8%)	19 (79.2%)
40	15(62.5%)	7 (29.2%)	2 (8.3%)		
41			1 (4.2%)	3 (12.5%)	20 (83.3%)
42	6 (25%)	16 (66.7%)	2 (8.3%)		
43			2 (8.3%)	6 (25%)	16 (66.7%)
44	7 (29.2%)	8 (33.3%)	5 (20.8%)	4 (16.7%)	

Avery and Bergsteiner's sustainable leadership classification was used to analyze how female managers in the logistics sector in Spain perceive leadership in the companies where they work. The categorization system used in our research was based on the following three criteria: foundational practices (questions 1 to 26), higher-level practices (questions 27 to 38), and key performance drivers (questions 39 to 44). These three criteria were also used in Kalkavan's [15] study. These three criteria will serve as the basis for the analyses of the study's results, as is shown hereon.

Moreover, we decided to further detail this categorization and complement the above framework by grouping the three above-mentioned criteria with the following subcategories: (1) professional development, (2) personnel management costs, (3) innovative leadership, and (4) corporate social responsibility.

1. Professional development: included here are the training and development of workers' professional careers.
2. Personnel management costs: included here are all matters related to the management of employees, the day-to-day terms and conditions of employees, behavior and work standards, compliance with regulations, labor communication, encouraging wellbeing, work satisfaction, and motivation and involvement through criteria balancing respect and the encouragement of initiative and participation. Innovative leadership contrasts with traditional leadership, where the worker's participation and opinion are not really considered.
3. Innovative leadership goes beyond merely complying with the top manager's guidelines.
4. Corporate social responsibility: refers to all that is CSR-related. It implies a type of management that considers how the organizational activities affect employees, customers, and even suppliers or shareholders (i.e., including those that are associated with environmental protection).

This classification is further described below.

As shown in Table 3, the survey questions were broken down in the following manner:

- Firstly, according to Avery and Bergsteiner's criteria (i.e., foundational practices, higher-level practices, and key performance drivers)
- Secondly, according to the authors' classification (i.e., categories aforementioned)

- Thirdly, according to whether they were associated to sustainable (i.e., bee sustainable leadership approach) or non-sustainable leadership practices (i.e., locust sustainable leadership approach).

The results of Table 3 are further discussed in the Discussion section of this article.

5. Discussion

The interview questions were categorized according to the three main criteria listed below:

- Foundational practices (Questions 1 to 26),
- Higher-level practices (Questions 27 to 38) and
- Key performance drivers (Questions 39 to 44).

The results regarding these three criteria are further described in Tables 3–5 below (Tables 4–6 below).

Table 4. Analyses showing the analysis of the foundational practices category.

Category	Subcategory	Sustainable Leadership	Non-Sustainable Leadership
Foundational practices	Professional development	In terms of training and development, I aim to develop everyone continuously. I mostly make promotions from within an organization wherever possible.	In terms of training and development, I aim to develop everyone selectively. I mostly appoint people from outside the organization wherever possible.
		I think that change is an evolving process.	I think that change is something rapid, volatile, perhaps even ad hoc.
	Personnel management cost	I value long tenure at all levels.	I accept high staff turnover. For me, employees are interchangeable and employee cost entails a significant part of the organization's accounts.
		I care about my employees' welfare.	
		I prioritize long-term business objectives over those that are short-term.	I prioritize short-term profits and growth.
	Innovative leadership	I believe in vision statements embodying a shared view of the future as an important strategic tool.	I believe that a shared view of the future is an essential strategic tool.
		In my opinion, a CEO works as the top team member or speaker	In my opinion, a CEO is a decision maker hero.
		I think that people should work with maximum independence from others to increase their profits.	I think people should follow their managers and obey instructions.
	Corporate social responsibility	When I set up business objectives, I always stress the importance of protecting the environment.	In my opinion, the environment is there to be exploited to increase profit.
		I think that the interests of the people and of the community are a big part of the business environment and should be carefully considered when making business decisions.	I think the people and community that entail the business environment should be exploited, since they are there to help the business to make profit.
		I think that everyone matters, independently of whether they are related to the business or not.	I think that the shareholders are the only stakeholders that matter.

Table 5. Analyses showing the analyses of the higher-level practices category.

Category	Subcategory	Sustainable Leadership	Non-Sustainable Leadership
Higher-level practices	Innovative leadership	I believe that knowledge should be shared throughout the organization	I believe that knowledge-sharing is not important; in fact, it should only be limited to a few gatekeepers.
		I believe the decision making in the business should be consensual and devolved.	I believe the decision making in the business should be primarily manager-centered.
		I believe staff are capable of managing themselves.	I believe managers should manage their staff
		I think team working should be extensive and empowered.	I think team working should be limited and manager-centered.
		I believe in fostering an enabling widely shared culture.	I think culture is weak except for a focus on a short-term focus.
		In business, I need to foster a high degree of trust through relationships and goodwill.	In business, we must control and monitor to compensate for low trust levels.

