

# Business managers, administrators, educators: Salient traits of business and academic leaders for sustainable governance within tourism-oriented systems

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## Abstract

*Leadership traits shape governance systems that sustain institutional effectiveness and long-term development across academic and tourism-linked environments. This study examines salient traits demonstrated by business managers, administrators, educators, and hospitality managers and their influence on sustainable governance. Using a qualitative design, Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 24 participants from academic institutions, tourism education institutions, and hospitality-related organizations and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings show that effective leadership is grounded in intellectual humility, integrity, emotional awareness, relational sensitivity, adaptability, disciplined decision-making, and participatory engagement. These traits strengthen trust, inclusivity, accountability, and collaborative governance. The study highlights that sustainable governance depends not only on technical competence but also on ethical, relational, and cognitive capacities that support institutional and societal sustainability.*

## Keywords

*business managers, administrators, educators, business and academic leaders, sustainable governance, tourism-oriented systems*

## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial activity among small and medium enterprises remains a central force in sustaining local economies while responding to evolving environmental and social conditions. Tourism-driven economies rely heavily on small and medium enterprises that provide services such as accommodation, food, transport, and cultural experiences, making entrepreneurial activity a critical driver of destination sustainability and competitiveness. In regional settings where resources are often constrained, business owners are compelled to align economic pursuits with broader considerations that extend beyond immediate financial returns. Tourism-related enterprises demonstrate this alignment through practices that balance visitor satisfaction, cultural preservation, and environmental protection. This alignment reflects a growing awareness that enterprise survival and growth are closely tied to ecological responsibility and community engagement. As enterprises operate within interconnected economic and social systems, their decisions increasingly reflect an integration of financial objectives with environmentally and socially informed practices Prokopenko et al. [2025].

In parallel, the adoption of environmentally conscious innovation reflects a deliberate effort to embed ecological considerations into business processes and offerings. In tourism industries, environmentally conscious innovation is evident in eco-friendly accommodations, sustainable transport solutions, and waste-reduction initiatives that enhance destination appeal while preserving natural resources. This

approach extends beyond conventional innovation by prioritizing solutions that reduce environmental impact while maintaining efficiency and competitiveness. Enterprises that pursue such innovations often engage in practices that optimize resource use, minimize waste, and respond to increasing demand for responsible products and services. This aligns with findings that businesses increasingly integrate compliance-based sustainability practices into operations [Chavez and Vicente, 2024]. Such practices are particularly relevant in tourism sectors where environmental quality directly influences visitor experience and long-term economic viability. These efforts not only enhance operational effectiveness but also strengthen credibility among stakeholders, positioning enterprises within a broader movement toward sustainable development [Singh, 2024].

Contemporary academic institutions operate as social systems where leadership conduct, institutional values, and governance structures intersect to shape collective development outcomes. Academic institutions also contribute to tourism development through education, research, and community engagement that support workforce preparation and sustainable destination planning. These environments extend beyond administrative coordination and engage broader concerns related to equity, participation, and long-term societal progress. Sustainable governance emphasizes conditions that promote inclusive growth, ethical accountability, and resilience across institutional settings. In higher education, governance practices influence not only organizational performance but also the formation of socially responsible communities guided through shared norms and coordinated action. Programs related to tourism, hospitality, and cultural heritage management reinforce the role of academic leadership in shaping sustainable tourism practices and community-based development. Educational institutions, therefore,

function as foundational spaces where leadership behavior contributes to sustainable pathways that support both human and institutional advancement. Sustainability-oriented development is reinforced when leadership practices integrate ethical responsibility, institutional commitment, and long-term sustainability goals, enabling organizations to uphold societal and environmental accountability [Leal Filho *et al.*, 2020].

Sustainable governance has gained prominence as institutions respond to increasing demands for transparency, inclusivity, and adaptability in decision processes. In tourism-related initiatives, governance practices influence how destinations are managed, how stakeholders collaborate, and how resources are allocated for long-term sustainability. Governance systems anchored in sustainability principles prioritize fairness, participatory engagement, and responsible allocation of resources, ensuring that institutional actions remain aligned with long-term developmental objectives. Sustainable governance is strengthened through experiential engagement, environmental responsibility, and balanced institutional coordination [Cutillas *et al.*, 2025; Filho *et al.*, 2023]. Leadership grounded in moral purpose strengthens collective commitment and encourages accountability, reinforcing trust across institutional communities [Jerab and Mabrouk, 2025]. These governance principles are equally essential in tourism systems where collaboration among public institutions, private enterprises, and local communities determines sustainable outcomes. These considerations position leadership traits as essential elements that shape governance environments oriented toward sustainability and social cohesion.

Despite increasing recognition of sustainable governance, inconsistencies remain in how leadership traits are expressed across academic and administrative contexts. Such inconsistencies also affect tourism-linked initiatives where misalignment between educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and governance structures may limit effective destination management and development. Variations in professional orientation often lead to differing priorities, where academic leaders emphasize intellectual engagement while administrators focus on operational efficiency. Such divergence may create gaps in communication, decision-making, and policy implementation that affect institutional stability and inclusiveness. A leadership attributes influence communication patterns and authority structures, which in turn affect how institutional members interpret expectations and engage in governance processes [Koeswayo *et al.*, 2024]. Similarly, Singh *et al.* [2024] argues that effective decision-making requires both analytical reasoning and social awareness, highlighting the need for leadership qualities that align cognitive judgment with relational understanding.

