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Sustainable Leadership Practices and Competencies of SMEs for Sustainability and Resilience: A Community-Based Social Enterprise Study

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Abstract: Current studies on how a sustainability leadership theory can influence the practice of SMEs, such as a context of community-based social enterprises, is still lacking, with scanty research to date. These small enterprises in the bottom of the pyramid settings are indeed the important socio-economic backbone of many nations around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has significantly hit all sectors and has adversely impacted them. Our study aims to broaden the limited scholarly knowledge and advance the developing SL theory in this realm. Hence, our critical research inquiries address: (1) What are the essential sustainable leadership practices and sustainability competencies for sustainability and resilience in a CBSE context? (2) How can a CBSE business apply the theoretical frameworks in practice to survive and thrive for sustainable futures, especially during the COVID-19 era? This study employs an integrative theoretical examination of sustainable leadership frameworks and sustainability leadership competencies to investigate the sustainable business practices in the SME sector, particularly in a community-based social enterprise context. Our business case centers on a green, social enterprise, which is an award-winner of Best Responsible Tourism and is located in a small coastal fishing village of Thailand. Using a case study research method, the multi-data collection methods include in-depth interviews and focus groups with multiple stakeholders. Evidence was found to comply with six-category sustainable leadership practices and five essential sustainability leadership competencies to varying degrees. The findings suggest that sustainable leaders and entrepreneurs should develop and integrate the value-based practices and competencies (i.e., strategic, systems thinking, interpersonal, anticipatory, ethical competencies) in business. The critical sustainable practices include enabling human capital with care for stakeholders, fostering ethical values and norms via altruism, cultivating social capital through social innovation, and supporting pro-environmental behavior and social responsibility to achieve inclusive growth, sustainability and resilience. The research results advance the theoretical development of the interconnected fields of sustainability leadership and sustainable entrepreneurship. An alternative sustainable business model for sustainability and resilience is also proposed. Overall, the insightful findings can provide practical advice and beneficial policy implications for sustainable futures.

Keywords: sustainability leadership; sustainable leadership; sustainable entrepreneurship; social entrepreneurship; community-based social enterprise; social enterprise; SME; community-based tourism; corporate sustainability; sustainable development; resilience; SDG



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1. Introduction

Sustainability leadership has gained much popularity as an emergent multidisciplinary area in the recent literature. Worldwide scholars call for more sustainability studies as an important leadership agenda [1–4]. Modern leaders need to strategically lead their businesses beyond profit-maximization or economic performance and maneuver their vision

and strategy toward environmental protection and social responsibility [5,6]. The literature urges future leaders and managers to purposefully develop value-oriented sustainable leadership and sustainability competencies in their business practices as well as to balance the economic performance and socio-environmental responsibility to thrive for long-term success [7–11]. The latest empirical research also indicates that sustainability leadership is a key determinant of long-term success and sustainability performance outcomes [12,13]. The topic strategically becomes critical to achieve corporate resilience, longevity and sustainable futures.

The rise of the global sustainable development aspiration, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), has further attracted international leaders and policy-makers to reorient their leadership paradigm towards sustainability. Further, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic crisis has severely affected all sectors, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and disadvantaged communities with limited capital funding and resource constraints [14–16]. The pandemic has indeed been a catalyst for an integrative lens on leadership for sustainability or sustainability leadership transformations [13]. The crisis is also pressing all leaders, entrepreneurs and managers to transform their visions and sustainable strategies as well as to incorporate SDGs into their missions with better balance of the economic, ecological and social triads [17,18].

In the leadership field, sustainability has greatly influenced contemporary organizational leadership and management studies. A recent bibliometric review of sustainable leadership from the worldwide scholarship by Hallinger & Suriyankietkaew [5] indicates the emergence of new theoretical models of leadership and sustainability over the past decades. The terms (i.e., sustainability leadership or sustainable leadership) are often used interchangeably for parsimony. The review reinforces the importance of sustainability-oriented leadership values towards sustainable futures [5]. Previous researchers also highlighted further integration of multidimensional facets of leadership and sustainability to advance this emergent field of inquiry [7,19,20]. One critical leadership view concerning sustainability puts forward the importance of social, ethical and responsible business conduct with multiple stakeholder engagement [9,21–23]. The literature urged that contemporary leadership should extend beyond the popular green and social notions of corporate sustainability, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate responsibility (CR) and triple bottom line (TBL) [24]. Another modernized perspective puts leadership and management processes at the heart of achieving long-term well-being and enduring value for all stakeholders, beyond just social and environmental sustainability, such as a theoretical framework of sustainable leadership offers [7,19]. In this paper, we thus undertake ‘sustainable leadership’ as the integrative theoretical leadership framework for corporate resilience and sustainability. In addition, we seek to advance the theoretical development by investigating necessary leadership competencies that are needed to develop contemporary sustainability leadership.

Moreover, the literature highlights the importance of SMEs, particularly social enterprises (SE), as the socio-economic backbone in most countries [25]. Since the introduction of the idea of “social business” by Muhammad Yunus in the early 1980s, social enterprises have grown in their global significance and have attracted many academic researchers, practitioners and policymakers worldwide [26]. They are defined as businesses organizations with primary focus on delivering social or environmental benefits in a self-sustaining way [27]. One distinctive form of SE is community-based social enterprises (CBSE). Researchers [28,29] highlight the importance of CBSEs as an alternative self-reliant, self-sufficient business model for sustainable development. CBSEs are non-profit, independent organizations with a unique geographical characteristic, wherein community members own and operate their business to earn incomes from self-managed community-based activities that contribute to the local development and well-being of the community [30–32]. In the CBSE context, leadership is the most critical success factor to help detect any coming opportunities and risks while mobilizing capital and capacities to realize community and social benefits [33]. They are indeed essential for socio-economic growth to achieve sus-

tainable development in the bottom of the pyramid settings. However, research evidence on sustainable leadership in the CBSE context from theoretical perspectives in practice is limited to date [34]. More importantly, the assessment of sustainability leadership in this sector is relatively undeveloped, especially in emerging economies, such as Thailand.

Overall, the topic of sustainability or sustainable leadership has been theoretically developed over the last decades. Yet, how the theories work in practice, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, has not yet been studied, with limited evidence. Hence, this sets a focal theme of this paper and becomes a critical inquiry. Therefore, the key research questions are as follows:

- (1) What are the essential sustainable leadership practices and sustainability competencies for sustainability and resilience in a CBSE context?
- (2) How can a CBSE business apply the theoretical frameworks in practice to survive and thrive for sustainable futures, especially during the COVID-19 era?

In sum, our paper aims to contribute to the currently limited scholarly knowledge and advance the theoretical development in this emerging field within the SME sector, particularly in the scarce research context of CBSE in a fast-developing country such as Thailand. Next, we will critically review the relevant literature and elaborate on the SL theoretical framework and research methodology used in the study. Lastly, we will discuss the findings and provide insightful, conclusive implications with suggested limitations and future research.

2. Literature Review and Research Framework

2.1. Critical Review of the Literature

The topic of sustainability or sustainable development originated in the World Commission on Economic Development (WCED), or the Brundtland Report, over 30 years ago [35]. Since September 2015, the United Nations has set a 2030 agenda for sustainable development or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These global goals cover three pillars of sustainability, specifically, people (social goals), prosperity (economic goals), planet (environmental goals) dimensions, along with peace and partnership, with the aim to create a better world for future generations [36]. Our world still faces diverse sustainability problems, e.g., climate change, environmental hazards, poverty, inequalities and political instability. In fact, these sustainability challenges require leadership and strategic foresight from multi-lateral parities and stakeholder orientation to take corrective and transformative actions toward balancing social-economic and ecological development [6,37,38]. Furthermore, the literature suggests that relevant value-based competencies, including strategic (management) competence, systems thinking competence, anticipatory (foresight thinking) competence, interpersonal competence and ethical competence, are needed to support the development of sustainability leadership and sustainable entrepreneurship in business, as suggested by the foregoing literature [8–11]. Further, firms need to incorporate societal and environmental responsibility while meeting the needs of all stakeholders and future generations [39,40]. Hence, sustainability leadership has strategically become critical to achieve sustainable goals and futures.

In the literature, the sustainability interests in the leadership field have increasingly grown in recent times. Diverse strategic leadership approaches for business sustainability have been proposed in the past three decades. Previous research [12,13] summarizes the differences and similarities. For instance, “stakeholder-based leadership”, with the focus on stakeholder relationships and triple-bottom-line criteria [22,41–43], “ethical leadership”, with emphasis on ethical business standards [44–46], “sufficiency leadership”, with the focus on a more ecological-economic-societal balancing approach toward sustainable development [47–49] and “sustainable leadership”, centered around the multidimensional nature of leadership behaviors and management systems to create long-term business sustainability and resilience [7,12,19,24,50].

A recent bibliometric review of sustainable leadership from worldwide scholarship by Halliger & Suriyankietkaew indicates the rapid development of new theoretical models

of leadership and sustainability over the past few decades. The existing trend highlights the theoretical development of six schools of thought, comprising “sustainable Leadership”, “leadership for corporate sustainability”, “managerial leadership”, “responsible leadership”, “ethical and transformational leadership” and “leadership for sustainable change” [5]. They relate to how leadership contributes to sustainability in organizations and societies. The prominent ones are referred to as “sustainability leadership” [2,51–53], or, alternatively, “sustainable leadership” [3,7,12,13,19,24,50,54–57]. These theoretical notions are used interchangeably for parsimony and clarity. The review also reinforces the growing major trend of the theoretical advancement of sustainable leadership, with a balanced view of sustainability values towards sustainable futures [5]. In this paper, we thus undertake sustainable leadership as the integrative theoretical leadership framework for corporate resilience and sustainability.

2.2. Sustainable Leadership Research Framework

Sustainability leadership is a process of influence that delivers direction, alignment and commitment and aims to address environmental, social and long-term sustainable development [58–60]. Various terms in the literature such as “green leadership”, “eco-sensitive leadership”, “sustainability leadership” and “globally responsible leadership” are used interchangeably and convey the same concept of sustainable leadership [59–61]. In this paper, we primarily use the term sustainable leadership (SL). SL comprises those behaviors and practices that create lasting value for all stakeholders, such as the society, environment and future generations at large [7,19].

