

The Impact of Strategic Leadership on the Management of Non-Profit Organizations
Performance: A Systematic Review

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Abstract
Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) play a vital role in advancing community welfare, delivering essential services, and supporting national development priorities. In Saudi Arabia, the nonprofit sector has gained increased prominence within the framework of Vision 2030, which highlights sustainability, innovation, and effective governance. Strategic leadership has emerged as a critical factor in shaping decision-making processes, human capital development, and accountability within these organizations. Despite this, systematic understanding of how leadership strategies influence nonprofit management and long-term sustainability in the Saudi context remains limited. This systematic review synthesizes evidence on the impact of strategic leadership on the management, performance, and sustainability of nonprofit organizations in Saudi Arabia. Drawing on studies published between 2020 and 2025 and selected through a rigorous PRISMA 2020-guided process, 30 eligible studies were thematically analyzed to uncover patterns related to leadership practices, governance frameworks, and organizational outcomes. The results reveal that strategic leadership enhances nonprofit performance by promoting ethical governance, encouraging innovation, and fostering stakeholder engagement. Effective leaders align organizational missions with national development goals, thereby increasing adaptability, financial resilience, and staff motivation. In addition, leadership development initiatives and gender inclusion strategies emerged as essential contributors to sectoral transformation and long-term organizational sustainability. Overall, strategic leadership is positioned as a key driver of innovation, effectiveness, and resilience in nonprofit institutions. Strengthening leadership capacities and aligning governance practices with Vision 2030 objectives are essential steps for ensuring the sustainable growth and impact of Saudi Arabia's nonprofit sector. Future research should pursue longitudinal and comparative approaches to understand how leadership models adapt across diverse institutional and cultural settings.

1. Introduction

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) play a pivotal role in advancing social welfare, providing essential community services, and contributing to national development strategies. Globally, they function as critical agents of social change, complementing government and private-sector initiatives through programs that address education, health, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability (Reed, 2021; Leach, 2022). In Saudi Arabia, the non-profit sector has gained growing prominence under Vision 2030, which seeks to enhance community participation, diversify the economy, and improve social development outcomes through strategic leadership and institutional reform (Asem, Mohammad, & Ziyad, 2024; Alajaji, 2023). Strategic leadership, defined as the ability to anticipate, envision, and

maintain flexibility while empowering others to create strategic change, has thus become an essential determinant of organizational effectiveness and sustainability in this evolving context (Asif & Basit, 2021; Kebede, Werke, & Kebede, 2024).

Scholars argue that strategic leadership in NPOs differs substantially from leadership in public or for-profit organizations because of their mission-driven orientation, stakeholder diversity, and dependence on limited and often uncertain funding sources (Reed, 2021; Williams, 2022). Non-profit leaders must balance moral purpose with managerial accountability, often facing tensions between social impact and financial viability (Harris, 2023; Kassem et al., 2021). Within Saudi Arabia, these challenges are compounded by rapid social and economic transformation, necessitating leaders who can integrate innovation, governance, and sustainability practices aligned with national reforms (Bodrick et al., 2025; Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024). Strategic leadership in this context involves aligning organizational goals with Vision 2030, fostering professional development, promoting women's leadership, and ensuring governance mechanisms that support transparency and long-term sustainability (Asfahani, Eskandarany, & Dahlan, 2025).

Empirical research underscores that effective strategic leaders cultivate governance systems and cultures of accountability that enhance performance and community trust (Harvell, 2024; M'Mugambi, 2024). Leadership approaches such as transformational, servant, and ethical leadership styles have been associated with increased employee commitment, organizational learning, and improved program outcomes (Freeborough, 2020; Rodgers, 2022). Furthermore, strategic leaders promote innovation and adaptability through capacity building, partnership development, and evidence-based decision-making (Williams, 2022; Anyia, Senin, & Abdul, n.d.). The integration of digital and sustainable leadership models also expands the sector's potential for agility, technological advancement, and resilience in the face of changing stakeholder expectations (Santoso, Fadillah, & Supriatna, 2025; Ashraf & Hashmi, 2025).