Concerns also arise when governance practices fail to reflect inclusive and participatory principles. In tourism development, limited stakeholder engagement may result

in unsustainable practices, weakened community participation, and reduced cultural and environmental integrity. Limited engagement of stakeholders, lack of transparency, and rigid administrative approaches may weaken trust and reduce collective responsibility. Ethical inconsistencies and insufficient adaptability further constrain the capacity of institutions to respond to evolving academic and societal demands. Ethical conduct fosters predictable behavior and strengthens trust, creating conditions that support cooperation and shared accountability. In addition, emotional awareness enhances leaders' ability to interpret social cues, contributing to more responsive and inclusive governance environments. These qualities are critical in tourism systems where diverse stakeholders including local communities, businesses, and visitors must be harmonized through inclusive governance approaches. These insights suggest that leadership traits extend beyond individual characteristics and shape broader institutional climates that influence sustainability outcomes.

The importance of examining leadership traits in relation to sustainable governance lies in their capacity to influence institutional coherence, social interaction, and long-term development. In tourism-oriented development, leadership traits determine how effectively institutions support sustainable destination planning, cultural preservation, and economic resilience. Traits such as integrity, adaptability, relational awareness, and intellectual openness contribute to governance systems that promote inclusivity and resilience. A forward-looking leadership establishes direction and fosters collective alignment toward shared goals, supporting institutional continuity [Stanikzai and Mittal, 2025]. Accountability mechanisms strengthen clarity in expectations and improve coordination, reinforcing governance structures that align with sustainable development principles [Almaqtari *et al.*, 2024]. These leadership traits are essential in tourism industries where long-term sustainability depends on coordinated actions among institutions and stakeholders. These contributions indicate that leadership traits are closely linked to the formation of governance environments that sustain both institutional effectiveness and social well-being. Despite the growing body of literature on leadership and sustainable governance, limited empirical studies examine how specific leadership traits are manifested across both academic and administrative roles and how these traits collectively shape governance practices in academic institutions. Existing studies often treat leadership attributes in isolation or within single professional domains, resulting in insufficient understanding of how variations in professional orientation influence participatory governance, trust-building, and institutional coherence. This limitation is further evident in tourism-related governance where effective coordination among institutions, industry actors, and communities requires integrated leadership approaches that remain underexplored in existing research. The absence of such integrated examination con-

strains a comprehensive understanding of how leadership traits function as interconnected behavioral and relational mechanisms that sustain inclusive, adaptive, and accountable governance systems across institutional and tourism-oriented environments.

Given these considerations, the present work examines salient traits demonstrated among business managers, administrators, educators, and hospitality managers, with emphasis on how these characteristics collectively shape sustainable governance across academic and tourism-linked institutions. The analysis focuses on identifying leadership traits that promote ethical consistency, participatory engagement, relational awareness, and disciplined decision-making, and how these attributes influence governance processes and institutional interaction patterns. The study further establishes the relevance of these leadership traits in tourism-oriented systems by demonstrating how they support coordinated stakeholder engagement, responsible resource management, and long-term development outcomes within educational and hospitality settings. Findings indicate that leadership traits grounded in integrity, adaptability, participatory orientation, and analytical reasoning contribute to governance environments characterized by trust, inclusivity, and shared accountability.

## 2. Literature

### 2.1 Ethical integrity in tourism-linked sustainable leadership

Ethical integrity strengthens sustainable governance by establishing predictable and principled behavior within institutional settings. Ethical leadership plays a critical role in tourism systems where responsible practices influence environmental conservation, cultural respect, and equitable economic participation among stakeholders. Consistent moral conduct fosters trust and clarifies expectations among members [Ogunfowora et al. 2021]. Ethical leadership strengthens organizational climate and guides institutional social norms [Gwamanda and Mahembe, 2023]. Ethical behavior shapes perceptions of fairness and responsibility, influencing compliance with governance systems. Morally responsible leadership encourages stakeholders to engage in prosocial conduct.

Consequently, ethical integrity contributes to a structured and accountable environment, where rules and expectations are respected, supporting overall institutional effectiveness. Moral leadership also promotes collective accountability through socially responsible decision-making. Ethical leadership is further reinforced through practices that uphold academic integrity and humanized approaches, strengthening trust and fairness in institutional systems [Chavez, 2023]. Stakeholder consideration ensures inclusive decision-making and strengthens engagement [Yusif, 2024]. Tourism governance benefits from ethical consistency as it ensures fair distribution of benefits, protection of local communities, and preservation of cul-

tural and natural assets. Sustainable governance is reinforced when ethical standards remain consistent across institutional actions and decision pathways. Long-term accountability is strengthened when leadership conduct reflects fairness, transparency, and responsibility toward all stakeholders [Beaufort et al., 2025].

### 2.2 Emotional intelligence and relational awareness in tourism governance

Emotional intelligence enhances governance by improving perception and management of social cues within institutional environments. Tourism governance involves continuous interaction among culturally diverse groups, making emotional intelligence essential in managing expectations, resolving conflicts, and fostering cooperation among stakeholders with varying interests. Leaders in tourism-oriented systems must navigate sensitivities related to cultural identity, community values, and visitor behavior, requiring heightened awareness of emotional and social dynamics. Emotional awareness facilitates recognition of members' needs and behavioral patterns. Self-regulation supports consistent decision-making under complex or stressful circumstances [Akeren et al., 2025]. Emotional competence encourages adaptive responses and strengthens communication effectiveness. Understanding emotional dynamics shapes workplace climate and encourages constructive engagement [Park et al., 2024; Antonopoulou, 2024]. Empathetic leaders develop trust and inspire cooperation, through emotional intelligence, leaders foster environments where collaboration and psychological safety guide institutional functioning. Sustainable governance is supported through relational conditions that encourage inclusivity, trust, and mutual respect across institutional groups [Lo, 2025].