Built on the Rhineland capitalism approach [62], Avery first introduced 19 SL practices. The 19 practices were derived from a study of 28 global corporations, in which 13 were European corporations (Germany and Switzerland) and the remaining 15 corporations stemmed from developed economies (Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, South Africa and the USA) [54]. Later, Avery & Bergsteiner expanded the list of practices and identified 4 additional practices to generate a set of 23 sustainable leadership practices or “Honeybee” leadership approaches in 2010 [7]. The four additional practices added in the latest sustainable leadership are trust, innovation, staff engagement and self-management.

The 23 practices are interdependent and reinforce one another within the levels [7]. The 23 practices are categorized as foundation, higher-level and key performance drivers. The outcomes of the Honeybee leadership model, which Avery & Bergsteiner introduced, go beyond the triple bottom line, with results that enhance brands, customer satisfaction and long and short-term financial viability while providing long-term value for all stakeholders. Avery & Bergsteiner arranged the 23 leadership practices into three structural levels of SL practices as follows. Firstly, the foundation practices consist of 14 practices including developing people, labor relations, retaining staff, succession planning, valuing staff, CEO and top team, ethical behavior, long-term perspective, organizational change, financial markets orientation, environmental responsibility, corporate social responsibility (CSR), stakeholders and the vision’s role in the business. Secondly, higher-level practices have been developed based on the idea that when foundation practices are in place, they facilitate and support the initiation of higher-level practices. The six practices include consensual and devolved decision making, creating self-managing employees, team orientation, cultivating a trusting atmosphere, forming an organizational culture that enables sustainable leadership and sharing and retaining the organization’s knowledge. Thirdly, SL indicates that three key performance drivers, namely, innovation, staff engagement and quality, can drive organizational performance.

A synthesis of the previous bibliometric review also reveals several common features that conform to the theoretical SL framework. They include emphasis on leadership as a management system, a long-term vision with broader goals that link organizations to society, ethical behavior, corporate social-environmental responsibilities, innovation capacity, systemic change and stakeholder orientation [5]. These values underlie both the

vision that leaders and stakeholders strive to achieve through corporate sustainability and the resilience.

Research indicates that firms adopting the SL principles create sustainable performance outcomes and resilience in the long run. Empirical research also suggests that the 23 SL practices are significantly associated with diverse organizational outcomes, such as financial performance [12,24], customer satisfaction [50] and stakeholder satisfaction [57]. Yet, most studies were conducted in developed countries [7,19], and previous case studies mostly examine the SL practices in large or listed corporations [63,64]. More evidence-based case studies are needed in future research [65]. Responding to the literature call for further theoretical advancement in this emerging field, this paper adopts SL to investigate how the SL theoretical framework can be applied in practice, specifically in the context of community-based social enterprises.

2.3. The Concept of Community-Based Social Enterprise (CBSE)

The introduction of the “Social Business” concept by the 2006 Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus through his work on social microfinance in poverty alleviation was a conceptual starting point for social enterprises. The topic of social enterprise (SE) has gained global significance and has attracted worldwide attention from academic researchers, practitioners and policymakers [26]. SE is defined as the businesses or organizations that primarily focus on delivering social or environmental benefits in a self-sustaining way [27]. It has been regarded as a more sustainable approach compared to a non-profit organization, which mainly relies on philanthropic charities and donations [66]. It can fill the gap that the public or private sector cannot provide. Therefore, it is essential for economic growth and advances sustainable development.

Community-based social enterprise (CBSE) is a typical form of social enterprise. CBSEs are non-profit, independent organizations with a solid geographical characteristic that earns income from community-owned-and-operated activities as well as contributes to the local development and well-being of communities [29–32]. It differs from other social enterprise concepts due to the following two unique attributes: (1) its solid local engagement from community members through a self-managed, community-driven governance structure in the development of an organization’s direction or objectives, and (2) its multifunctional organizations with strategic decisions that focus on local priorities [29].

Several terms have similar meanings to CBSE but appear in various research disciplines. They are “community enterprise” [32,67,68], “community-led social enterprise” [69,70] and “small and micro community enterprise” [71,72]. All these terms are interchangeable. Table 1 presents various CBSE definitions. They show some commonalities. First, in the CBSE context, locals take ownership of the enterprise and community development. Second, planning and management processes should be done by locals. Third, the enterprise generates economic, social and ecological benefits to support the community. In this paper, we adopt the CBSE definition by Somerville & McElwee since it explains and integrates all the critical multi-dimensional aspects of CBSE [32]. In this study, CBSE refers to a subset of social enterprise that is an independent, not-for-private-profit organization, which is owned and managed by highly committed community members, with an aim to create long-term benefits to the local people for sustainable development.

Table 1. Definitions of Community Based Social Enterprise (CBSE).

Author	CBSE Definition
Pearce [29]	A multifunctional organization that is engaged in several different kinds of initiatives. It is designed to contribute to local regeneration holistically. It includes democratic governance structures that allow members of the community or the constituency they serve to participate in the management of the organization.
Peredo & Chrisman [31]	A community that corporately acts as both an entrepreneur and an enterprise in pursuit of the common good.
Nyssens [73]	An independent organization that is run by communities or individuals. It is not governed by the state. The profits are distributed for societal benefits.
Somerville & McElwee [32]	An independent, not-for-private-profit organization that is owned and/or managed by community members and highly committed to delivering long-term benefits to local people.
Bailey [30]	An organization that has a social purpose in relation to a specific population or sub-group living in a spatially defined area.
Sakolnakorn & Naipinit [74]	A business that people in communities work on collaboratively, investing money to get started, creating products together and sharing collective responsibility for everything that affects business operations. Additionally, its products emerge from the local wisdom and from local people who have transferred such knowledge from generation to generation.
Doherty et al. [75]	A hybrid organization that combines attributes from the private, non-profit and public sectors and seek the dual objectives of social and economic purposes.
Osborne et al. [76]	A type of co-production that focuses on voluntary involvement for co-innovation to deliver public services and respond to social needs.
Bailey, Kleinhans & Lindbergh [28]	An enterprise that is rooted in a particular geographical place and responds to its needs. It aims to generate profits to be reinvested in the local community. It is accountable to the local community. It benefits and impacts the local community.
Steiner & Teasdale [77]	An organization that tackles rural challenges to provide sustainable economic development. The organization aims to promote community cohesion.
Olmedo, van Twuijver, & O'Shaughnessy [78]	A social enterprise operates in a defined geographical location or 'community' and gives a high priority to engaging local residents and businesses.

Our literature review suggests that CBSE has five essential characteristics [29–32]. First, it is community-owned, by which assets belong to a community and cannot be sold for personal gains. Second, it must be operated and managed by community members. Third, the profits from the enterprise are shared among members or re-invested in the community business. Fourth, it aims to solve the social and environmental problems whilst delivering long term benefits to the community. Lastly, it is financially self-sustaining or minimizes the dependence from government funding, grants and donations.

While each CBSE case may vary based on their distinctive contexts, the literature identifies several underlying common success factors in the development of CBSE. These include leadership [28,33,79], local ownership [31], community participation and partnership support from within and outside the community [80–82], plus benefit-sharing [83,84]. In fact, CBSE represents a transformational change from traditional top-down to bottom-up participatory leadership approaches, and an absence of necessary leadership support may adversely affect CBSE progression toward sustainability [85]. Importantly, the literature puts the emphasis on leadership as the key driver to help CBSE recognize opportunities and risks and mobilize capital and capacities to achieve social benefits [33]. Hence, our study focuses on examining how the theoretical sustainable leadership practices are pragmatically implemented in the underdeveloped CBSE context.

2.4. Integration of Sustainable Leadership (SL) and Community-Based Social Enterprise (CBSE)

This paper intends to advance the currently limited research regarding SL in the CBSE context. How the theoretical framework of SL is relevant to and may be integrated into the CBSE context can be explained in Table 2. Table 2 provides functional descriptions of how these sustainable practices fit into the CBSE context. Each leadership element addresses issues and challenges that CBSE leaders may face when implementing the practices to achieve sustainability and resilience.

Table 2. Integrative relevance of SL and CBSE.

Leadership Elements	SL Theoretical Framework	Relevance in the CBSE Context
Foundations practices		
Developing people	Develops everyone continuously	Developing people is key to sustainable CBSEs.
Labor relation	Seeks cooperation	Sustainable CBSEs care for their staff and embed amicable labor relationships.
Retaining staffs	Values long tenure at all levels	CBSEs value their community members and staff. They tend to retain long-term staff for sustainable community development.
Succession planning	Promotes from within wherever possible	Succession planning and internal promotion is essential to develop long-term continuity and sustainable growth in CBSEs.
Valuing staff	Is concerned about employees' welfare	Sustainable CBSEs value and care for the well-being and welfare of the community members and the locals.
CEO and top team	CEO works as top team member or speaker	Shared or participative leadership and decision-making among its top-team community committees, members and/or stakeholders are key for sustainable CBSEs.
Ethical behavior	"Doing the right thing" as an explicit core value	Sustainable CBSEs comply with high ethics, morals and values, extending beyond the law's requirements.
Long-term or short-term perspective	Prefers the long term over the short term	Long-term orientation (e.g., long-term thinking, planning decisions and strategies) instead of the short-term goals is critical to develop sustainable impacts in CBSEs.
Organizational change	Change is an evolving and considered process	CBSEs are susceptible to external environmental impacts (e.g., economic, political, social and pandemic). They should adapt to systemic change to survive and thrive.
Financial market orientation	Seeks maximum independence from others	CBSEs should be independent from external market pressures, but financial supports from governmental or external institutional funding may be needed, depending on the varied CBSE developmental stages.
Responsibility for the environment	Protects the environment	Sustainable CBSEs pay respect to their environment and stay responsible for their environmental impacts.
Social responsibility	Values people and the community	Social and cultural sustainability in local communities are taken into account for sustainable CBSEs.
Stakeholder consideration	Everyone matters	Caring for stakeholders becomes a key to successful and sustainable CBSEs.
Vision's role in the business	Shared view of future is an essential strategic tool	A strong and shared vision in CBSEs is a strategic management tool toward success and sustainability.
Higher level practices		
Decision-making	Is consensual and devolved	Decision-making should be driven by community enterprise committees and teams to benefit sustainable development in successful CBSEs.

Table 2. Cont.