Table 6. Analyses showing the analyses of the key performance drive category.

Category	Subcategory	Sustainable Leadership	Non-Sustainable Leadership
Key performance drives	Professional development	I highly value emotionally committed staff	In my opinion, financial rewards suffice as motivators; therefore, I do not expect emotional commitment from the staff.
	Innovative leadership	In my opinion, strategic innovation is especially important and therefore should be encouraged at all levels of the organization.	In my opinion, innovation is risky and therefore should only be managed by managers.
		In my opinion, quality ought to be embedded within the culture of the business.	In my opinion, quality may only be achieved through mechanisms of control.

The survey results demonstrated that there is a clear need for companies in the logistics sector to continue working toward achieving sustainable business practices.

In Table 4, in the "Professional Development" subcategory, continuous training and development of employees did not seem to be a priority for companies (50.4% of the interviewees completely disagreed that there was such a need). This seems to contradict the current notion that businesses and corporations from all over the world should be people-centered and people should therefore be the core of all organizational activities [40,41]. The latter creates long-term value not only for employees, but also consumers, among a realm of different stakeholders [42].

The above findings were surprising, especially in the times we live in, when there are companies that are considerably advanced in this regard and even allow the workers to select the courses and training that they consider most adequate for them (i.e., thereby further contributing towards their training and personal development).

With respect to the issue of promotions, the internal promotion of employees did not appear to be commonplace (66.7% of the interviewees completely disagreed that internal promotions were performed on a frequent basis), even though it is a recommended practice that contributes to employee development and nurtures the commitment between the employee and the company.

Many of the female managers understood that, in general, there seemed to be a tendency for companies to hire people from outside the organization. However, for our future research, it will be interesting to study in further depth the reason why companies behave in this manner; whether it is a practice that is embedded in the company's culture (i.e., instead of encouraging internal promotions) or whether the decision to hire externally

is due to the simple fact that the company lacks the personnel with the skills and abilities that are needed for a specific job position.

Most respondents recognized and accepted the existence of change management; 40% of them considered that change is an evolving process, and more than 50% defined it as something fast, volatile, and even something that could occur spontaneously.

Moreover, for the personnel management cost section, a good part of the respondents did not agree with the possibility of there being a high rate of employee turnover at all levels of the organization. Responding to the question "for me, long job tenure is very important at all levels", 33.3% of the respondents answered with a "completely disagree", and 37.5% with a "disagree", while a quarter of interviewees were neutral with regard to this question. Staff turnover can be costly for companies, and therefore it would be ideal to keep the latter to a minimum. Therefore, organizational leaders must properly guide staff through changes by maintaining their commitment and engagement toward the organization [43,44]. Furthermore, greater organizational effectiveness may be achieved through the alignment of human capital with corporate goals and objectives [17,45].

When presented with the explicit question "I accept high staff turnover", 25% of respondents agreed and 12.5% completely agreed, which was a surprising result, as one would have expected the exact opposite.

The female managers interviewed prioritized long-term over short-term business objectives, not giving priority to the company's profits above all else. They considered that effective company management was a strategic tool that ensures the achievement of future objectives.

The well-being of employees was found not to be the companies' main concern, as affirmed by all interviewees. Furthermore, most respondents considered that employees were interchangeable in their company. They also felt that it was a cost that was important when analyzing the company's accounts.

With respect to the Innovative Leadership subcategory, e, less than 50% of female managers surveyed affirmed that they considered the CEO to be a team worker. For more than 70% of the respondents, the CEO was referred to as a person who is actively in charge of the organization's decision making.

In this respect, a low percentage of the female managers interviewed believed that people should work with maximum independence from others to increase their objectives, not limiting themselves to obeying their managers. Therefore, most interviewees fully agreed that the CEOs were in charge of the decision making and that they determined everything that must be done.

The issue of the correct management of matters of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is becoming increasingly important in every company. With regards to this section of our study, our research led us to the following conclusions.

With regards to the company's CSR, there is still a lot of work to be done in this area, since almost 70% of the female interviewees said that environmental protection was not a priority except when it coincided with the company's financial and commercial interests. The respondents, however, did reject the notion that the environment only existed for it to be exploited to benefit the company and increase its profits.

Moreover, the interviewees agreed that there was a general lack of commitment from the company's perspective towards people and community, even though the participation and collaboration of both stakeholders are necessary to improve and better develop the business. However, respondents did reject the assumption that both people and community should be exploited to increase the business' profits. They did, however, recognize that shareholders were very important to the business in such a way that the concern for their satisfaction was higher than the concern for the rest of the people and community.