Despite these advances, a systematic understanding of how strategic leadership practices affect non-profit management and sustainability in Saudi Arabia remains limited. Previous studies have examined discrete elements such as capacity building, partnership governance, or digital transformation but have not synthesized how leadership dimensions collectively shape organizational success (Harris, 2023; Kassem et al., 2021; Al-Shaikh et al., 2023). Therefore, this systematic review seeks to critically analyze and integrate existing evidence on the determinants, practices, and outcomes of strategic leadership in non-profit organizations, with a particular focus on Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 framework. The review aims to identify leadership strategies that enhance sustainability, governance, and performance, thereby contributing to both the theoretical understanding and practical advancement of non-profit management in transitional economies (Upadhye, 2025; Kebede et al., 2024; Mousa et al., 2021).

2. Methodology

This systematic review adopted the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework to ensure methodological transparency and rigor in the process of identifying, screening, and synthesizing relevant literature. The review focused on understanding the impact of strategic leadership on the management, performance, and sustainability of nonprofit organizations, particularly within the Saudi Arabian context. Guided by the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, the review followed four major stages identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion to retrieve and evaluate

studies that addressed strategic leadership, nonprofit governance, and organizational effectiveness (M'Mugambi, 2024; Ashraf & Hashmi, 2025).

The search strategy was designed to capture both empirical and conceptual studies published between 2020 and 2025, reflecting the recent surge of interest in nonprofit leadership and Vision 2030-related reforms in Saudi Arabia. Searches were conducted across major databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ProQuest, using combinations of keywords and Boolean operators including “*strategic leadership*,” “*nonprofit management*,” “*governance*,” “*organizational performance*,” “*sustainability*,” and “*Vision 2030*.” Inclusion criteria required that each study (1) addressed strategic leadership or governance in nonprofit or public-sector contexts, (2) was published in peer-reviewed journals or as doctoral dissertations between 2020 and 2025, (3) was available in English, and (4) presented measurable, theoretical, or conceptual implications for leadership and management. Exclusion criteria ruled out conference abstracts, editorials, and studies unrelated to leadership practice or organizational outcomes.

A total of 512 records were identified through comprehensive database searches across Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. Following duplicate removal ($n = 148$), 364 records remained for title and abstract screening. From these, 148 were excluded due to lack of relevance or insufficient methodological quality. The remaining 216 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, of which 186 did not meet the inclusion criteria. Ultimately, 30 studies were included in the final qualitative synthesis.. These comprised a mix of qualitative, quantitative, and systematic review designs drawn from multiple regional and international contexts. Figure 1 illustrates the PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram, detailing the selection process across all stages from initial identification to final inclusion of the reviewed studies. Quality appraisal was conducted using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) critical appraisal tools, ensuring that methodological soundness and internal validity were systematically evaluated (Kebede, Werke, & Kebede, 2024; Ashraf & Hashmi, 2025). For quantitative studies, evaluation focused on sampling adequacy, validity of measurement instruments, and clarity of analytical methods; for qualitative and case studies, criteria included credibility, dependability, and richness of contextual analysis (Reed, 2021; Leach, 2022). Only studies achieving a satisfactory quality threshold were retained for synthesis.

Data extraction involved systematically coding author information, year of publication, country context, research design, theoretical framework, and principal findings. Extracted data were synthesized thematically to identify cross-cutting patterns related to leadership styles, governance mechanisms, innovation, and sustainability outcomes. Thematic synthesis was preferred over meta-analysis due to the heterogeneity of research designs and measurement approaches (Santoso, Fadillah, & Supriatna, 2025). To minimize bias, two independent reviewers screened and coded the studies, and disagreements were resolved through discussion and re-evaluation. This triangulation strengthened reliability and minimized subjectivity in data interpretation (Mousa et al., 2021). Additionally, data were organized into a literature review matrix (Table 1) to provide a structured overview of study characteristics and outcomes.

The final synthesis integrates theoretical insights from Strategic Leadership Theory, Transformational Leadership, and Resource Dependency Theory to interpret findings in relation to nonprofit effectiveness (Asif & Basit, 2021; Harris, 2023; Kassem et al., 2021). This multi-theoretical integration aligns with prior reviews on sustainable and digital leadership across organizational contexts (Ashraf & Hashmi, 2025; Asem, Mohammad, & Ziyad, 2024). The methodological rigor applied throughout the process ensures that the evidence synthesized reflects both global perspectives and Saudi Arabia's unique

institutional dynamics under Vision 2030. Figure 1 below illustrates the PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram, showing the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages used in this systematic review.