Leadership Elements	SL Theoretical Framework	Relevance in the CBSE Context
Self-management	Staff are mostly self-managing	In successful CBSEs, community leaders and members are likely to be self-managed and engage in community-driven governance. They commit to take responsibilities toward community development.
Team orientation	Teams are extensive and empowered	Strong teamwork and committed participation from community members become critical for sustainable CBSEs.
Culture	Fosters an enabling, widely shared culture	Shared and strong community culture and values drive longevity, resilience and long-term success in CBSEs.
Knowledge-sharing and retention	Spreads throughout the organization	Knowledge-sharing and management is key to sustainable community development and resilience. Regular meetings and continuous communication among community members are essential for successful CBSEs.
Trust	High trust through relationships and goodwill	Trust between community leaders and all stakeholders become key to successful CBSEs. Trust enhances bonding among all community members and improves social capital toward sustainability.
Key performance driver		
Innovation	Strong, systemic, strategic innovation evident at all levels	Innovation is critical for sustainable CBSEs due to intense competition and unexpected changes. Successful CBSEs should co-design or co-create social innovation for the long-term benefits of the community development.
Staff engagement	Values emotionally committed staff and the resulting commitment	Successful CBSEs need to emotionally engage with their members to create a sense of place or local ownership toward sustainable enterprises.
Quality	Is embedded in the culture	Sustainable CBSEs should produce superior quality products and services as well as embed high quality in all things they do to enhance long-term success.

In addition, this paper responds to a call for more evidence-based case studies to advance the SL theoretical research in the CBSE context. To answer the research inquiry, the study examines the 23 sustainable practices built by Rhineland's previous sustainability leadership research framework [63,65]. The SL practices are thus grouped into six categories: long-term perspective, people priority, organizational culture, innovation, social and environmental responsibility and ethics [63]. Additionally, we further examine other relevant value-based sustainability leadership competencies, including strategic (management) competence, systems thinking competence, anticipatory (foresight thinking) competence, interpersonal competence and ethical competence [8–11], to advance the theoretical development of SL in business.

2.4.1. Long-Term Perspective

The literature indicates that organizations should consider long-term perspectives rather than short-term views for sustainable growth [86]. Hofstede & Minkov's cultural study also indicates that long-term orientation is prominent in Asian cultures and becomes crucial for the economic development [87]. Research indicates that a sustainable enterprise must focus on the long term over the short term to achieve sustainability and resilience [7,19,88]. Leaders and members with the long-term orientation tend to emphasize the long-term future actions and outcomes, including thinking, planning decisions and strategies, instead of the short-term goals [63]. Built on the previous studies, the long-term orientation also requires diverse sustainability leadership competencies, namely, strategic (management) competence, systems thinking competence and anticipatory (foresight thinking) competence [8–11]. These sustainability leadership competencies incorporate the ability to think strategically and systematically in order to analyze complex systems toward sustainability strategies and future transformation. The competencies also help

anticipate potential consequences for future sustainability issues and decisions made by the enterprise at present.

Apart from its long-term thinking and management orientation, building long-term stakeholder relationships with related stakeholders (i.e., suppliers, customers, employees and the community) helps enhance future business wellbeing and the prosperity of SMEs [24]. The word “sustainability” clearly implies the long-term span over time. In the CBSE context, community leaders and their members are held accountable for their decisions and actions that affect related stakeholders in both the short and long term [89]. Every decision-maker must consider long-term impacts. The long-term orientation can improve the CBSE sustainability when all stakeholders are satisfied and a compromise between short- and long-term goals in all prudent decision-making are prudentially considered [12,54,56]. Long-term orientation allows organizations to outperform their competitors with the short-term thinking [90]. Recent studies [12,24,56,91] indicate that companies with long-term thinking and investments outperform their counterparties.

In light of the literature, the long-term orientation is a critical practice to create sustainable impacts in CBSEs. Hence, this study intends to investigate this SL element and the related competencies to advance the scanty research. It also seeks to understand how these values and practices can support the socio-economic and ecological development of a real-life CBSE setting, particularly during the COVID-19 era.

2.4.2. People Priority

People are core to organizational sustainability, and human capital is essential to socio-economic development [88]. Continuous people development or human resource development (HRD) is fundamental to human capital through various forms of education and skills trainings [7,19]. In practice, human resource management (HRM), comprising positive relationships with laborers, valuing people, staff retention and succession planning, is key to creating sustainable well-being and success in businesses, consistent with the literature [7,19] and sustainable HRM research [92]. The literature also stresses the importance of people priority and long-term staff retention within the community to create sustainable enterprises [65].

Importantly, people priority also extends to care for stakeholder orientation. Leaders care for all employees and stakeholders in sustainable firms [12,56]. Sustainability leadership works toward establishing good stakeholder relationships and partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders (e.g., staff, customers, suppliers, locals, academics, NGOs and governments) [22,24,53]. Stakeholder engagement and capacity building are imperative for sustainable leadership [5]. From a strategic management for sustainability perspective, stakeholder management and partnerships become vital for sustainable development [6]. A SME study also reveals that caring for stakeholders is a significantly positive driver for enhanced long-term financial performance [12,56].

Furthermore, the literature puts forward the importance of building sustainability leadership capabilities, particularly strategic (management) competence, systems thinking competence, anticipatory (foresight thinking) competence, interpersonal competence and ethical competence. [8–11]. These competencies strategically and systematically enhance people engagement, stakeholder interdependence and organizational ethical values, which can help transform future sustainability leadership and enterprises.

Previous research suggests that a sustainable CBSE should value and care for the people, including the community members, the locals and other stakeholders. The key purpose is to improve their well-being and support progressive socio-economic development in the CBSE. Hence, our research hopes to study this SL element and relevant competencies to advance our currently limited knowledge in this sphere in the CBSE context.

2.4.3. Organizational Culture

Sustainable leadership theory puts emphasis on building a strong organizational culture. Scholars signify that a shared, strong culture and values drive longevity, resilience

and long-term corporate success [12,56]. Underlying values and beliefs in a culture suggest how people should behave and help employees identify desirable behaviors. Collins & Porras's (1996) study shows that "built-to-last" companies shared strong cultures with their people, which make them the "special place to work" [93]. Empirical research also suggests that a strong and shared culture is a significant predictor of employee satisfaction [50]. The recent literature suggests that sustainability leaders should strategically and systematically enable people to develop "personal connection" and "empowerment to act" to achieve sustainability in business [8]. Despite the strategic and systemic thinking competence, the organizational culture also requires interpersonal and ethical competence to build sustainability leadership and organizations [10,11].

Based on the SL theory, sustainable enterprises foster a strong organizational culture with a shared vision. Culture is often managed through statements of vision, values and/or philosophy, statements intended to express direction, core beliefs and informal guidelines to influence the behavior of organizational members [64]. A vision is defined as a psychological image of the desired future for a community [94]. A meaningful and powerful vision can empower organization members' sense of ownership, emotional commitment, engagement and accountability toward sustainable goals [95,96]. Empirical research also supports the idea that the strong and shared vision can positively drive long-term financial performance [50]. In total, sharing a strong vision with employees is vital to create sustainable enterprises [12,56,63].

From the preceding discussion, it is expected that a strong culture with vision-sharing among all organizational members is key to sustainable enterprises. This study thus hopes to explore the SL element and the associated competencies to advance the SL theory as well as explain how a CBSE business may apply the theory to create sustainability and resilience.

2.4.4. Innovation

Sustainability leaders must rely on innovation to build successful enterprises. Rhineland's sustainable enterprises use innovation as a critical competitive advantage to lead their respective markets [54]. Continuing innovative organizations can lead to long-term growth and sustainable results [12,56,90]. Sustainable enterprises rely heavily on innovation in teams where shared leadership and collaboration among members are presented [7,97]. The research states that SMEs need to cultivate an empowered culture to create innovation capability [98]. Innovation and trusting team members are important for SMEs [99], and small enterprises should rely on their teams' abilities to be innovative and achieve competitive advantages [100]. In recent research, a trusting, innovative team is a significantly positive driver for enhanced sustainability performance outcomes, particularly long-term financial performance and stakeholder satisfaction, in the SME and entrepreneurial contexts [12,13]. In total, innovation is key to sustainable firms and socio-economic development. Researchers also indicate that social innovation can drive long-term success and sustainability in small community enterprises [101,102].

The literature also highlights that building sustainability leadership with innovation requires diverse competencies. They are the strategic management, systems thinking, anticipatory and ethical competencies. The sustainability leaders are required to think strategically and manage their innovation initiatives in anticipation of future sustainability needs and ethical-oriented values to achieve a balancing socio-economic and environmental responsibility [8,10,11].

Furthermore, the recent literature indicates that social innovation enhances sustainable development in community enterprises [103]. Social innovation is referred to as a "distinctive and effective response to address unmet needs motivated by a social purpose which enhances social assets and capabilities" [104] (p. 471). The social innovation can be developed or grown from their traditional cultural and/or rich environmental heritage [105]. Community members normally decide on initiatives and solutions that are best for them by their own without external pressure. Collectively, the community members try to solve

a particular issue or problem by innovating positive solutions that are expected to happen and processing through their collective group innovation [106].

Existing research in the area of sustainability-oriented innovation in the CBSE context in this area is still underdeveloped. This paper thus intends to explore the lacking topic of how a CBSE business can embrace or enable continuing and social innovation to support community development and sustainability.

2.4.5. Social and Environmental Responsibility

Social and environmental responsibility is the core to develop sustainability leadership in sustainable enterprises. Sustainable businesses should positively contribute to society to grow social responsibility, preserve cultural heritage and promote ecological conservation [7]. The literature stresses the importance of anticipatory and ethical competence in thinking about how to pave sustainable paths forward with foresight as well as to enable social and environmental responsibility toward sustainable futures [8,11]. Ethical values and norms—specifically, the pro-environmental behaviors and values with a focus on strict social and environmental responsibilities—become the crucial element in a sustainable entrepreneurship model [11]. Scholars also call for the balancing of personal ethical values and business objectives when planning and implementing social-and-environmental responsibility activities [10].

The sustainability leaders often go beyond what the law and society require in their social and environmental responsibilities. Being socially and environmentally responsible pays off by increasing sustainability performance outcomes [65]. Social responsibility is also found to be the significant key predictor of long-term financial performance in SMEs [24]. Researchers show that sustainable enterprises that operate businesses beyond minimum regulatory requirements with sustainability orientation can outperform those without [65,107]. SME firms with care for socio-economic and environmental focus can enhance profitability and competitive gains [99,108]. Recent studies also affirm an upcoming trend towards a green ideology and socio-environmental sustainability [109,110].