In relation to the higher-level practices category, all matters related to innovative leadership were found to be important. However, from the survey responses, knowledge sharing within the organization was not considered relevant, and knowledge was considered to be the domain of only a few, effectively on a "need-to-know" basis. In fact, the

survey results seemed to highlight a belief among the interviewees that business decision making should be carried out mainly by the management of the company.

In this sense, most respondents tended to believe that most staff were not able to manage themselves. However, they also considered that it was not the manager's job to do so either. In this regard, the results led to unclear conclusions with respect to this point.

In addition, the results affirmed that in the company, there was no need to have a high degree of trust among the employees, and that consequently, a system for controlling and monitoring them had to be put into place to compensate for the existing low trust levels.

Surprisingly enough, the respondents considered that it was not necessary to promote teamwork, Furthermore, there was general agreement that teamwork needed to be limited and mainly handled by the manager of the company.

On the other hand, respondents seemed to believe that an open and transparent company culture does not seem to promote the fulfillment of the company's commercial objectives, and they rejected the possibility that such a company culture should be shared and promoted. For them, the short-term company's objectives were a priority.

With regards to the key performance drivers category, it was observed that 83.3% of the personnel were committed to the company. Although it is not specified how, the respondents did seem to indicate that strategic innovation was important and should be encouraged at all levels of the organization.

In this sense, we must refer to Herzberg's theory on extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors, which describes the elements that influence human behavior, both in the professional and personal contexts [46]. Thus, factors such as salary, working conditions, and safety are extrinsic motivational factors, since they come from outside of one's personal scope of influence and we therefore have less control over them. In fact, when analyzing these factors in depth, it becomes clear that they are elements that by themselves do not help the worker become more motivated. However, curiously enough, should these factors not be managed correctly, they have the potential to have a considerable impact and consequently demotivate the members of staff. Intrinsic motivational factors, however, are specific tasks that offer a possibility for personal growth. Effective management of these factors makes a significant difference and encourages a feeling of motivation for the worker.

Eighty percent of the respondents completely disagreed with the statement "in my opinion, strategic innovation is especially important and therefore should be encouraged at all levels of the organization". With respect to quality management, 70% of respondents associated quality not so much with the organization's culture, but rather with the leader's management.

This research took as its framework Avery and Bergsteiner's (2011) honeybee and locust sustainable leadership model. The female managers interviewed from the logistics seemed to indicate that in the companies where they worked, sustainable leadership was not being implemented at its fullest. From their responses, for example, CSR did not seem to be a priority, leaving the "people" perspective in second place in the organization's strategic priority list. According to Avery and Bergsteiner (2011), organizations that are "100" percent "pure" in nature as regards the honeybee and locust leadership elements are rare to find. According to both authors, we are most likely to find a mixture of both types of leadership elements, arguing that this trend is often historic or may reflect a personal preference of the organization's founder [23].

The results of this study are aligned with Kalkavan's (2015) study, which aimed to evaluate the level of sustainable leadership in the Turkish insurance industry. Kalkavan also used Avery and Bergsteiner's sustainable leadership model as a framework for her study. Her study results showed that despite the existence of significant leadership elements among managers of the Turkish insurance industry, sustainable leadership skills fell short of expectations. This is very much aligned with the results from this study where it was shown from the perspective of the female managers from the Spanish logistics sector that the leadership that was being implemented in their sector was a mixture of the

two diametrically opposed bee and locust leadership philosophies [15]. Kalkavan's study results indicated that there was a need for improvement to help managers to improve their skills and consequently change their way of managing in a positive way. Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) argue that changes in the present leadership philosophy may happen because of dramatic events such as mergers and acquisitions or the taking on of additional major shareholders. Furthermore, global pressures due to changes in the financial markets or political situations may also promote this form of change.

Sustainable leadership according to Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) goes beyond just complying with the three pillars of sustainability, which are financial, social, and environmental. Theoretically, a honeybee approach would be ideal. In honeybee organizations, the participation of stakeholders such as customers, employees, and suppliers is key. In this context, managers should act as stewards for future generations and "plan for the long term and protect the firm's reputation through implementation of ethical practices (caring for the environment and local communities)" [23] (p. 31). From this study's findings, in the Spanish logistics industry, there is still a long way to go, and from the authors' perspective, the status quo needs to be improved considerably.

Furthermore, according to Tuppen and Porrit [25], sustainable leadership should also consider equity, environmental justice, intergenerational equity, and governance. In line with this, according to Kouzes and Posner, a sustainable leader should also be concerned with caring for the well-being of humanity and all forms of life. With respect to this point, the respondents said that there was considerable work to be done still as regards the companies' corporate social responsibility strategy. Almost 70% of female managers interviewed said that environmental protection was not a priority for the different companies except when the latter was aligned with the organization's financial and commercial interests. The interviewees agreed that there was a general lack of commitment towards people in general and the community. They admitted that both stakeholders were needed to improve the business. Moreover, they said that there was more concern for shareholders than for people and the community.