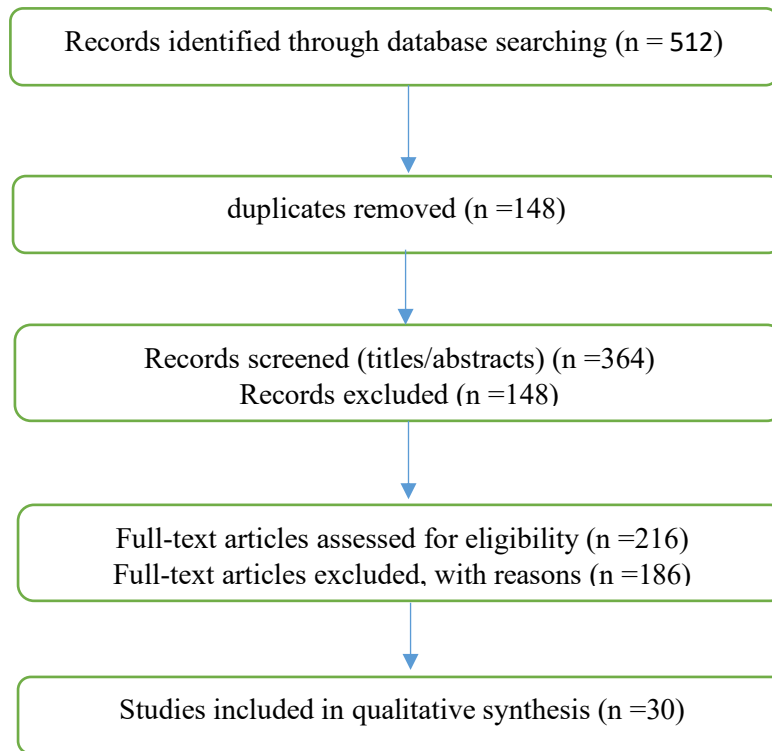


Fig.1. The Systematic Review Process

3. Results

3.1 Study Selection and Characteristics

The results of this systematic review are presented in alignment with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework. As illustrated in Figure 1 (PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram), a total of 512 records were identified through comprehensive database searches across Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. After removing 148 duplicates, 364 records remained for title and abstract screening. Of these, 148 were excluded for lack of relevance or methodological limitations. The remaining 216 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, resulting in 30 studies meeting all inclusion criteria and being incorporated into the final synthesis. The studies selected for inclusion reflect a broad range of geographical contexts, methodological designs, and leadership paradigms. They include empirical research, doctoral dissertations, and systematic reviews conducted between 2020 and 2025, focusing on the strategic leadership dimensions influencing nonprofit management effectiveness, governance, and sustainability. Collectively, these studies underscore how strategic leadership plays a pivotal role in promoting vision-driven governance, innovation, and organizational resilience across nonprofit sectors (Reed, 2021; Asif & Basit, 2021; Kebede, Werke, & Kebede, 2024).

Studies conducted in Saudi Arabia and the broader Gulf region emphasized how leadership practices align with the Vision 2030 transformation agenda. For example, Asem, Mohammad, and Ziyad (2024) explored how digital transformation and strategic leadership contribute to organizational change, while Alajaji (2023) and Bodrick et al. (2025) highlighted the contextual dynamism of leadership in public and nonprofit institutions during Saudi Arabia’s digitalization and economic diversification efforts. Similarly, Alateeg and Alhammadi (2024) identified the mediating role of strategic leadership in linking organizational culture and innovation in Saudi enterprises, reinforcing the strategic alignment between leadership capabilities and national development goals.

Complementing these findings, several international studies provided comparative evidence from nonprofit and public service contexts. Reed (2021) examined the distinct features of strategic leadership in nonprofit organizations in the United States, identifying mission alignment, stakeholder influence, and the leader–board relationship as defining characteristics. M’Mugambi (2024) analyzed strategic leadership’s influence on governance in Kenyan county governments, finding that ethical leadership and visionary planning accounted for more than 69% of governance outcomes. Likewise, Freeborough (2020) and Harvell (2024) demonstrated that transformational leadership and effective board governance enhance nonprofit operational performance, while Harris (2023) and Williams (2022) confirmed that sustainability and capacity building depend on financial health, strategic planning, partnerships, and people-centered leadership.