According to the SL theory, sustainable enterprises are primarily concerned about social and environmental responsibilities. In the CBSE context, enterprises do not solely focus on generating economic benefits but also gear toward social and ecological benefits to support the community [29]. Therefore, our study intends to examine the SL element in practice and how a CBSE business can survive and thrive for sustainability and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

2.4.6. Ethical Behavior

Ethical values and behaviors are essential for sustainability leadership to build sustainable firms. Leadership principles should stem from ethics and moral principles as the foundation for business sustainability [49,111]. A moral purpose and ethics must be embedded in enterprises to create corporate sustainability [112]. Ethics help create positive organizational impacts (e.g., integrity, loyalty and fairness at work) as well as promote equitable and virtuous environments with justice, equality and human rights [113,114]. Scholars [115,116] highlight that enterprises need to support ethical leadership to foster a strong ethical culture and create corporate values that drive sustainable performance outcomes. In the literature, ethical enterprises are found to enhance employee satisfaction, a superior business performance competitive advantage [49,57,112]. A meta-analysis indicates that leadership and ethics should go hand in hand as the strategic elements to support organizational strategies and drive the balancing of socio-ecological and economic values for long-term sustainability [4].

Diverse researchers also put forward the significance of ethical competence with moral values in developing sustainability leadership in business [8,11,117]. Osagie et al. suggest that sustainability leaders should apply personal ethics to a business situation, called “personal value-driven competencies”, in order “to strike an appropriate balance between idealism and pragmatism” [10]. The literature also highlights the magnitude of motivation

or “the moral transformation from a passive attitude with respect to sustainability issues into an active and engaged attitude” [10]. Furthermore, pro-environmental behaviors and values with a strict focus on social and environmental responsibilities are key to developing sustainability leadership in business [8,11]. As a result, ethics become critical for creating a sustainable entrepreneurship model [11].

According to the literature, ethics are key to corporate sustainability and resilience. Yet, evidence-based research that investigates ethics and sustainability in the CBSE setting is still lacking. Therefore, this research aims to study this SL element and the associated competencies to advance the SL theory in this sphere as well as to explore how these ethical and moral values are operated to develop sustainability leadership and build a sustainable CBSE.

2.5. Community-Based Social Enterprise (CBSE) in Thailand

Historically, the concept of social enterprises has a long history in Thailand stretching back over a century ago. It originated from a cooperative form of business, called a “co-op” for short, by low-income farmer communities in rural areas to expand markets and gain financial access [118]. The government of Thailand has recognized the social enterprise model as an alternative means for promoting community development and driving sustainable socio-economic growth. In May 2009, the Social Enterprise Promotion Act was launched to promote, register and provide grants and loans for registered social enterprises [119], and the Social Enterprise Thailand Association or SE Thailand was established with aims to build a network among social enterprises and work collaboratively with other sectors to boost social and environmental impacts [120,121]. According to the Social Enterprise Promotion Act 2019, social enterprises that want to register with the Office of Social Enterprise Promotion (OSEP) must meet the following criteria: (1) have a clear social purpose and good governance, (2) generate at least 50% of revenue from selling community-based products or services and (3) reinvest at least 70% of profit into social purposes. The registered social enterprises benefit from tax allowance, and their sponsors are also eligible for a tax reduction. As of February 2021, there were 148 registered social enterprises under the new Act [121,122].

Expanding from the traditional view of social enterprises, the concept of community-based social enterprise (CBSE) in Thailand is increasingly recognized as a sustainable solution for socio-economic development at the community level and in the bottom of the pyramid setting. Since 2001, the Thai government has developed One Tambon One Product (OTOP) as a project initiative to promote the CBSE concept to the public. According to the Community Development Department (CDD), Ministry of Interior, the initiative intends to create one community-based product or service per municipality to support poverty alleviation and increase prosperity in every Thai village [123]. The government provides funding, technical assistance, business consultancies and market access to both domestic and international markets. Yet, the local communities have their rights and accountability on every business decision, ranging from product development and marketing to sales. In fact, OTOP is regarded as an instrument to build up social entrepreneurial activities among the grassroots. The government introduced a grant of one million Baht to fund the project accordingly and allocated its budget to 74,989 villages during the third phase of its project implementation [123,124].

Later in 2005, the Community Enterprise Promotion Act was enacted with an aim of supporting and promoting CBSEs in Thailand. Later, this act evolved to the Unity Civil Society Policy or “Pracharat Rak Samakki” in 2015 [124]. Then, the Department of Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative oversees registration and administrative support for the community enterprises. Thus far, there are 116,298 registered community enterprises, but only 520 of them were officially registered as legal entities or companies as of 2021 [121,125].

According to Sakolnakan & Naipinit [126], there are three levels of community enterprises in Thailand.

1. **Primary Level.** At this level, the community enterprises produce their own goods for their own consumption on a small scale, such as consumables such as soap, shampoo and dishwashing liquid, and the produced goods can be locally sold to community members at lower prices than those of large manufacturers. This can help lessen the cost of living for people in the community.
2. **Development level.** Community enterprises at the development level have the capacity to develop their new market channels. Additional goods and services are primarily sold to neighboring communities and other people who visit the communities. The revenues and profits from those transactions return to their community.
3. **Progressive Level.** At the progressive level, community enterprises produce their goods and services for mass markets. They better understand the market mechanism and continuously expand to other external markets and the general public. Profits are used to grow their businesses for community development and sustainability.

In addition, the literature identifies many challenges and obstacles found in CBSEs in Thailand that hinder their business success. For example, poor leadership and organizational management, limited production capabilities because of old machinery and the high cost of labor [127], accounting and financial management [128,129] and marketing and product development in terms of product design, trademark, labeling, packaging, pricing and proper distribution channels [130–132]. Since the literature highlights the importance of CBSEs in sustainable development, this paper intends to expand the underdeveloped SL theoretical knowledge and its application for sustainability and resilience.

3. Business Case: A Community-Based Social Enterprise of Tung Yee Peng Village

This paper mainly focuses on the business case of a CBSE context in order to advance our knowledge in the limited field. For the investigation, the CBSE case study is called Tung Yee Peng Village (TYP), located in a Koh Lanta Island in the Krabi province of Thailand. Koh Lanta Island is a famous international tourist attraction with beautiful white sandy beaches, rocky shores, colorful coral reefs and rich natural resources from marine biodiversity. TYP is a small coastal fishing village surrounded by abundant nature with mountain forests, sea mangroves and rivers, with a total geographic area of 5.6 square kilometers. It largely is home to a Muslim community that has been settled for more than 100 years with a love of the nature and its strong cultural heritage [133]. In 2004, the TYP community survived the tsunami disaster due to its abundant mangrove forest, which has been registered as a community forest. After the tsunami hit in 2005, the community received support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to build a pier bridge to connect the mainland and the island, which could lead to a community forest learning center. Currently, the population is about 1065 people with 300 households.

Due to its popular tourism destination of Koh Lanta, TYP has developed as a famous community-based tourism spot on the beautiful island. The ecotourism activities have attracted many outsiders, investors and tourists into the area. In 2011, TYP was officially registered as an Ecotourism Community Enterprise Group, with an original local membership of 130. This CBSE has been led by the strong visionary leadership of Mr. Narathorn Hongthong for over eight years. His leadership has supported the community toward organic growth, in which the locals own and operate all activities at the CBSE. The community members have a strong participative engagement and commitment regarding how to capitalize natural resources and cultural heritage sustainably. This CBSE has focused on three main areas of development: (1) community-based tourism, (2) community forest management and (3) the promotion of sports in the community. To balance the socio-economic and ecological responsibilities, this CBSE offers ancient gondola sailing and kayaking in its serene mangrove forest to enjoy the beautiful island with rich biodiversity. The tourism program also includes its famous “Dawn bathing program” and “Moonlight bathing program” with their morning and night gondola rides. The social enterprise also provides local homestay services, called the “home plus” initiative, which let tourists experience the traditional local foods and community lifestyles. It also expands

to sell the community homemade and handmade products, such as shrimp paste, dried fish, herbal tea and shrimp oil. The TYP community-based social enterprise has equitable benefit-sharing among the local community members.

Furthermore, to serve the increasing demand of tourists, the village also expands its networks to partner with other local entrepreneurs, such as luxury hotels and resorts, car rentals, boat rentals and souvenir shops, to help tourism at ease, and TYP has also created diverse multi-lateral partnerships with external parties, such as the Royal Forest Department, Krabi Community Development Office, Tourism Authority of Thailand–Krabi office, Office of Tourism and Sports and several higher education institutes, to support community exchanges of ideas and knowledge-sharing.

Indeed, the TYP village is a successful community-based tourism model. It has received many awards over the years. In 2017, it received the Best Community Forest Award. In 2020, it won the Best Rural Tourism Award in the category of Best Responsible Tourism, organized by the Tourism Authority of Thailand [134]. Today, TYP is a self-sustaining community business, as it has grown to become a progressive-level CBSE according to Sakolnakan & Naipinit [126].

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the local community enjoyed the economic growth. Yet, the tourism has, to some extent, caused geosocial changes in the traditional fishing and farming cultures, and the people have turned and engaged in the tourism service businesses. The changes have raised many concerns for some community members, who want to maintain a simple lifestyle and live in harmony with nature. The rapid growth of tourism businesses has raised critical questions about environmental conservation and cultural heritage preservation for the community. However, the pandemic crisis has hit this CBSE like many other businesses. Hence, this paper aspires to study the sustainability leadership in practice, particularly in the underdeveloped CBSE context.

4. Research Methodology

The study employs a qualitative case study research design to answer our research inquiries. The theoretical sustainability-oriented leadership research frameworks are mainly based on Avery & Bergsteiner's 23 sustainable leadership [7] and sustainability competencies [8–11] to examine our key research questions and further advance the SL theory. In particular, our business case study focuses on the green or ecotourism community-based social enterprise (CBSE) of Tung Yee Peng (TYP) village, as discussed in the previous section. Importantly, the evidence-based research was conducted according to the international ethical standards and approved by the Mahidol University Central Institutional Review Board (MUCIRB).

We adopted a multi-data collection method to collect data to answer the research questions with a multi-stakeholder perspective. We employed in-depth interviews, non-participant observations and references to the documentation and information supplied by or published about the enterprise to enhance the quality of the research, as suggested by Yin [135]. Our data collection was aimed to gain better knowledge about the CBSE development and its community members' perceptions, satisfactions, challenges and opportunities at the CBSE pre-COVID-19 and during the pandemic, along with their opinions regarding its economic, social and environmental impacts on sustainability and resilience. Due to the varying COVID-19 pandemic situations in 2021, we conducted our data collection in both on-line and on-site modes. We collected primary data from several semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus groups and non-participatory observations of the diverse stakeholders at the TYP village. We also interviewed the leader or head of the community and social enterprise, its CBSE committee members, its community residents, the nearby locals and business entrepreneurs in the surrounding areas. Moreover, we conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with its related external stakeholders, including the three-panel judges of the Thailand Rural Tourism Award 2020, the chairman of the Lanta Island Tourism Association and its visiting tourists. In total, we collected data from several

face-to-face interviews and focus groups with more than 30 voluntary participants at the CBSE site.