Emotional awareness strengthens participatory engagement, allowing diverse contributions to inform governance processes. Inclusive interaction patterns promote long-term cohesion and alignment with social development goals anchored in fairness and collective responsibility. Tourism systems rely on relational awareness to sustain partnerships among government units, academic institutions, and private enterprises, particularly in managing shared resources such as natural attractions and cultural assets. Effective relational leadership reduces stakeholder conflict, enhances cooperation in destination planning, and strengthens community participation in tourism initiatives. In addition, relational awareness strengthens governance through the cultivation of meaningful interactions across hierarchical and peer networks. Empathy reduces conflict and promotes understanding within teams. Relational competence supports cohesion and cooperative behavior in structured settings [Odame and Pandey, 2025]. Strong interaction patterns improve coordination and task execution. Connection-oriented leadership reinforces shared goals and organizational coherence. Positive relational climates enhance engagement and satisfaction, encouraging

participation [Suryadi *et al.*, 2024].

### 2.3 Visionary thinking and strategic direction

A visionary thinking provides direction and shared purpose that guides institutional behavior and collective priorities. Visionary leadership is critical in tourism-oriented systems as it defines long-term pathways for destination sustainability, integrating economic growth with environmental stewardship and cultural preservation [Liu *et al.*, 2022]. Strategic vision allows institutions to anticipate tourism trends, manage resource constraints, and design development initiatives that balance competitiveness with sustainability. Articulating a clear vision aligns members' efforts and fosters commitment to long-term objectives. Visionary leadership strengthens engagement and proactive participation through clear institutional direction [Hassan *et al.*, 2023]. Forward-looking leadership supports innovation and responsiveness to emerging challenges. Strategic vision integrates institutional priorities with actionable plans, enhancing coherence. Visionary thinking helps leaders shape environments that encourage goal alignment and coordinated effort across institutional systems. Additionally, strategic direction reinforces governance by ensuring that decisions and resource allocations reflect long-term priorities [Hermawan *et al.*, 2024]. Porter highlights that effective positioning enables institutions to leverage capacities efficiently.

Strategic planning provides frameworks for addressing challenges and growth opportunities, coherent strategies reduce misalignment and foster institutional stability. Sustainable governance benefits from forward-looking direction that aligns institutional priorities with long-term social and developmental objectives. Strategic clarity supports continuity, responsible resource allocation, and adaptive capacity in response to evolving institutional demands [Zeng and Rojnirutikul, 2025]. Tourism development requires integrated planning across education, infrastructure, and service industries to ensure that destinations remain competitive while preserving ecological and cultural assets. Strategic alignment among academic programs, business operations, and governance mechanisms supports workforce readiness and innovation in tourism services.

### 2.4 Accountability and decision-making discipline

Accountability within governance environments reflects interaction between cognitive evaluation and social expectations that shape responsible leadership behavior. Tourism-oriented systems require transparent accountability structures to monitor environmental impact, regulate industry practices, and ensure that development initiatives align with sustainability goals. Accountability mechanisms support compliance with policies related to resource management, cultural preservation, and service quality, which directly influence destination integrity and stakeholder trust. Clear attribution of responsibility strengthens perception of fairness and en-

courages consistency in institutional processes. Structured accountability supports interpretation of authority as transparent and aligned with collective expectations. Social environments characterized by clarity in responsibility encourage adherence to ethical standards that influence cooperation and trust formation. Accountability contributes to development of predictable interaction patterns that support institutional stability and shared understanding of performance expectations. The accountability mechanisms strengthen clarity of expectations and improve evaluation of outcomes [Yasmin and Ghafran, 2021]. Monitoring processes encourage consistency in performance and reinforce institutional credibility. Structured responsibility supports coordination that improves effectiveness of governance implementation [Kulmie and Mohamed, 2023].

Decision-making discipline reflects cognitive regulation processes that influence judgment quality within complex institutional environments. Structured reasoning supports evaluation of alternatives that encourages balanced consideration of consequences affecting organizational outcomes [Cristofaro *et al.*, 2022]. Deliberate cognitive processing reduces susceptibility to bias that may influence interpretation of information within governance situations [Zhou and Shen, 2024]. A careful evaluation of evidence supports formation of decisions perceived as consistent and ethically grounded. Sustainable governance is strengthened through accountability mechanisms and disciplined decision processes that emphasize transparency, fairness, and long-term institutional impact. Governance systems grounded in community perspectives and political will enhance accountability and ensure that sustainability initiatives are implemented with transparency and public alignment [Askali, 2025]. Responsible governance practices encourage consistency in policy implementation while maintaining responsiveness to social and institutional demands. These conditions support trust, stability in a sustainable governance [Quttainah *et al.*, 2025; Elayah and Alassi, 2026]. Decision-making in tourism systems requires integrating data on environmental capacity, visitor behavior, and community impact to ensure that policies support sustainable growth without degrading resources. Evaluation of alternatives supports rational consistency in decision outcomes. Evidence-informed decision processes improve responsiveness to institutional needs. Decision-making quality improves when analytical reasoning is integrated with contextual understanding [Dawson *et al.*, 2024].

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research design

The research study that was performed used a qualitative approach to determine the traits that contribute to effective leadership within academic institutions. Due to the complexities of the leadership within academic institutions, a qualitative research methodology allows for an investigation into the

experiences and perceptions of the individuals within those institutions. Additionally, as there is a limited amount of research regarding the differences in leadership traits between individuals with educational versus administrative experience, the exploratory nature of this research study was appropriate for investigating the topic.