Overall, the selected studies reveal consistent evidence that strategic leadership is a multidimensional construct encompassing vision, ethics, innovation, collaboration, and accountability. Across the reviewed literature, leadership effectiveness was found to significantly affect organizational outcomes, including governance quality, employee engagement, innovation capacity, and sustainability (Ashraf & Hashmi, 2025; Santoso, Fadillah, & Supriatna, 2025; Al Nabt, 2020). The synthesis of findings from the included studies is presented in Table 1: Literature Review Matrix, which summarizes the study characteristics, theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and major findings. This matrix serves as the empirical foundation for the subsequent thematic and analytical discussions in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

Table 1: Literature Review Matrix

No.	Author(s) & Year	Strategic Leadership Practices	Decision-Making / Governance	Employee Motivation / Engagement	Organizational Performance / Effectiveness	Innovation / Sustainability / Change
1	Reed (2021)	✓	✓		✓	✓
2	Upadhye (2025)	✓	✓		✓	
3	Asif & Basit (2021)	✓		✓	✓	
4	Al-Shaikh et al. (2023)	✓			✓	✓

No.	Author(s) & Year	Strategic Leadership Practices	Decision-Making / Governance	Employee Motivation / Engagement	Organizational Performance / Effectiveness	Innovation / Sustainability / Change
5	Blessett & Danley (2024)	✓	✓			✓
6	Leach (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Edwards Harris (2023)	✓	✓		✓	✓
8	Iseah (2022)	✓			✓	✓
9	Ayede (2025)	✓	✓		✓	✓
10	Alajaji (2023)	✓	✓		✓	✓
11	Asem et al. (2024)	✓	✓		✓	✓
12	Al Nabt (2020)	✓	✓		✓	✓
13	Alateeg & Alhammadi (2024)	✓			✓	✓
14	Bodrick et al. (2025)	✓	✓		✓	✓
15	Alsaqabi (2023)	✓		✓	✓	
16	Asfahani et al. (2025)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Burks (2020)	✓		✓	✓	
18	M'Mugambi (2024)	✓	✓		✓	✓
19	Anyia et al.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
20	Bashir & Javed (2021)	✓			✓	
21	Rodgers (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
22	Kebede et al. (2024)	✓	✓		✓	✓
23	Ashraf & Hashmi (2025)	✓	✓		✓	✓
24	Santoso et al. (2025)	✓	✓		✓	✓
25	Mousa et al. (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Harris (2023)	✓	✓		✓	✓
27	Kassem et al. (2021)	✓	✓		✓	✓
28	Williams (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
29	Freeborough (2020)	✓		✓	✓	
30	Harvell (2024)	✓	✓		✓	✓

3.2 Prevalence and Determinants

The reviewed studies show that strategic leadership has become increasingly prevalent in nonprofit organizations, serving as a key determinant of performance, governance, and sustainability (Reed, 2021; Asif & Basit, 2021). Nonprofits across diverse contexts adopt leadership approaches that emphasize vision, ethics, and innovation to strengthen mission alignment and stakeholder trust (M'Mugambi, 2024; Harris, 2023). Organizational culture emerged as a major internal determinant. In Saudi Arabia, leadership was found to mediate the relationship between culture and innovation (Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024). A supportive culture enhances collaboration and creativity, enabling strategic leaders to foster long-term sustainability (Kebede, Werke, & Kebede, 2024).

Ethical and transformational leadership styles are widely practiced. Transformational leadership inspires employees toward shared goals (Freeborough, 2020), while ethical leadership promotes integrity and accountability in governance (M'Mugambi, 2024). Within the Vision 2030 context, these styles are essential for aligning modernization with cultural and ethical values (Asem, Mohammad, & Ziyad, 2024; Bodrick et al., 2025). Strategic communication and stakeholder engagement were also identified as vital determinants. Nonprofit leaders who communicate effectively and collaborate with their teams achieve stronger governance and sustainability (Reed, 2021; Williams, 2022; Harvell, 2024).