In general, in-depth interviews and focus groups provide the researchers the benefit of exploring a given topic and gaining insight. The in-depth interviews allow for the exploration of the personal thoughts, attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of the interviewees in a safe environment without peer judgement [136]. Focus groups can help generate data based on the synergy of the group interaction [137]. We also engaged in participative and non-participative observations at the CBSE sites. The observations help the research team to gain better understating of the context [138]. Regarding the technical approach, all participants were informed of the study objectives. In addition, note-taking and tape-recording techniques were also employed during the interviews [139]. The open-ended and probing technique was used during the in-depth interviews to generate qualitative data [139]. The probing questions allowed the researcher to clarify contents and document analysis explored in the in-depth interview answers [140]. In addition, our secondary data were derived from publicly available publications, such as newspapers and publicized media from reliable sources and institutes.

For data analysis, thematic analysis [141] was employed to organize the data, identify commonalities and offer insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across the data set. The literature indicates that it is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis [142]. The analysis also supported the researchers in conducting the mechanics of coding and analyzing the qualitative data systematically so that it could later be linked to broader theoretical or conceptual issues/themes, as advocated by the literature [141]. According to Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, the thematic analysis demonstrates a combination of inductive and deductive thematic approaches [142]. The methodological approach thus helped us to integrate data-driven codes with theory-driven ones.

In this study, the thematic analytical approach allowed the researchers to independently examine and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences from the empirical data and observations for conclusive patterns or thematic identification. Further, it helped us to provide deductive reasoning for testing the theories. In practice, we examined to what extent TYP's practices are congruent with the sustainable leadership principles by investigating the theoretical SL conformity levels. The assessment levels can be classified on a range from "least evident", to "moderately evident", to "most evident" based on the relative strengths of the evidence found in the case study, as illustrated in the next section. In addition, we studied how the community-based social enterprise could pragmatically employ the sustainability leadership competencies, based on the identified categories, through the theoretical mapping and interconnection. Largely, the data analysis helped us to uncover both descriptive insights about the sustainable practices in the real-life CBSE context and enhance the SL theoretical advancement.

Furthermore, document analysis [143] through reviews of the company-related documentation or publications from the secondary data was employed to explore the data, elicit meaning and gain more in-depth understanding about the CBSE context. More importantly, we also ensured the validity and reliability of the qualitative study using triangulation [144]. We triangulated using multiple sources of evidence and the aforementioned combined analysis and approach for comprehensive analysis, understanding of phenomena and theoretical development, as suggested by the literature.

In conclusion, the qualitative case study method and techniques were specifically employed to answer the research inquiries with three main goals: (1) to validate the data for the rigor and quality of the research, (2) to gain insights into the phenomena of the specific context in this case study and (3) to present the robust evidence and reliable findings for further theoretical advancement. Overall, the described research method in this study helped us to expand our limited understanding and scholarly knowledge about the SL theoretical development of the CBSE phenomenon as well as provided us with vigorous

evidence on how the sustainability leadership theory could be practiced in an actual setting with validity and reliability.

5. Analytical Findings

The following analytical findings intend to address our key research inquiries. The beginning part answers the first research question: what are essential sustainable leadership practices and sustainability competencies for corporate sustainability and resilience in a CBSE context? Our analytical findings employ both theoretical frameworks (i.e., the sustainable leadership and the sustainability competencies), which are separately analyzed and discussed in the resulting subsections. Further, the later part responds to the second research question: how can a CBSE business apply the practices and competencies in action to survive and thrive for sustainable futures, especially during the COVID-19 era? In particular, the research context focuses on the green or ecotourism CBSE of the Tung Yee Peng (TYP) village during the COVID-19 era, as described in turn.

Using the theoretical SL framework, we can identify varied extents of the conformity of the CBSE with diverse sustainable practices and sustainability competencies. Built on the previous SL study in a community business, the SL conformity levels are based on the relative strengths of evidence found in the case study [65]. The levels can be classified on a range from “least evident”, to “moderately evident”, to “most evident”. We can also group the 23 SL elements based on Avery & Bergsteiner’s theoretical framework into six relevant categories, as previously elaborated in the integration of SL and CBSE (see Table 1 and Section 2.4) [7]. The assessment of sustainable leadership in the CBSE of Tung Yee Peng is elaborated next.

From the analysis, the CBSE in TYP appears to be broadly conform to the SL research framework. Table 3 presents a summary of the resulting findings. From Table 3, we can identify all 23 sustainable leadership practices at the CBSE setting, but to different degrees. The evidence suggests varied conformity with the SL theoretical framework. The sustainable practices are not mutually exclusive but are interrelated to enhance corporate sustainability. In this study, we can distinguish six SL relevant categories, as supported by the literature. They cover several interconnected sustainable leadership practices, as presented in sequence.

Firstly, the TYP community-based social enterprise strongly adopts a long-term perspective, which covers 17 out of the 23 SL practices including managing and developing people, long-term planning, high quality and organization-wide management practices. Secondly, the evidence suggests that 17 out of the 23 SL elements are well associated with people priority, including varied HR perspectives from HRM to HRD, stakeholder orientation, teamwork and staff engagement. Thirdly, 19 out of the 23 SL aspects are greatly linked with the organization culture to enable its employees, support the strong culture and enhance its all-inclusive organizational management systems. Finally, nine out of 23 SL components are found under the innovation category, comprising organizational change, knowledge-sharing and retention and quality. In terms of social and environmental responsibility, 7 out of the 23 sustainable practices, specifically, social responsibility, environmental care, stakeholder orientation and quality, are integrated in the social enterprise. Lastly, 14 out of the 23 SL elements are clearly connected to the ethical behavior category, such as valuing staff, high quality and embedded ethical conducts in all business decision-making and management activities, as illustrated in Table 3.

In addition, our subsequent analysis addresses the following question: what are the essential sustainability competencies for corporate sustainability and resilience in a CBSE context? Stemming from the theoretical framework for sustainability competencies [8–11], we particularly identify five critical sustainability competencies for corporate sustainability and resilience in a CBSE context. They are strategic (management) competence, systems thinking competence, anticipatory (foresight thinking) competence, interpersonal competence and ethical competence. These competencies are crucial for developing sustainability leadership, as supported by the preceding literature.

Table 3. Sustainable leadership grid at the Tung Yee Peng community-based social enterprise.

Honeybee Elements on Sustainable Leadership Grid	TYP	Extent to Conformity			Relevant Categories					
		Least Evident	Moderate Evident	Most Evident	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Develop people	x		x							
2. Labor relations	x			x						
3. Retaining staffs	x			x						
4. Succession planning	x	x								
5. Valuing staffs	x			x						
6. CEO and top team	x	x								
7. Ethical behavior	x			x						
8. Long-term perspective	x			x						
9. Organization change	x		x							
10. Financial market orientation	x	x								
11. Environmental responsibility	x			x						
12. Social responsibility	x			x						
13. Stakeholder orientation	x			x						
14. Vision’s role in business	x		x							
15. Decision making: consensual	x			x						
16. Self-management	x		x							
17. Team orientation	x			x						
18. Enabling culture	x			x						
19. Knowledge sharing and retention	x		x							
20. Trust	x			x						
21. Innovation	x			x						
22. Staff engagement	x			x						
23. Quality	x			x						
Total elements in conformity	23									

Legend: x = conforms. Category No.: 1 = long term perspective; 2 = people priority; 3 = organizational culture; 4 = innovation; 5 = social and environmental responsibility; 6 = ethical behavior. The shadow refers to mapping evidence found in each category. Source: Authors.

To advance the theoretical development of the SL theory, we integrate the theoretical SL practices and sustainability leadership competencies in a single study. Our integrative SL theoretical framework for sustainability practices and competencies is shown in Table 4. It generally depicts the integration of the theoretical SL practices and sustainability leadership competencies as they are applied in practice, based on the evidence found at the Tung Yee Peng community-based social enterprise.

Table 4. SL practices and competencies grid at the Tung Yee Peng community-based social enterprise.

SL Categories in Practice	Competence				
	Strategic	Systems Thinking	Anticipatory	Interpersonal	Ethical
Long term perspective	x	x	x		
People priority	x		x	x	x
Organizational culture	x	x		x	x
Innovation	x	x	x		
Social and environmental responsibility			x		x
Ethical behavior		x			x

Legend: x = conforms; Source: Authors.

Table 4 also illustrates the importance of the leadership competencies that are required in developing sustainability leadership along with the SL categories, based on the evidence found in practice. The evidence suggests that the leadership competencies are not mutually exclusive but are interrelated to enhance each of the sustainable leadership categories.

The next part subsequently responds to the second research inquiry. The following analytical findings demonstrate how the community-based social enterprise can pragmatically apply the value-based sustainable leadership practices and sustainability leadership competencies in practice. In brief, the results entail how the CBSE business can put various sustainability leadership practices and sustainability leadership competencies into action, as elaborated in sequence.

5.1. Long-Term Perspective

One finding reveals that the social enterprise adopts a strong long-term orientation consistent with the abovementioned literature. At TYP, its mission focuses on long-term inclusive sustainable growth for all. According to the Head of the TYP community-based social enterprise, the mission states: “developing the economy, society, and environment at the family level”. This mission involves both internal and external stakeholders. Going beyond short-term profits, the social enterprise exhibits that every decision or practice it makes must create lasting values for all stakeholders and benefit the society and future generations. It also suggests the necessary sustainability leadership competencies, specifically, the strategic and systematic thinking and anticipatory capacity. These essential competencies are integrated in its sustainability-oriented strategy toward creating shared values and sustainable futures, aligned with the literature [8–11]. Our analytical results from diverse interviews also show the following evidence that the long-term orientation is key to its sustainable development.

“We want to avoid the short-term capitalism concept. We pay attention not only [to] revenue from tourism but also [to] the impact on the environment and livelihood of people in the community. We need to have a long-term plan.” —Head of the TYP community-based social enterprise

“TYP is only a small village in Lanta Island. We share long heritages, challenges and hardships. We only have 300 households in the community. All of us are accountable for any actions we do, and we must think of our children and the next generations.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (A)

Taking a long-term perspective is strongly marked through its enduring cultural heritage preservation and environmental protection at TYP. Its stakeholders also observed how the social enterprise intended to create shared values within the community and for others toward sustainability.