### 3.2 Participants

Purposive sampling techniques were utilized to select the 24 participants included in the study. Participants were drawn from academic institutions, tourism education institutions, and hospitality-related organizations in Jolo, Sulu, Philippines. The participants included academic leaders, educators, institutional administrators, and hospitality managers involved in governance and organizational decision-making.

The inclusion of participants from both educational and hospitality sectors enabled the study to examine how leadership traits influence sustainable governance across academic and tourism-linked environments. Participants were selected based on their leadership experience, governance responsibilities, and involvement in institutional or organizational operations.

### 3.3 Research instrument

The instrument that was used to collect the data from the participants was a questionnaire. The questions that were asked of the participants were developed through the concepts of leadership traits and academic governance, as well as through reviewing published studies on each of these topics. The questions that were asked of the participants in Table 1 were used to gather information regarding their beliefs about leadership traits and the impact that those traits can have upon academic governance.

### 3.4 Data gathering procedure

Data was collected through one-on-one interviews with the participants. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was conducted in person or through video conferencing platforms. The interview used the questionnaire listed in

table 1, as well as additionally asked the participants the open-ended questions regarding their experiences with leadership within their academic institutions. The questions asked of the participants were structured to elicit responses regarding their experiences with governing their institutions, as well as questions regarding leadership traits and how those traits can impact the relationships between individuals within those institutions.

The interview was conducted in a manner that allowed the participants to discuss their experiences in depth with the researcher. Open-ended questions allow participants to provide detailed answers to the questions, as well as to allow the researcher to follow-up to the questions to obtain additional information. The interview was conducted in a location that was safe for the participants, and where the participants felt comfortable sharing their information with the researcher. Furthermore, any questions were answered by the participants and recorded with their consent. Additionally, field notes were taken during the interview to observe the participants and record any additional information that may become relevant to the study.

### 3.5 Data analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to systematically identify, examine, and interpret patterns of meaning across participant responses. The analysis followed a structured and iterative process guided by established qualitative procedures. Interview transcripts were first transcribed verbatim and reviewed multiple times to ensure familiarity with the data and to capture initial impressions relevant to leadership traits and governance practices.

Initial coding was conducted through an open coding approach, where meaningful segments of the data were identified and labelled based on recurring ideas, expressions, and participant insights. Codes were generated inductively from the data rather than imposed a priori, allowing themes to emerge directly from participants' perspectives. These codes were then examined, compared, and refined through constant comparison to ensure consistency and reduce redundancy.

Table 1: Interview guide

Objectives	Interview question
1. To identify salient traits that are essential for effective leadership and sustainable governance among administrators, academic leaders, and hospitality managers across academic and tourism-linked institutions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. From your perspective, what personal qualities or traits are most important for someone to be considered an effective academic leader?</li> <li>2. Can you share an experience where a leader's traits either positively or negatively influenced governance in your institution?</li> <li>3. In your view, which traits distinguish successful academic leaders from less effective ones?</li> </ol>
2. To analyze how these salient traits contribute to effective governance in educational institutions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do the traits you identified influence decision-making and problem-solving in your institution's governance?</li> <li>2. In what ways do these traits affect the relationships between leaders, faculty, staff, and students?</li> <li>3. Can you provide examples of how certain traits of academic leaders have shaped institutional policies or sustainable governance outcomes?</li> </ol>

#### 4. Results

Research Objective 1. To identify salient traits that are essential for effective leadership and sustainable governance among administrators, academic leaders, and hospitality managers across academic and tourism-linked institutions.

Question No. 1. From your perspective, what personal qualities or traits are most important for someone to be considered an effective academic leader?

##### 4.1 Embracing intellectual humility

Ten (10) respondents emphasized that effective academic leaders recognize that no single person holds all the knowledge and that learning is continuous. Leaders who demonstrate intellectual humility are more open to new ideas, diverse viewpoints, and alternative approaches to solving institutional challenges. This trait allows them to facilitate discussions where all members feel their perspectives are valued, which fosters collaboration and a sense of shared ownership. Moreover, intellectual humility enables leaders to acknowledge gaps in understanding, making it easier to seek guidance from experts and build collective solutions. By combining awareness of knowledge limitations with a clear vision, leaders create an environment that encourages innovation while keeping goals aligned with institutional priorities.

“As a leader in academia we must recognize that knowledge is collective and always evolving.”

“Beyond listening and fairness, it’s important for us to guide others with a clear sense of purpose whether in research, teaching, or community engagement.”

##### 4.2 Upholding integrity and authenticity

Ten (10) respondents shared that honesty and transparency are essential for establishing credibility and trust within academic communities. Leaders who demonstrate integrity consistently act in alignment with ethical principles, making it easier for faculty and staff to trust decisions even under challenging circumstances. Authentic leaders foster a culture where admitting mistakes and uncertainties is normalized, which encourages open communication and continuous improvement. This trait also helps maintain fairness and equity in decision-making, as actions are grounded in consistency rather than convenience or favoritism. Over time, integrity and authenticity shape a culture where both faculty and students feel safe, respected, and motivated to engage in institutional initiatives without fear of bias or retribution.

“An academic environment value honesty and transparency, especially when a leader admits what we don’t know but shows willingness to learn.”

“Leaders who openly acknowledge our limitations create a culture where it is safe to ask questions and admit mistakes.”

##### 4.3 Prioritizing problem-solving and organizational skills

Five (5) respondents highlighted that academic institutions face complex and multifaceted challenges requiring analytical thinking and careful planning. Leaders with strong problem-solving and organizational skills can break down issues into manageable components, incorporate input from relevant stakeholders, and develop solutions that are both practical and sustainable. These traits allow leaders to anticipate potential obstacles and adjust strategies as situations evolve, which is critical for long-term institutional success. Furthermore, combining patience with a structured approach ensures that decisions are informed, equitable, and strategically aligned with the institution’s mission. Leaders who cultivate these skills maintain operational stability even in high-pressure situations, guiding faculty and staff toward shared objectives effectively.