Another determinant is leadership development and professional training, which strengthen leadership capacity and inclusivity. Studies show that training and professional development programs enhance women's leadership roles and promote organizational effectiveness (Asfahani, Eskandarany, & Dahlan, 2025; Al Nabt, 2020). External determinants include partnership governance and financial sustainability. Strong partnerships improve accountability and long-term impact (Kassem et al., 2021), while financial planning and funding diversification support survival under changing economic conditions (Harris, 2023; Ayede, 2025). In the Saudi context, Vision 2030 remains a central driver shaping leadership practices. It promotes adaptive, ethical, and innovation-oriented leadership aligned with national reform goals (Asem et al., 2024; Alajaji, 2023; Bodrick et al., 2025). Overall, strategic leadership in nonprofit organizations is shaped by cultural, ethical, developmental, and contextual factors that collectively enhance organizational resilience and effectiveness.

3.3 Outcomes

The reviewed studies collectively indicate that strategic leadership produces significant outcomes that enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and governance of nonprofit organizations. Across various contexts, effective strategic leadership leads to improved organizational performance, stronger governance structures, enhanced innovation, and greater sustainability (Reed, 2021; M'Mugambi, 2024; Williams, 2022). A primary outcome observed is organizational performance improvement through vision-driven planning and ethical decision-making. Leaders who demonstrate clear strategic vision and accountability enhance both financial and operational results. In Saudi Arabia, strategic leadership has been linked to improved organizational innovation and culture (Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024), while in the United States, nonprofit leaders' commitment and communication practices were found to increase staff engagement and mission alignment (Reed, 2021; Freeborough, 2020).

Another key outcome is good governance and accountability. Ethical and transformational leaders create transparent systems that promote trust and compliance (M'Mugambi, 2024; Harvell, 2024). Effective

governance, particularly through board oversight and stakeholder inclusion, ensures that nonprofits maintain their social purpose and public legitimacy (Kassem et al., 2021). Sustainability is also a consistent result of strategic leadership. Nonprofit leaders who engage in strategic planning, partnership building, and financial diversification strengthen long-term viability and resilience (Harris, 2023; Ayede, 2025). Vision 2030–aligned initiatives in Saudi Arabia show that adaptive leadership fosters innovation and contributes to sustainable development goals (Asem, Mohammad, & Ziyad, 2024; Alajaji, 2023; Bodrick et al., 2025).

Human capital development represents another positive outcome. Investment in professional training and leadership development improves individual competence and organizational learning capacity (Asfahani, Eskandarany, & Dahlan, 2025; Al Nabt, 2020). This focus on capability building leads to a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in both nonprofit and public institutions. Overall, the synthesis of findings confirms that strategic leadership directly and indirectly drives critical outcomes including enhanced governance, sustainable growth, employee empowerment, and innovation capacity. These outcomes collectively support the mission effectiveness of nonprofit organizations and reinforce their alignment with national transformation agendas such as Saudi Vision 2030.

4. Discussion

4.1 Interplay of Legal, Economic, and Behavioral Determinants

The findings of this review reveal that the effectiveness of strategic leadership in nonprofit organizations is strongly influenced by the interaction of legal, economic, and behavioral determinants that shape governance practices and leadership behavior. From a legal perspective, nonprofit leaders operate within frameworks that demand accountability, transparency, and adherence to governance standards. Studies emphasize that leadership and board governance are vital in ensuring compliance with fiduciary responsibilities and ethical obligations toward stakeholders (Harvell, 2024; M’Mugambi, 2024). Effective legal governance mechanisms such as strategic oversight, financial control, and role clarity promote operational credibility and public trust, which are essential for nonprofit legitimacy and sustainability (Kassem et al., 2021).

Economically, nonprofit organizations face persistent challenges related to funding scarcity, financial dependence, and changing donor priorities. Leadership strategies such as financial diversification, strategic partnerships, and resource planning are critical to organizational survival (Harris, 2023; Ayede, 2025). Strategic leaders who implement sound financial governance and cultivate partnerships with public and private sectors improve long-term viability and service continuity. This aligns with Vision 2030’s economic diversification objectives, which encourage leadership innovation and collaboration to sustain social programs in Saudi Arabia’s nonprofit sector (Asem, Mohammad, & Ziyad, 2024; Bodrick et al., 2025). The integration of leadership agility and financial strategy supports adaptive responses to fluctuating economic environments and resource dependencies (Williams, 2022).