“The community-based social enterprise has strictly complied with the stringent criteria of Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), which are the global standard for sustainable travel and tourism. The social enterprise does not only focus on its profit maximization but also preserve[s] its long cultural heritage and protect its environment as key priorities. This is why I gave the highest scores for TYP and selected it as the winner of the best responsible tourism category for Thailand’s Rural Tourism Award.” —Judge of the best responsible tourism category, Thailand Rural Tourism Award 2020 (A)

“I feel that the TYP community understands and learns how to live together with the nature in harmony. The community and locals are united toward the common goals toward good well-being of the society. The social enterprise shows us how to make the best use of its local natural resources without harming the biodiversity and ecosystem. They don’t only focus on profit but also aim to preserve the cultural heritage and community livelihood. These are my thoughts about the trip at the community.” —A tourist (B)

Our finding is also consistent with the literature finding that sustainable enterprises, which adopt a long-term perspective with moderation and sufficiency thinking, prevail

and grow sustainability. During the interviews, the sufficiency mindset and resilience with long-term endurance was also presented. The tsunami catastrophe in 2005 and past crises had helped the community to focus on long-term building toward more sustainable futures, and its former careless actions, such as tree-cutting of the mangrove trees or ruining the fertile agricultural land for other fast or big money businesses like shrimp farming, had damagingly changed the ecosystems and reshaped the thinking. The adverse impacts on natural biodiversity, ecological systems and societal changes from short-term capitalism were the great lessons learned for the locals.

“We learn from our mistakes. Now, we must carefully do things and do only what we have resources and expertise for. If we have no expertise and are uncertain about investments, we will not risk investing in it. Today, we think to create long-term values more than short-term gains.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (B)

5.2. People Priority

The community-based social enterprise at TYP cares for its people as the top priority for sustainability and resilience. The social enterprise develops, values and keeps good relations with its people and stakeholders to benefit the community’s well-being and the society. The enterprise members are considered as the most crucial assets and the family, whilst other stakeholders (i.e., the locals, its community, academics and governmental institutes) are considered as its partners. Caring for its people and multiple stakeholders demonstrates its sustainability leadership capability and competencies to think and manage strategically with foresight, since these individuals have significant impacts on future sustainability and the transformation of the social enterprise, consistent with the foregoing studies [8–11]. As a result, the supporting evidence shows:

“TYP is a very small community, and we are the poorest community compared to other neighboring villages. We are more united and cohesive because of the poverty and hardship we shared. We perceive everyone as our family members. All [of the] families know each other and we are more like an extended large family in the community. We are kind to each other and help one another in everything. Regarding the community-based social enterprise we set up, we take everyone’s point of view, concern and interest into account for every decision we make. We are concerned with not only the members but also other people who are not our enterprise members.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (A)

“All villagers are like brothers and sisters. If there’s anything, we help each other out. We also have conversations to consult each other all the time.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s member (A)

With participative leadership, the TYP social enterprise holds regular monthly team meetings with the full engagement of its committees and related stakeholders. They devolve and are involved in all of the decision-making. They commit to having a strong sense of place and ownership to enhance the community’s well-being. Moreover, they have strong accountability, with collective responsibility and emotional commitment toward the enterprise’s success. As a consequence, the enterprise members accept the shared responsibility for developing community-based tourism activities.

“There is at least a once a month meeting for the enterprise update. In this meeting, we include the government agencies, the village headman, and the assistant village headman. We get help and work together with the assistant village headman, village committees and village health volunteers. All community members fully participate in every activity, as they realize how tourism activities can positively and negatively affect their well-being.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (B)

“Altruism is one of our core values at TYP. Sometimes we have conflicts, and these misunderstandings adversely affects our enterprise’s work. Yet, when we think about our

community's benefit as a priority, all disputes are solved. And then, we are back together again." —TYP community-based social enterprise's committee (A)

"We feel proud of [the] TYP village. We have full ownership and shared responsibility to protect our community in preserving the long cultural heritage and conserving natural resources. We keep them for our children and the young generations." —TYP community-based social enterprise's member (B)

Moreover, this CBSE fosters a knowledge-sharing culture that allows everyone to share and learn from each other's successes or failures. It also contributes as a successful community-based learning center for other neighborhoods or nearby communities. Others can learn from the CBSE's sustainable business model, best practices or lessons learnt so that they can apply what they learn in their business contexts. However, our evidence shows that this CBSE does not have a clear succession plan or any systemic or explicit training curriculum in place, which differs from other sustainable enterprises found in the developed countries in the West. This CBSE mainly focuses on tacit knowledge-sharing and retention through community participation, meetings, discussions, story-telling and learning by doing rather than proper classroom settings or well-structured workshops. Yet, the enterprise leader has encouraged members to participate in various trainings, seminars and programs provided by government agencies and universities when opportunities arise.

"I use casual gatherings, such as having a talk over tea or meal together, rather than formal training. I show them the truth, showing what is right and not. Then, the rest of the villagers will decide for themselves. They need to think about how they would like the community and their livelihood to be." —Head of the TYP community-based social enterprise

5.3. Organizational Culture

Sustainability leaders must cultivate a strong organizational culture to achieve sustainable success and resilience. The literature suggests that the social enterprise and its people should have a 'personal connection' and 'empowerment to act' to develop sustainability leaders in business [8]. The evidence in this case study also supports the importance of the interpersonal competence as a key enabler of sustainability leadership [11]. At TYP, the community-based social enterprise presents a strong organizational culture. The social enterprise also promotes its strong ethical and cultural values toward selfless dedication and altruism to support the sustainable development, consistent with the ethical competence [11]. For generations, the people in this culture have embedded and embraced strong 'personal connection' values with love and care for the rich ecological system and cultural heritage. Protecting its nature and nurturing biodiversity in the community becomes the living philosophy and way of living that goes beyond any formal guidelines or regulatory compliance. The community has a strong spiritual connection with the nature as the vital symbol of life on earth. It also treats the mother earth—all trees, rivers and the ocean—with esteemed respect. People in the community and the social enterprise believe that TYP is the "special place to work", consistent with the literature [93], and the loving and caring community-based social enterprise makes all people and employees feel happy and satisfied. Building the strong organizational culture at the social enterprise also requires the strategic and systematic competencies together with the ethical competence to develop sustainability leadership and organizations [11].

"TYP is a small fishing community surrounded by abundant nature with mountain forests, sea mangroves and rich biodiversity. We love our culture and natural resources. We have to preserve our culture and conserve the environment to pass on to our children and [the] next generations." —TYP community-based social enterprise's committee (A)

"Leaders must have the heart to serve and dedicate themselves to the community. I appreciate the strong leadership here. I can feel that the community enterprise leader and members have strong teamwork. If only one person frowns, the whole atmosphere can

turn sour. But here they are so warm and friendly. This is the charming magic of TYP.”
—A tourist (B)

Moreover, the social enterprise understands the importance of “empowerment to act”. The social entrepreneur empowers its people to act upon the common and strong shared vision and core values to cultivate its strong culture to last for future generations. The meaningful and powerful vision and values toward environmental conservation and cultural preservation for the next generations help empower all organization members’ sense of ownership, emotional commitment, engagement and accountability toward sustainable goals. It offers all-inclusive organizational management systems implicitly and explicitly. It provides education to support knowledge-sharing and learning within the community through regular meetings, story-telling, internal and external training and development from within the enterprise or external sources. It also established a learning center, called “TYP’s Community Forest Nature Study and Ecotourism Center”. The center focuses on a natural resource management project where the community can learn and enhance their analytical thinking. It is also a training venue for the sea and coastal volunteer citizens. There are various programs at the center, including a study visit to improve other community members’ understanding about how they can effectively implement sustainability actions and manage multiple natural resources in the village.

“The TYP’s community forest learning center is set up to create awareness of the importance of the forest conservation. It encourages the people in the community to fully participate and cooperate in organizing responsible tourism activities.” —Head of the TYP community-based social enterprise.

“The TYP’s community forest learning center is open for everyone in the community and visitors, both individuals and groups. It aims to foster relationships between the community and natural resources in TYP. It is the venue for all community members to learn and care for the mangrove forest and surrounding nature. It also provides educational trainings for children and youth in the area to develop their artwork by using the natural biodiversity in the mangrove forest as the source of inspiration. Moreover, the center welcomes all community members and local entrepreneurs to exhibit and sell their environmentally friendly products in the center for visitors and tourists.” —TYP community-based social enterprise committee (B)

The social enterprise envisions that the community-based tourism can be instrumental to enrich its economic prosperity, social equity and environment quality. This vision gives the direction of where people should go or what they should aim for. This clear vision has empowered the enterprise members. They share ownership rights and collective responsibility as well as feel emotionally committed to their cultural and natural resources that are key to the tourist attractions. The finding shows a strong collective responsibility in this CBSE. Collective responsibility focuses on mutual understanding and awareness of tourism development in the village of TYP. The enterprise members accept the shared responsibility for developing tourism initiatives. They follow the CBSE rules and instructions. The collective responsibility also refers to taking care of their cultural and natural heritage assets (e.g., keeping their building fresh and pavement clean) as well as continuously improving their hospitality to enhance the tourist experiences.

“We all have shared responsibility for the development of TYP and the success of our enterprise. All community members fully participate in every activity, as we realize how tourism activities can positively and negatively affect the well-being and sustainability of the community.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (B)

“It is everyone’s responsibility to keep our village clean. Moreover, we all should be good hosts when tourists visit our village.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s member (B)

5.4. Innovation

Sustainability leaders foster innovation to achieve long-term growth and competitive advantages. The findings from the case study suggest that the CBSE leader and enterprise members focus on a shared leadership through collective group innovation and collaboration to co-create innovation as a team. They put effort into cultivating an empowered culture to create innovation capability, as suggested by the literature [7,98]. They also work together to decide on initiatives and solutions that are best for them to develop social innovation as well as grow from their traditional cultural and/or rich environmental heritage to enhance social assets and capabilities for long-term success, in line with the previous research [103–105]. The evidence also supports the importance of the sustainability leadership competencies, as it illustrates how the social enterprise has innovation as its strategic imperative [11]. It also anticipates how its foresight and innovative initiatives can support socio-economic balance without harms to the ecosystem [8,11].