“Academic institutions face complex issues, and our leaders must be able to analyze situations, consider input from experts, and find fair solutions.”

“Complex issues don’t always have quick fixes, so being able to carefully weigh different perspectives before acting helps ensure sustainable solutions.”

Question No. 2. Can you share an experience where a leader’s traits either positively or negatively influenced governance in your institution?

##### 4.4 Handling budget cuts with transparency

Ten (10) respondents described how transparency and inclusiveness transformed a challenging situation into a collaborative effort. Leaders who openly communicate limitations and involve faculty in problem-solving help prevent uncertainty and stress from escalating. Such approaches demonstrate that even without complete expertise in every area, effective governance can be maintained through participatory decision-making. Additionally, clear explanations regarding processes and decisions reduce the spread of rumours, minimize conflicts, and strengthen trust between leadership and faculty. The emphasis on openness also fosters a sense of shared responsibility, where all members feel empowered to contribute solutions that align with the institution’s goals, reinforcing organizational cohesion.

“Our leader admitted he had little background in finance but was transparent about the challenges. He asked for faculty input and involved us in brainstorming solu-

tions.”

“Even though he lacked training in administration, he always communicated clearly and ensured decisions were explained.”

#### 4.5 Policies without classroom insight

Ten (10) respondents noted that policies developed without understanding the realities of teaching and learning can lead to inefficiency and frustration. When administrators prioritize metrics over the practical experiences of faculty and students, governance becomes disconnected from institutional needs. Such misalignment can erode trust, hinder collaboration, and reduce compliance with policy directives. In contrast, leaders who integrate empathy for classroom practices and actively seek faculty input create solutions that are more realistic and implementable. This approach enhances institutional functioning, strengthens relationships, and demonstrates that successful governance requires an understanding of both academic and administrative perspectives.

“We learned that governance in education requires not just managerial skills, but also empathy for the teaching mission.”

“We learned that successful governance requires administrators to listen carefully to educators before making changes.”

#### 4.6 Challenges with avoiding difficult decisions

Five (5) respondents described situations where academic brilliance alone did not guarantee effective governance. Leaders who hesitate to make administrative decisions, such as budget allocation or policy enforcement, may unintentionally impede institutional progress. Avoidance can lead to inefficiencies, underutilized resources, and missed opportunities for improvement. Effective governance requires balancing intellectual capability with practical action, ensuring that administrative responsibilities are addressed decisively. By confronting difficult decisions, leaders model accountability and provide direction, which enhances institutional effectiveness and supports faculty and student outcomes.

“Their hesitance created delays, and opportunities for improvement were lost. It taught us that in governance, decisiveness is as important as intellectual ability.”

“It highlighted to us that governance demands practical decision-making alongside academic expertise.”

Question No. 3. In your view, which traits distinguish successful academic leaders from less effective ones?

#### 4.7 Valuing listening and respecting opinions

Ten (10) respondents emphasized that successful leaders cultivate an environment where open dialogue is encouraged and all voices are considered. Approachable leaders who create safe spaces for discussion help maintain engagement, trust, and collaboration across the institution. Conversely, leaders who impose decisions without consultation often undermine morale and stifle creativity. By respecting diverse academic and administrative perspectives, effective leaders promote inclusive decision-making, strengthen relationships, and support innovation. This trait ensures that decisions are informed, balanced, and aligned with both institutional goals and community needs.

“Most successful leaders I’ve seen are those who encourage open dialogue and allow every member of the academic community to contribute.”

“Effective leaders are approachable and create safe spaces for discussion, even when opinions differ.”

#### 4.8 Practicing transparency

Ten (10) respondents highlighted that transparent communication enhances trust and accountability within institutions. Leaders who articulate not only the outcomes but also the rationale behind decisions minimize uncertainty and prevent misinformation from spreading. Transparency creates clarity and fosters confidence among faculty and staff, encouraging them to engage constructively with institutional policies. Over time, this trait reinforces credibility and strengthens the social fabric of governance by promoting fairness and predictability in decision-making processes.

“Leaders who clearly communicate challenges and decisions gain respect, whereas secrecy and ambiguity make governance ineffective.”

“I’ve seen leaders who are upfront about institutional struggles earn trust, while those who remain vague create unnecessary anxiety and speculation.”

#### 4.9 Embracing adaptability

Five (5) respondents indicated that leaders who adjust their approach to align with academic culture and values achieve better engagement and support. Flexibility allows leaders to respect academic freedom, accommodate different departmental needs, and foster collegiality. Leaders who insist on rigid, corporate-style control often face resistance and limited collaboration. Adaptable leadership strengthens relationships, supports shared decision-making, and enhances the overall effectiveness of governance within educational institutions.

“Our leaders who can adjust to the culture of academia and respect academic freedom succeed more, while those who force corporate-style policies fail to connect with

faculty.”

“I’ve seen administrators succeed when they adapt their management style to fit academic values of collegiality and shared decision-making. Those who insist on strict top-down control rarely achieve lasting support.”

Research Objective 2. To analyze how these salient traits contribute to effective governance in educational institutions.

Question No. 1. What personal or professional experiences have influenced your understanding and practice of inclusivity in customer service?