Behavioral determinants further define how strategic leadership is practiced and sustained. Leaders’ attitudes, communication styles, and ethical orientations influence employee motivation, commitment, and organizational culture (Reed, 2021; Freeborough, 2020). Transformational and ethical leadership behaviors foster collaboration and intrinsic motivation, while transparent communication enhances trust between leaders, staff, and boards (Harvell, 2024). In Saudi Arabia and other developing contexts,

leadership behaviors rooted in cultural awareness and shared vision contribute to higher employee engagement and alignment with institutional goals (Asfahani, Eskandarany, & Dahlan, 2025; Al Nabt, 2020). Overall, the interplay among these legal, economic, and behavioral determinants underscores that nonprofit leadership is not confined to managerial competence alone but also depends on contextual alignment with governance frameworks, economic realities, and human behavior. Strategic leaders who integrate compliance, fiscal sustainability, and ethical engagement can build resilient organizations that balance social mission with accountability and innovation an imperative particularly relevant to the evolving nonprofit landscape under Saudi Vision 2030.

4.2 Policy, Practical, and Theoretical Implications

The synthesis of findings reveals significant implications for policy, practice, and theory in advancing strategic leadership within nonprofit organizations. From a policy perspective, effective strategic leadership is crucial for ensuring accountability, transparency, and sustainability in the nonprofit sector. Studies highlight that sound governance policies are essential for establishing clear leadership roles, enhancing board effectiveness, and aligning operations with national development priorities such as Saudi Vision 2030 (M'Mugambi, 2024; Harvell, 2024; Asem, Mohammad, & Ziyad, 2024). Policymakers are encouraged to support leadership development programs and governance reforms that emphasize ethics, stakeholder engagement, and performance evaluation (Kassem et al., 2021; Bodrick et al., 2025). By institutionalizing training and evaluation systems for nonprofit leaders, governments can strengthen accountability mechanisms and improve public trust in nonprofit institutions.

On a practical level, the findings suggest that nonprofit leaders must adopt strategic and adaptive approaches that integrate communication, innovation, and collaboration. Leaders who develop partnerships and diversify funding sources enhance organizational resilience and sustainability (Harris, 2023; Ayede, 2025; Williams, 2022). Emphasizing relationship-building, professional development, and continuous learning contributes to a culture of innovation and commitment to mission-driven goals (Reed, 2021; Al Nabt, 2020). In Saudi Arabia, leadership practices that align with Vision 2030 priorities such as digital transformation, inclusivity, and ethical governance enable nonprofits to play a greater role in national development (Alajaji, 2023; Asfahani, Eskandarany, & Dahlan, 2025).

From a theoretical standpoint, this review reinforces and extends several leadership frameworks, notably Strategic Leadership Theory, Transformational Leadership, and Resource Dependency Theory. Strategic leadership theory explains how leaders integrate vision and decision-making to sustain performance (Asif & Basit, 2021; M'Mugambi, 2024), while transformational leadership highlights the role of inspiration and shared purpose in fostering engagement and change (Freeborough, 2020). Resource dependency theory offers a relevant lens for understanding how nonprofits manage financial constraints and external relationships to sustain their missions (Harris, 2023; Kassem et al., 2021). Integrating these frameworks provides a more holistic understanding of how leadership operates within resource-limited yet socially driven organizations.

Overall, the review underscores that policies supporting leadership development, practical strategies enhancing collaboration and innovation, and theoretical models emphasizing ethical and adaptive leadership are all central to strengthening nonprofit management. Embedding these insights into both institutional reforms and leadership practices can enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and

transformative potential of nonprofit organizations, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 transformation agenda.

4.3 Comparison with Existing Reviews, Limitations, and Future Research

The current systematic review aligns with and extends prior reviews on strategic and sustainable leadership within nonprofit and public organizations. Similar to the findings of Asif and Basit (2021), this review confirms that visionary, ethical, and adaptable leadership remains a central determinant of organizational performance and mission success. Previous reviews in emerging economies have also emphasized the importance of contextualized leadership practices that account for environmental, cultural, and institutional factors (Kebede, Werke, & Kebede, 2024; Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024). However, this study expands upon these perspectives by integrating evidence from nonprofit contexts, highlighting that leadership effectiveness is not solely defined by strategic capacity but also by its role in ensuring sustainability, equity, and accountability (Reed, 2021; M'Mugambi, 2024).