“Our community members have worked together and shared the ideas on how to capitalize natural resources and cultural heritage sustainably. One of the ideas was to use forests as the protagonist of ecotourism as an innovative initiative. Therefore, it is a sustainable alternative for the TYP community to prevent and reduce the impact on the environment. And, the tourists can directly experience as well as learn from our natural environment and ecosystem.” —Head of the TYP community-based social enterprise

In the case study, it is evident that the social enterprise leader and members help each other to co-design distinctive products and service innovations. The innovative products and hospitality services include distinct tourism programs and activities that exhibit an authentic originality, such as its dawn bathing or sunrise gondola programs. For example, the dawn bathing gondola program allows tourists or visitors to take a cruise from the early morning at 5:00–9:00 a.m. with the local guides and villagers, who escort them to see the sunrise. The dawn or sunrise bathing gondola program in TYP has become the most popular destination and a must-do tourism activity in Lanta Island. This product innovation is a good example of social innovation. The tourism programs aim to present their inimitable cultural heritage of the old-fashioned fishing village as well as promote the natural biodiversity conservation in the mangrove forest to support socio-environmental responsibility.

“The gondola with dawn bathing program has a unique value proposition. Our community is not only selling gondola rides. We sell the philosophy behind it. Tourists do not only enjoy the beauty of mangrove forests during the course, but they also learn to appreciate the nature whilst enhancing their sense of responsibility to the planet. Tourists can appreciate the serenity and art of living.” —Head of the TYP community-based social enterprise

“The program developer has an excellent understanding of the concept of luxury marketing. They know how to decipher the luxury. Tourists can stay in ultra-luxury hotel chains, such as the Four seasons or the Six Senses, and take on the similar luxury services and experiences with its gondola dawn bathing program. The course is well crafted and designed to enhance the tourist experiences. They know how to let their visitors enjoy the beauty of the scenery. They also know when the best moment is and [. . .] which landscape points would be much appreciated for food-catering and photo-shooting.” —Judge of the best responsible tourism category, Thailand Rural Tourism Award 2020 (B)

Before the COVID 19 pandemic crisis, many young people in the TYP village moved to seek employment in Bangkok or overseas. Consequently, the family values were diminished, the young failed to appreciate the significance of family bonding and various family members stayed apart. However, the COVID 19 crisis has put many young seasonal and migrant workers out of jobs, and they then returned to their origin and hometown with no earnings. To solve the social problems and family challenges of the crisis, the

leader or headman of the social enterprise and its community committees discussed and helped co-create a new social innovation. The social enterprise has introduced the “Baan Buak” (in Thai) or “Home plus” (in English) initiative. The “Baan Buak” or “Home plus” concept seeks to bring all family members to work together to enrich their family values as well as keep their positive energetic spirits in harmony. It is conceptualized as a living house that helps restore healthy family relationships and improve the social security with confidence. Since the family unit is the smallest basic unit of society, the strong empowered family relationships can support balanced living and sustainable communities. The family members can earn a decent living from working at their own home through their traditional home-cooked restaurants, homebased spas or homemade food/souvenir shops. Importantly, the family values, cultural knowledge and experiences are shared and transferred among family members from generation to generation. The initiative allows for knowledge management and sharing among the family members to learn about their cultural and environmental heritage. Overall, this initiative brings happiness to the family and the community despite the hardship of the COVID-19 crisis. The social innovative initiative hopes to promote the sustainable community development. The pioneering “Baan Buak” or “Home plus” initiative is an alternative sustainable business model for modern social innovation.

“The “Baan Buak” initiative aims to improve the family relationship and create a safety net for them. We encourage families to take care of each other. All affiliated families are connected and create a network for helping each other. We set up a community fund for any home-based developmental projects needed. Moreover, every family must take good care of their surroundings and environment because we believe that a good and pleasant environment leads to good quality of life. We also avoid the capitalism mentality for short-term thinking and actions, such as borrowing other people’s money to pay debts or funding our investments. We should only use available capital, such as local wisdom, know-how or our own saving, to develop Baan Buak.” —Head of TYP community-based social enterprise

“During the COVID-19, I came back home after I got laid off. I told my father that I wanted to find a job. My father shared the story of Baan Buak. He asked me to help and continued his work in the community to be better. Now, I thank [. . .] the Baan Buak initiative since I am thrilled to learn many new things about our community and heritage.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s member (A)

In the CBSE context, successful firms must keep innovative and maintain their distinction to satisfy their customers or visitors, as recommended by the literature [145]. The customers or tourists with high satisfaction are likely to spend more time and money on tourism activities at the community enterprise. For example, they can participate in various activities, increase the length of stay, revisit the places and create positive word of mouth with referrals. At TYP, the social enterprise also manages and innovates systems to keep tracks of the satisfaction and feedback of its customers or visitors.

“We want the visitors to be happy and have good experiences when visiting our village. So, we ask them how they feel and take their feedback seriously for future improvement. We share their concerns and comments [with] our enterprise and community monthly meetings.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (A)

5.5. Social and Environmental Responsibility

Social and environmental responsibility is a critical success factor for the TYP community-based social enterprise. Everyone at the social enterprise strongly commits to the strict environmental conservation and cultural heritage preservation for the benefits of the community regardless of law enforcement. The TYP enterprise realizes the importance of its distinctive location with abundant natural resources and ecosystems—it is surrounded by the striking mountain forests, sea mangroves, rivers, the emerald-green ocean and white-sand beaches. The people care for the environment and take high social responsibility when

it comes to protecting their nature and the community. For instance, tree-cutting is largely prohibited in the community. If a tree is cut for some reason, an immediate tree-planting replacement is required. In 2004, the CBSE managed to register its sea mangrove forest as an official community forest to safeguard the biodiversity and ecological system. In 2017, the TYP community forest won the first prize of the National Community Forest Award. Hence, the evidence suggests that the people at the enterprise have anticipatory and ethical competencies. The CBSE's foresight helps pave a sustainability path forward with strong pro-environmental behaviors and social responsibility. In total, the evidence conforms to the literature [8,11].

"If someone cuts a tree, he or she must ask for permission and register for tree-cutting or go to jail for breaking our tree-cutting law. The person is responsible for planting the mere trees to replace the same number of trees they cut. With these rules, we can maintain the lushness and natural abundance of the community." —TYP community-based social enterprise's committee (A)

At TYP, a dedicated CBSE committee is established to oversee environmental issues. The social enterprise has adopted waste management as well as implemented environmental-oriented rules and regulations on natural resource conservation. The leader or head of the committee and its members put strong emphasis on natural resource conservation. The environmental and social responsibility mindset has been embedded in all community-based tourism activities. The CBSE business allows its tourists to experience and learn directly from its natural setting and biodiversity as well as educate them indirectly about its environmental conservation to reduce negative ecological impacts, such as climate change or plastic waste. For example, the tour program only uses non-motor gondola sailing in the mangrove forest to reduce carbon emission. Other motorboats are not allowed. Being environmentally and socially responsible, tourists are asked to refrain from using plastics in the community and during all tourism activities, such as canoeing or old gondola sailing. They are asked to bring all kinds of garbage back to the shore to avoid dropping plastic waste into the ocean.

"Waste-Free Community" is our goal. We create a waste management process, starting with waste sorting, garbage collection and waste disposal. We learn and get support from the municipality for the proper management of the solid waste. We also encourage all households to adopt the 3Rs (reduce-reuse-recycle) concept. —Head of the TYP community-based social enterprise

"We have a zero waste and no garbage disposal campaign here. Each household must keep its surrounding clean without trash. The community helps each other with collecting and disposing of garbage." —TYP community-based social enterprise's committee (B)

"The community focuses on cleanliness, manages waste and saves the environment. In our Community Forest Nature Study Center in the mangrove forest, we request all tourists and visitors to carry and drop their garbage in the assigned garbage bins outside the Center to avoid external contaminated waste and prevent monkeys from rummaging [through] the garbage bins." —TYP community-based social enterprise's committee (C)

TYP's social responsibility is strongly evident in its fair and responsible treatment of all community members. The local culture and historical heritages are still well-preserved even though there is pressure from rapid urbanization. Tourism activities have been continuously developed to only suit the fitting context of the community. The community offers various socially and environmentally responsible tourism activities, such as ancient gondola sailing and kayaking, in its serene mangrove forest to enjoy the beautiful island with rich biodiversity. The community also provides local homestay services called the "Baan Buak" initiative. The initiative lets the tourists experience the local foods and community lifestyles with its rich cultural inheritance. The social enterprise only produces handmade and homemade products that can be found in its community, such as shrimp

paste, dried fish, herbal tea and shrimp oil. The community supports and develops environmentally friendly products with good quality and standards by using only natural materials and adopting the traditional local wisdom in all operational processes. For instance, the community uses pendent trees, flowers and local natural resources to make plates and other decorations to serve the tourists.

Additionally, the social enterprise shows its extreme care for the society to prevent any adverse social impacts from over-tourism or short-term gains from other external business activities that may ruin the peaceful way of life and tradition. Therefore, the enterprise has set up a capacity limit for each of its tourism activities to demonstrate its social responsibility. Furthermore, outsiders or external parties who do not belong to the community are strictly prohibited from organizing activities, such as tourism or various festivals, without approval from the enterprise's committee.

"We want the visitors to never forget our village and heritage. We introduce our local community to engage in cultural exchanges through conversation and activities, such as eating traditional local meals from pendent plates, cooking local dishes from what we can find from the land and sea [and] enjoying home-based handicraft workshops." —TYP community-based social enterprise's member (B)

"To safeguard our community from over-tourism problems, we limit the number of tourists capacity to only 30 people per day to participate in our Baan Buak at a time." —TYP community-based social enterprise's committee (A)

The embedded social and environmental responsibilities pay off. The community pays much attention to both environmental and socio-cultural aspects in operating its social enterprise and their tourism activities. When visiting TYP, the customers and tourists show their appreciation and are satisfied with the social enterprise. It is evident via the visitors' word-of-mouth and tourist satisfactions, as expressed below.