#### 4.10 Relying on colleague input

Ten (10) respondents indicated that, lacking formal administrative training, they rely extensively on input from colleagues when making decisions. This practice ensures that policies and solutions reflect academic realities rather than purely administrative priorities. Gathering perspectives encourages collective problem-solving and helps anticipate practical implications of governance decisions. It also supports leaders in grounding their choices in the values of scholarship and teaching, even when they are unsure of technical protocols. Integrating the knowledge of faculty and staff into decision-making, leaders foster a more inclusive environment where every member feels recognized and empowered to contribute to institutional goals.

“Since I don’t have administrative training, I rely heavily on listening to colleagues and gathering input before decisions.”

“I sometimes lack the technical know-how for administrative tasks, but I bring empathy. Decisions are guided by how they will affect students and faculty on the ground, rather than abstract efficiency.”

#### 4.11 Using transparency to build trust

Five (5) respondents emphasized that making the decision-making process visible helps prevent misunderstandings and promotes accountability. Transparency allows colleagues to understand not only the outcomes but also the reasoning behind decisions, fostering constructive dialogue even when disagreements arise. Open communication encourages participation in problem-solving and strengthens collective responsibility for institutional goals. It also sets realistic expectations by clarifying constraints such as time, resources, or policy limitations. Through consistent transparency, leaders develop trust with faculty, staff, and students, creating a governance culture where collaboration and engagement are prioritized over secrecy or unilateral action.

“Even if my decisions aren’t perfect, people know why I made them, and that prevents misunderstandings.”

“Sharing challenges openly makes problem-solving collaborative. Being clear about limitations, whether time, budget, or policy, helps set realistic expectations.”

#### 4.12 Respecting academic freedom

Ten (10) respondents highlighted that respecting academic freedom is central to sustaining a supportive and effective governance culture. Leaders who consider the impact of decisions on faculty independence ensure that short-term administrative objectives do not compromise long-term academic goals. This approach allows faculty to experiment with teaching and research, encourages creativity, and maintains a diverse intellectual environment. Leaders who safeguard academic freedom also prioritize consensus-building and inclusivity, which strengthens collective commitment and trust within the institution. Protecting autonomy helps maintain a balance between administrative efficiency and the intrinsic values of teaching and research, reinforcing sustainable governance practices.

“Even if I’m pressured to act quickly, I pause to consider how a decision might affect faculty independence. Protecting that freedom is more valuable than a short-term fix.”

“I try to safeguard the diversity of thought in our institution. Decisions that limit expression or intellectual risk-taking may solve administrative issues but harm the academic mission.”

Question No. 2. In what ways do these traits affect the relationships between leaders, faculty, staff, and students?

#### 4.13 Promoting collaboration

Ten (10) respondents explained that inclusive decision-making strengthens collaboration and professional respect. When faculty and staff feel that their input is genuinely considered, relationships become more reciprocal, and a sense of partnership emerges. This collaborative approach also positively affects students, as faculty who feel supported are more attentive and responsive to student needs. Creating an environment where contributions are valued, leaders foster mutual accountability, shared problem-solving, and a sense of belonging that enhances both governance and institutional cohesion.

“I rely on listening, faculty and staff feel valued when their voices are included because they often know the practical details I miss.”

“Consulting widely, I create an atmosphere where faculty

and staff feel empowered.”

#### **4.14 Transparency enhances trust**

Five (5) respondents highlighted that transparent communication establishes a foundation of trust and reduces speculation about leadership intentions. When the reasoning behind decisions is openly shared, faculty and staff are more likely to accept outcomes, even when they disagree with them. Transparency also promotes accountability by providing clear criteria for evaluating leadership actions. Over time, this practice reduces conflict, increases engagement, and strengthens the relational networks necessary for effective governance. Institutions where transparency is prioritized tend to maintain a culture of fairness and openness, enhancing the overall climate for academic collaboration.

“When I explain the reasoning behind a decision, even unpopular ones, colleagues appreciate the clarity. It reduces suspicion and prevents unnecessary tension.”

“Openness creates accountability. When people understand the process, they hold me responsible in fairways rather than assuming favoritism or hidden motives.”

#### **4.15 Respecting academic freedom**

Ten (10) respondents noted that leaders who protect faculty autonomy build strong, trusting relationships. Refraining from micromanagement, they demonstrate respect for professional expertise, which encourages innovation and experimentation. Faculty feel more motivated and confident to implement new teaching methods or research projects, enhancing educational quality and student engagement. Respecting academic freedom signals to the institutional community that leadership values professional growth and independent thought, which fosters loyalty, collaboration, and a positive governance climate.

“Respecting academic freedom, I maintain good relations with faculty who appreciate not being micromanaged.”

“Respecting academic freedom encourages innovation. Faculty feel safe to try new approaches, and students benefit from more dynamic teaching and research.”

Question No. 3. Can you provide examples of how certain traits of academic leaders have shaped institutional policies or sustainable governance outcomes?

#### **4.16 Developing inclusive workload policies**

Ten (10) respondents shared that prioritizing listening helped create workload distribution policies that were fair and practical. Faculty and staff contributions ensured that policies reflected real academic demands rather than purely administrative expectations. This collaborative approach also im-

proved other institutional policies, such as grading and teaching allocations, by incorporating feedback from those directly affected. Leaders who listen carefully promote engagement and ownership, resulting in policies that are sustainable, equitable, and aligned with both faculty needs and institutional priorities.

“Because I emphasize listening, our department developed a more inclusive policy on workload distribution.”

“Prioritizing listening during committee meetings, we revised our grading policy to better balance academic rigor with student well-being.”

#### **4.17 Facilitating collaborative budgeting**

Ten (10) respondents reported that transparency during budget discussions enabled faculty and staff to participate actively in identifying cost-saving measures without compromising essential academic programs. Sharing financial realities encouraged innovative solutions and allowed departments to propose practical strategies. This approach ensured that resource allocation decisions were informed, equitable, and widely supported. Leaders who communicate openly about constraints and possibilities create a governance culture that balances efficiency with academic integrity.