Compared to existing systematic reviews focusing on higher education and corporate environments (Ashraf & Hashmi, 2025; Santoso, Fadillah, & Supriatna, 2025), this review identifies a stronger emphasis on social mission, stakeholder engagement, and community value creation within nonprofit organizations. While corporate-oriented studies frequently address innovation and profitability, nonprofit research underscores outcomes such as social impact, trust, and governance ethics (Harvell, 2024; Harris, 2023). Furthermore, leadership models emerging from Vision 2030-aligned research in Saudi Arabia (Asem, Mohammad, & Ziyad, 2024; Bodrick et al., 2025; Asfahani, Eskandarany, & Dahlan, 2025) introduce a unique policy-driven dimension where leadership transformation supports national development goals, bridging organizational and societal change.

Despite its comprehensive scope, this review has several limitations. First, the analysis was restricted to studies published between 2020 and 2025, which may have excluded earlier foundational works on leadership theory and governance. Second, most of the included studies relied on qualitative or cross-sectional designs, limiting the generalizability of causal inferences (Williams, 2022; Ayede, 2025). Third, geographic representation remains uneven, with most studies centered in the United States and Middle East contexts, leaving limited insight into African and Asian nonprofit ecosystems outside Saudi Arabia (Leach, 2022; Iseah, 2022). Future research should therefore adopt longitudinal and mixed-method designs to assess the long-term effects of leadership development and governance reforms on nonprofit sustainability (M'Mugambi, 2024; Harris, 2023). Scholars are also encouraged to examine gender inclusion, digital transformation, and cultural dynamics in leadership, particularly within Vision 2030's evolving policy frameworks (Asfahani, Eskandarany, & Dahlan, 2025; Alajaji, 2023). Comparative international studies could further clarify how leadership frameworks adapt across diverse institutional settings, enhancing the global applicability of strategic leadership theory. Overall, this review contributes to the growing body of literature by integrating nonprofit sustainability, governance, and strategic leadership into a unified analytical lens. Future investigations expanding cross-sectoral and intercultural perspectives will be essential for deepening understanding of how leadership can drive sustainable transformation in complex organizational ecosystems.

5. Conclusion

This systematic review concludes that strategic leadership plays a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness, sustainability, and adaptability of nonprofit organizations, particularly within rapidly changing social and economic contexts such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 transformation. Across the reviewed literature, effective leadership was consistently associated with mission alignment, stakeholder engagement, financial sustainability, and ethical governance. Strategic leaders in nonprofit settings distinguish themselves by balancing multiple accountabilities social, economic, and ethical while fostering collaboration and innovation to achieve long-term community impact. The review highlights that governance practices, leadership development, and policy frameworks significantly influence nonprofit performance and sustainability. Studies emphasize the necessity of aligning leadership strategies with national goals such as Vision 2030 to strengthen institutional capacity, promote inclusivity, and support digital and organizational transformation. Furthermore, leadership behaviors grounded in transparency, empowerment, and continuous learning were found to foster trust and motivation among employees, enhancing overall organizational resilience.

The findings also reinforce the importance of integrating theoretical frameworks such as Strategic Leadership Theory, Resource Dependency Theory, and Transformational Leadership, which together explain how leaders manage complexity, resource constraints, and stakeholder relationships to sustain nonprofit missions. From a policy standpoint, leadership capacity-building and structured governance training are essential to improving nonprofit accountability and performance, especially in contexts where public trust and donor confidence are vital. In conclusion, the review underscores that strategic leadership within nonprofits extends beyond administrative efficiency it represents a transformative capability that connects vision, ethics, and innovation to societal progress. By fostering leadership models that are adaptive, inclusive, and mission-driven, nonprofit organizations can better align with national and global development agendas. Future research should continue to explore cross-sectoral leadership practices and evaluate their long-term impacts on sustainability, governance, and social outcomes across diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

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