Although over the years, the participation of women in the workforce has increased considerably, at present, women have scarce representation in management positions both in the private and public sectors. In Spain, the percentage of women in senior positions reached 20% in 2016. In the logistics sector, this figure stands at circa 8%. The profile of the female managers interviewed was very varied, ranging from the food sector to the IT sector. Even though we cannot deny that the role of women in leadership positions in the corporate world is becoming increasingly prominent over time, there remains a long way to go. The increasing presence of women in leadership has its benefits, many of which are aligned with those of the implementation of sustainable leadership strategies. Among the benefits to highlight are enhanced corporate governance, better strategies, and corporate performance through focusing more on accountability and ethical behavior [47].

At present, there are still several obstacles that seem to hinder women's professional development, such as reconciling personal and professional obligations and the fact that many organizations are still male-biased making women's professional progression difficult [34]. The pressure that women face to conform to an organization's executive leadership culture is tremendous [48]. Over time, the logistics sector has been seen as the domain of such stereotypically beefy activities as driving heavy trucks and heavy lifting and handling work in warehouses, but the growth of e-commerce, the automation of warehousing, and the advent of the digital transformation in recent years have created more and new opportunities for women in the logistics industry.

This study is very much aligned with the fifth Sustainable Development Goal, which is "to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" [49]. In this respect, our study researches the situation of female managers in the logistics sector and more specifically evaluates the leadership style in which companies endeavor their activity, (1) the way in which leadership is carried out by them, and (2) the level of sustainable

leadership that is aligned with the compliance of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals described above.

6. Conclusions

The main objective of this research was to analyze how female managers in the logistics sector perceived leadership in the companies where they work, and how this leadership fit within Avery and Bergsteiner's honeybee and locust sustainable leadership model. A qualitative study was performed through a questionnaire composed of 52 questions. Twenty-four middle and top managers of the logistics sector participated in our study. This sample size of 24 was considered to be adequate considering that the sample unit (i.e., the female managers of the logistics sector) entails a fairly select target group, as only 8% of the managers in this sector are women.

The study results demonstrated that leadership in the Spanish logistics industry was a mixture of honeybee and locust leadership elements. This context is quite common as it is very difficult to find an organization that is 100 percent consistent with either honeybee or locust leadership elements.

Respondents felt the well-being of employees to be a priority. A total of 83.3% of respondents said that they were committed to the company. Most respondents felt that employees were interchangeable and therefore not really valued or appreciated as individuals in the organization. Furthermore, they admitted that employee training and development did not appear to be a priority for companies. In this respect, less than 50% of the female managers surveyed affirmed that the CEO was a team member. According to Kouzes and Posner [28], good leaders should be honest, forward-looking, competent, inspiring, and intelligent, in addition to having the ability to be flexible and adapt to the specific context of the organization. Respondents, however, agreed that organizations did not seem to be very open as regards knowledge sharing.

Although the study was considerably effective in data gathering, considering the limited number of middle and top female managers that exist in the Spanish logistics industry, it did have its limitations, such as:

- The fact that the logistics industry in Spain is mainly a male-dominated industry, thus limiting the study sample number. As was mentioned in the introduction of this manuscript, less than 10% of managerial positions in the logistics industry are occupied by women.
- The pandemic situation that we are currently facing was also a limitation in this study. Ideally, the authors would have preferred to carry out live interviews; however, at the time that the empirical study was carried out, we were in the middle of the pandemic, and data collection in this respect proved to be impossible.

As regards future research, the authors would like to suggest the following:

- Carrying out this same study but extending the sample to include also male managers of the logistics industry in Spain.
- A similar study could also be carried out in different geographical locations, and in this manner, a benchmarking exercise could be performed with this present study.
- The same study could be repeated on a long-term basis to undertake a longitudinal study to be able to observe different trends in the development of sustainable leadership over time.

To conclude, the results from this study seem to indicate that the logistics industry still has a considerable way to go with regard to the implementation of sustainable leadership. The study itself is innovative in the sense that sustainable leadership and female leadership are not often combined in one article, nor is it common to apply this analysis to a sector that is male-dominated, as is the case of the logistics industry.

The authors understand, however, that progress is being made gradually toward a sustainable type of leadership in companies of the logistics sector in Spain. However, improvements still need to be made in the different aspects included in these conclusions.

Nonetheless, there are no doubts that work will continue in this direction, given that many companies are becoming more aware of the favorable impact that the implementation of sustainable leadership practices can have on their income statement. Sustainability with time has become more than a simple trend in the corporate world. With time, it has come to be a necessity, a must-have in any company [50].

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