“My practice of open communication helped us during budget cuts. By sharing financial realities with faculty and staff, we shaped cost-saving policies that avoided harming core academic programs.”

“Being transparent about resource constraints, I encouraged departments to propose their own efficiency measures.”

#### **4.18 Supporting flexible curriculum**

Five (5) respondents highlighted that respecting academic freedom influenced curriculum changes by allowing program-level flexibility. This approach promoted faculty ownership of decisions and enhanced student engagement. Leaders who balance policy guidance with professional discretion help maintain faculty autonomy while ensuring institutional goals are met. Flexibility in governance allows innovation in teaching and research, supports diverse learning needs, and encourages buy-in from all stakeholders, leading to more sustainable and widely accepted policy outcomes.

“Instead of mandating uniformity, we allowed flexibility across programs, which improved faculty buy-in and student engagement.”

“While reviewing teaching load policies, I ensured that faculty had the discretion to balance research and instruc-

tion.”

## 5. Discussion

The findings extend existing leadership and sustainable governance literature by demonstrating that leadership effectiveness in academic and tourism-linked institutions is not solely dependent on managerial competence, but on the integration of ethical, relational, and cognitive leadership capacities. The study contributes theoretically by presenting intellectual humility as a governance-enabling trait that strengthens participatory decision-making, reduces hierarchical rigidity, and improves institutional coherence across complex organizational environments. Unlike traditional leadership perspectives that emphasize authority and technical efficiency, the present findings support a multidimensional governance framework where collaborative reasoning, stakeholder inclusion, and adaptive leadership sustain long-term institutional and tourism-oriented development. These findings further reinforce sustainable governance theory by showing that leadership traits function as interconnected mechanisms that shape trust, accountability, and resilience within institutional systems. Leadership that promotes shared understanding strengthens alignment toward institutional direction, suggesting that openness to multiple viewpoints enhances coherence in governance processes. [Alghamdi, 2024]. This emphasis on shared understanding becomes especially relevant in tourism systems where governance involves continuous coordination among public institutions, private enterprises, and local communities, requiring leaders to integrate diverse forms of knowledge in shaping sustainable destination outcomes. Such openness further reinforces sustainable governance by ensuring that decision-making incorporates long-term considerations, interdisciplinary insight, and inclusive participation, which are essential in maintaining institutional resilience over time. In tourism-oriented development, this inclusive and knowledge-driven approach enables institutions to design strategies that balance economic opportunities with environmental protection and cultural sustainability, ensuring that development remains both competitive and responsible over time.

Integrity and authenticity establish a foundation for consistency in leadership conduct, reinforcing trust and predictability in institutional interactions, which are essential in maintaining stable governance relationships across complex organizational environments. Leadership grounded in academic integrity and humanized engagement sustains ethical continuity, ensuring that institutional practices remain consistent, credible, and responsive to stakeholder expectations [Chavez, 2023]. Such ethical consistency is particularly critical in tourism systems where trust among stakeholders directly influences destination reputation, visitor confidence, and the willingness of communities to participate in development initiatives. A moral alignment encourages cooperative

behavior, ethical leadership shapes organizational climate through consistent conduct. These conditions support sustainable governance structures where expectations remain clear and interactions are guided through fairness [Bharati, 2026]. In tourism contexts, fairness in governance ensures that benefits are distributed equitably among stakeholders while minimizing conflicts related to resource use and community participation. Moreover, sustainability-oriented leadership strengthens ethical continuity by ensuring that governance practices remain responsive not only to present institutional demands but also to future organizational and societal implications [Liao, 2022]. This forward-looking ethical orientation supports tourism sustainability by guiding long-term planning decisions that protect environmental resources and cultural heritage while maintaining economic viability.

Emotional awareness and relational sensitivity influence how leaders navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, particularly in settings where diverse professional orientations intersect and require careful coordination of interests. The ability to interpret social cues enhances responsiveness to institutional needs, allowing leaders to manage tensions without undermining cohesion. Emotional awareness strengthens understanding of behavioral patterns and promotes cooperation within institutional environments [Güneş *et al.*, 2026]. These insights correspond with the findings, where relational attentiveness strengthens engagement and fosters environments characterized by mutual respect and sustained collaboration across institutional groups. In relation to sustainability, such relational dynamics contribute to the continuity of institutional partnerships and promote long-term stakeholder commitment, which are fundamental in sustaining governance systems. Tourism governance depends on these sustained partnerships, particularly in managing shared resources such as natural attractions and cultural assets that require coordinated oversight and collective responsibility. Transparency and participatory engagement are not merely operational practices but foundational governance mechanisms that strengthen institutional legitimacy and stakeholder trust. The findings suggest that participatory leadership enhances governance sustainability by institutionalizing accountability, collaborative problem-solving, and inclusive decision-making across academic and tourism-linked systems. This expands existing governance literature by illustrating how relational leadership traits influence not only organizational interaction patterns but also the long-term stability and adaptability of institutions operating within complex social and tourism-oriented environments. This openness strengthens accountability and encourages shared responsibility in addressing institutional challenges with sustainable solution [Kelling *et al.*, 2021]. In tourism systems, such transparency supports collaborative problem-solving in addressing issues such as environmental degradation, visitor management, and community concerns.

Transparent governance also reinforces sustainability by institutionalizing accountability mechanisms that ensure resources, decisions, and policies are managed with long-term impact in mind [Adams, 2025]. This institutionalization of accountability is critical in tourism governance, where monitoring environmental impacts and regulating development practices are necessary to maintain destination integrity. Structured accountability improves clarity in expectation reinforcing acceptance of decisions across organizational levels. The findings suggest that transparent communication not only clarifies processes but also strengthens confidence in leadership judgment, reinforcing trust among stakeholders involved in governance processes.

Decision-making discipline reflects the capacity to engage in structured reasoning when addressing complex institutional issues that require careful evaluation of multiple alternatives. Leaders who evaluate alternatives carefully and consider broader implications are better positioned to produce balanced and consistent outcomes across governance systems. Cognitive regulation enhances judgment quality, minimizing bias improves the accuracy of decision processes. This disciplined approach is particularly relevant in tourism systems where decision-making must consider environmental capacity, economic demands, and socio-cultural impacts simultaneously to avoid unsustainable outcomes [Criado-Perez et al., 2024]. These perspectives align with the observed emphasis on careful deliberation, where thoughtful evaluation contributes to governance stability and reinforces confidence in institutional direction. From a sustainability standpoint, disciplined decision-making ensures that institutional actions remain aligned with long-term strategic goals, resource efficiency, and responsible governance practices. In tourism development, this alignment supports the creation of policies that regulate growth while preserving ecological balance and community well-being. Adaptability emerges as a defining characteristic in aligning administrative practices with academic and organizational expectations, enabling leaders to respond effectively to evolving demands. Leaders who adjust their approaches to fit institutional culture are more likely to sustain engagement and reduce resistance across organizational structures. Adaptive leadership supports organizational coherence by improving responsiveness to changing conditions and institutional demands [Eshaq and Ella, 2025]. The findings indicate that flexibility in leadership approach supports continuity while maintaining sensitivity to evolving institutional demands. This adaptability is integral to sustainable governance, as it enables institutions to respond effectively to environmental, social, and organizational shifts without compromising stability or long-term direction. In tourism contexts, adaptive governance enhances resilience by allowing destinations to respond to fluctuations in demand, environmental pressures, and emerging sustainability challenges.

The integration of stakeholder input reflects an approach

to governance that values collective insight in shaping institutional outcomes and ensuring that decisions are grounded in practical realities. Leaders who incorporate perspectives from faculty, staff, and other members ensure that decisions reflect operational realities rather than abstract assumptions. Stakeholder engagement strengthens decision quality, informed reasoning benefits from the interaction between analytical and experiential knowledge [Lisa and Philipp, 2023]. In tourism systems, this integration of stakeholder perspectives ensures that development initiatives reflect the needs of local communities, the capacities of natural resources, and the expectations of visitors. This pattern suggests that inclusive engagement enhances both the relevance and acceptance of governance decisions across institutional structures. Sustainability is further reinforced through this inclusivity, as participatory governance ensures that diverse interests are represented, promoting equitable and enduring institutional outcomes. Tourism governance benefits from such inclusivity by fostering community ownership, strengthening stakeholder commitment, and reducing resistance to development initiatives. Inclusive and human-centered leadership approaches contribute to long-term institutional sustainability by embedding ethical awareness, participatory engagement, and social responsibility into governance systems [Nazareth et al., 2026]. These leadership approaches support tourism sustainability by ensuring that governance practices remain socially inclusive, culturally sensitive, and environmentally responsible. Findings indicate that governance effectiveness is shaped through the convergence of ethical grounding, relational awareness, cognitive discipline, and adaptive orientation. Elements interact to produce leadership approaches that sustain institutional coherence, reinforce trust, and maintain continuity across complex organizational environments. In tourism-oriented systems, this convergence enables integrated governance that aligns institutional objectives with destination sustainability goals, ensuring coordinated and balanced development. The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of sustainable governance by integrating leadership traits within a multidimensional framework that combines ethical integrity, relational awareness, cognitive discipline, and adaptive engagement. The findings demonstrate that leadership traits operate as interconnected governance mechanisms that influence institutional trust, participatory decision-making, accountability, and organizational resilience. In tourism-oriented systems, these dimensions support coordinated stakeholder engagement and sustainable development practices, extending existing leadership theories beyond administrative efficiency toward more inclusive and sustainability-centered governance models.

## **6. Conclusion**

Leadership traits demonstrated by business managers, administrators, educators, and hospitality managers play

a critical role in shaping governance systems that sustain institutional effectiveness and long-term development. Findings confirm that leadership effectiveness is grounded in a combination of intellectual humility, ethical integrity, emotional awareness, relational sensitivity, decision-making discipline, adaptability, and participatory engagement. These traits collectively strengthen governance by promoting transparency, inclusivity, accountability, and coherent decision-making processes that align institutional actions with broader sustainability goals across academic and tourism-linked institutions. The study highlights that governance is not solely driven by technical competence but by the integration of ethical, relational, and cognitive dimensions that influence how leaders engage with stakeholders and respond to complex organizational demands. Leadership approaches that emphasize collaboration, openness, and responsible judgment foster environments where trust is sustained, participation is encouraged, and institutional coherence is maintained.

These insights extend beyond academic institutions and hold relevance for tourism-oriented systems, particularly within tourism education and hospitality-related organizations where governance requires coordination among multiple stakeholders. Leadership traits identified in this study support sustainable tourism development by enabling responsible resource management, strengthening stakeholder collaboration, and promoting balanced decision-making that integrates economic, environmental, and socio-cultural considerations. The study contributes to the understanding of leadership as a multidimensional construct that underpins sustainable governance. Strengthening these leadership traits enhances the capacity of institutions and organizations to support inclusive development, maintain stability, and adapt to evolving challenges, thereby reinforcing sustainable outcomes across both academic and tourism-linked systems.

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