"The community manages the program well. I believe that community leaders along with the members appreciate endowed natural resources." —A tourist (A)

"I am impressed with the rich natural resources and community management practices to care for the nature. I can see the well-preserved natural resources, biodiversity and ecological system." —A tourist (C)

"I tremendously enjoyed the trip here. I appreciate how the community preserves its culture and tradition. I gained new experiences about eating their local food and participating in many activities representing their way of life." —A tourist (D)

5.6. Ethical Behavior

Ethical behavior and moral principles are key success factors at the CBSE. Ethical values and norms become important elements in a sustainable entrepreneurship model [11]. The TYP social enterprise highly values ethics and morality, which are strongly entrenched in its culture. Ethics guide the people's values and behaviors as well as allow them to do the right things, including good governance, decision-making and all management activities. The social enterprise demonstrates the pro-environmental behaviors and values, with a focus on strict social and environmental responsibilities, which is aligned with the literature [11]. The ethical principles and values also prevent them from short-term thinking that may harm the nature or lead to any wrong-doings for quick profit-maximization. The strong ethical leadership is also strongly evidenced in the community enterprise leaders, entrepreneurs, members and all locals to balance the triple-bottom-line concept toward sustainable development. Its people care for the planet while gaining profits. Every member strictly follows the community's rules and regulations that guide their actions toward the common shared vision for sociocultural and economic sustainability. Overall, the evidence also supports the importance of ethics toward sustainability leadership development, particularly balancing personal ethical values, ethical responsibility and business objectives with social-responsibility implementation [10].

“Everyone in TYP knows each other. We trust and look out for each other like we are the same family. Most people here participate in our social enterprise projects and share decision-making in managing [the] local cultural and natural heritage. We feel proud to share our way of life and tradition with visitors. This sense of place and enthusiasm can create better experiences for our guests.” —Head of TYP community-based social enterprise

“Profit maximization is not our enterprise’s ultimate goal. We aim to improve our community members’ livelihood, preserve our cultural heritage and conserve our environment. Everyone commits to sustainability and follows the community’s rules and guidelines accordingly.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (A)

In addition, the TYP village is a Muslim-based community. The people are influenced by the uniqueness of Muslim values to live their lives with loving kindness, harmony and peace. They are firmly united as one family by the religion and are willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the community. In light of the Islamic belief that natural resources are the gifts of God, the people in the community love and respect all aspects of nature and care for its resources. The people uphold their beliefs and traditions with honesty and integrity. Therefore, the TYP community-based social enterprise aims to focus on promoting its responsible tourism program to earn a decent living without unethical conduct or harm to others.

“We act according to our subconscious and core values [. . .] which we hold at heart. We know what to do and [what we] should not do.” —Head of the TYP community-based social enterprise

“According to Muslim principles, the people at TYP love the community and environment. Everyone upholds these values dearly.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (A)

“Compassion and kindness are the core values of people here at TYP. We help each other. If any parents and siblings do not feel well, others will help and take care of them.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (B)

“We provide visitors a good service and make their experience memorable. We need to be honest and treat visitors as our family members.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (C)

“People here cooperate very well. We drive community participation by using the religious mechanism. We have imams as advisors to the community.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s member (A)

Furthermore, the TYP community-based social enterprise supports the fairness and integrity principle with altruism, consistent with the literature [11]. According to the literature, ethics help to promote a fair and equitable culture and environment and create a positive impact on ethical values in firms, such as integrity, loyalty and fairness, whilst focusing on the end values of justice, equality and human rights [113,114]. It aims to encourage equitable economic benefits sharing among the social enterprise members. Therefore, the benefits earned from tourism activities are shared and fairly distributed in the enterprise. As a result of the fair distribution of economic benefits such as revenue and dividends, all CBSE members have positive attitudes toward the CBSE.

“Most rural development has consistently failed and created conflict in the community because it lacks transparent benefit-sharing. So here at TYP, we make it fair and transparent. All members can view the income and receive a dividend (if the enterprise gains profit).” —Head of the TYP community-based social enterprise

“Our TYP community-based social enterprise has equitable benefit-sharing in an investment form of co-ops. Dividends are shared among the enterprise’s members, who buy shares of stock that represent their equity ownership. In return, the members can receive

dividends in the following year when the tourism business generates profits.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (A)

“TYP has a well-structured enterprise system. It has equitable income distribution. There is a transparent system for collecting money and distributing income to members. In the beginning, it had around 10 household members. Now, it has grown to about 140 household members.” —TYP community-based social enterprise’s committee (B)

Another piece of evidence on its ethical conduct can be seen from no visitors’ complaints on quality issues. This implies that the community always does the right thing and adheres to high ethical standards in operating their tourism activities.

“I enjoyed the trip to the village of TYP. The locals are nice, friendly and willing to show me many things around the community. They treated me as a guest, not a customer. They live up to the promise that is written on the website. There is no over-claims or exaggerated advertising. I think everyone has good ethical standards here.” —A tourist (F)

6. Discussion and Implications

Overall, this evidence-based research paper provides analytical findings and enlightening evidence about sustainability leadership in the underdeveloped CBSE context in TYP. It critically contributes to the currently limited scholarly knowledge and advances the theoretical development in this emerging field within the SME sector, particularly in a scarce research context of CBSE in a fast-developing country such as Thailand. Our case study unveils insights that respond to the following research inquiries:

- (1) What are the essential sustainable leadership practices and sustainability competencies for sustainability and resilience in a CBSE context?
- (2) How can a CBSE business apply the theoretical frameworks in practice to survive and thrive for sustainable futures, especially during the COVID-19 era?

In this study, the findings offer robust evidence about the essential SL pragmatic practices and competencies that enable the CBSE to survive and thrive for sustainable futures and resilience in all weathers. It also specifies how the theoretical sustainability leadership can be translated into sustainable practices. In short, the research article tackles how the CBSE business within the SME sector can apply the SL theory into practice. Notably, the study contributes in several ways, as discussed in turn.

First and foremost, the study broadens our theoretical and practical knowledge in this developing field of SL and CBSE. In essence, it affirms that leadership is the most critical success factor in the CBSE context. Leadership helps detect any coming opportunities and risks while mobilizing capital and capacities to realize community and social benefits, as stated in the literature [33]. The findings also reveal that a strong presence of visionary and participatory leadership qualities can benefit overall sustainability and resilience, as demonstrated by the leader and members in the TYP community-based social enterprise. In particular, our evidence supports the literature finding that a strong leadership presence and the contemporary bottom-up participatory leadership approach become necessary for CBSE progression toward sustainability [85]. Further, our study corresponds to the previous researchers’ finding that CBSE is an alternative self-reliant, self-sufficient and sustainable business model [28,29]. The strong community ownership can also support all enterprise members to earn profitable incomes from self-managed community-based activities as well as to contribute to the local development and well-being of the society, consistent with the previous research [30–32]. In sum, we highlight that the CBSE sector is indeed vital for socio-economic growth to achieve sustainable development in disadvantaged communities and the bottom of the pyramid setting.

Secondly, our analytical results theoretically respond to the first research question. The findings reveal that there are several essential sustainable leadership practices and sustainability competencies for sustainability and resilience in the CBSE context, as elaborated below.

- This study provides vigorous evidence that all 23 sustainable practices and six-category SL elements are essential sustainable practices to create sustainability and resilience in the CBSE setting, to varying degrees. The investigation of the CBSE development toward sustainability and resilience is thus found to conform to the theoretical SL framework of Avery & Bersteiners [7] to varying degrees, as aforementioned and displayed in Table 3. We also reveal that the six-category sustainable practices (i.e., long-term perspective, people priority, organizational culture, innovation, social and environment responsibility and ethical behavior) are critical for sustainability and resilience in the case of the TYP community, consistent with the literature [12,24,49,50,56,65,91,99,101–103,114].
- The study also identifies five essential sustainability competencies for sustainability and resilience in the CBSE context at TYP. Our resulting investigation indicates that strategic (management) competence, systems thinking competence, anticipatory (foresight thinking) competence, interpersonal competence and ethical competence are important leadership competencies for developing sustainability and resilience in the social enterprise. The research findings are thus aligned with the foregoing literature [8–11].

Thirdly, the evidenced-based case study provides insights about how the CBSE business in TYP can pragmatically apply the value-based SL theory in practice to survive and thrive for sustainable futures, especially during the COVID-19 era. Our findings evidently demonstrate how the social enterprise put the theoretical SL practices in action. To sum up, the social enterprise values the long-term perspective over the short-term gains as well as sets its people and stakeholders as the priority. It also cultivates a strong and shared organizational culture, fosters innovation, cares for social and environmental responsibility and promotes ethical behavior for sustainability and resilience. These value-based practices enable the CBSE business to withstand the COVID-19 crisis and succeed in the long run. As a result, our findings expand the limited knowledge about the SL theory in the SME sector and support the previous research [12,13,24,50,57,65]. Furthermore, the TYP case study illuminates how the sustainability competencies are vital for sustainable human resource management and development, as supported by the literature [92]. Further, the study corresponds to the literature's call for supporting sustainable entrepreneurs to be the change agents toward sustainable community and society development [146]. Moreover, our results imply that future successful entrepreneurial and social enterprise leaders and managers should support these instrumental competencies toward building sustainability and resilience in firms.

In a nutshell, our research findings contribute to the SL theoretical advancement by expanding the currently limited scholarly knowledge in the CBSE context that is underdeveloped to date [34]. Above all, this study interconnects the theoretical frameworks of the 23 or six-category SL practices and five SL competencies in a single study. The integration of the theoretical SL practices and sustainability leadership competencies can be depicted in Table 4. The strong evidence also suggests that developing these essential six-category SL practices and competencies is key to build lasting sustainable enterprises. The overall results also illustrate that the TYP social enterprise benefits from the solid sustainable practices and values. More importantly, the case study of TYP reveals how the CBSE business can literally survive and thrive for sustainable futures and resilience, particularly during the COVID-19 era. Our findings provide robust evidence about how the theoretical sustainability leadership can be translated into sustainable practices in a real-life setting. In brief, the study provides insightful knowledge about how the CBSE context within the SME sector in emerging economies such as Thailand can apply the SL theory into practice. As a result, the CBSE can gain the triple-bottom-line profit via enhanced stakeholder satisfaction and sustainable financial performance toward sustainability and resilience, as advocated by the previous studies [12,13,24]. Lastly, the resulting investigation may be a starting gate to open the doors for further theoretical advancement in the multidisciplinary fields of sustainability leadership, sustainable entrepreneurship and social development in business.

In light of the preceding discussion, this article intends to broaden the scholarly knowledge and advance the SL theoretical development. Our study puts forward that the sustainable leadership practices and sustainability competencies are necessary for capability building and human capital development toward sustainable futures in the CBSE context. An alternative sustainable business model for CBSE, built on the previous research of Hallinger & Suriyankietakew's [5] sustainable leadership model and Suriyankietakew & Petison's [6] strategic management for sustainability model, is thus proposed, as depicted in Figure 1. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed model that encapsulates the integrative development of the future of sustainability leadership via incorporating the six-category SL practices and five sustainability leadership competencies altogether to achieve overall corporate sustainability outputs and outcomes. The proposed model may unfold how the advanced SL theory connects to practice.

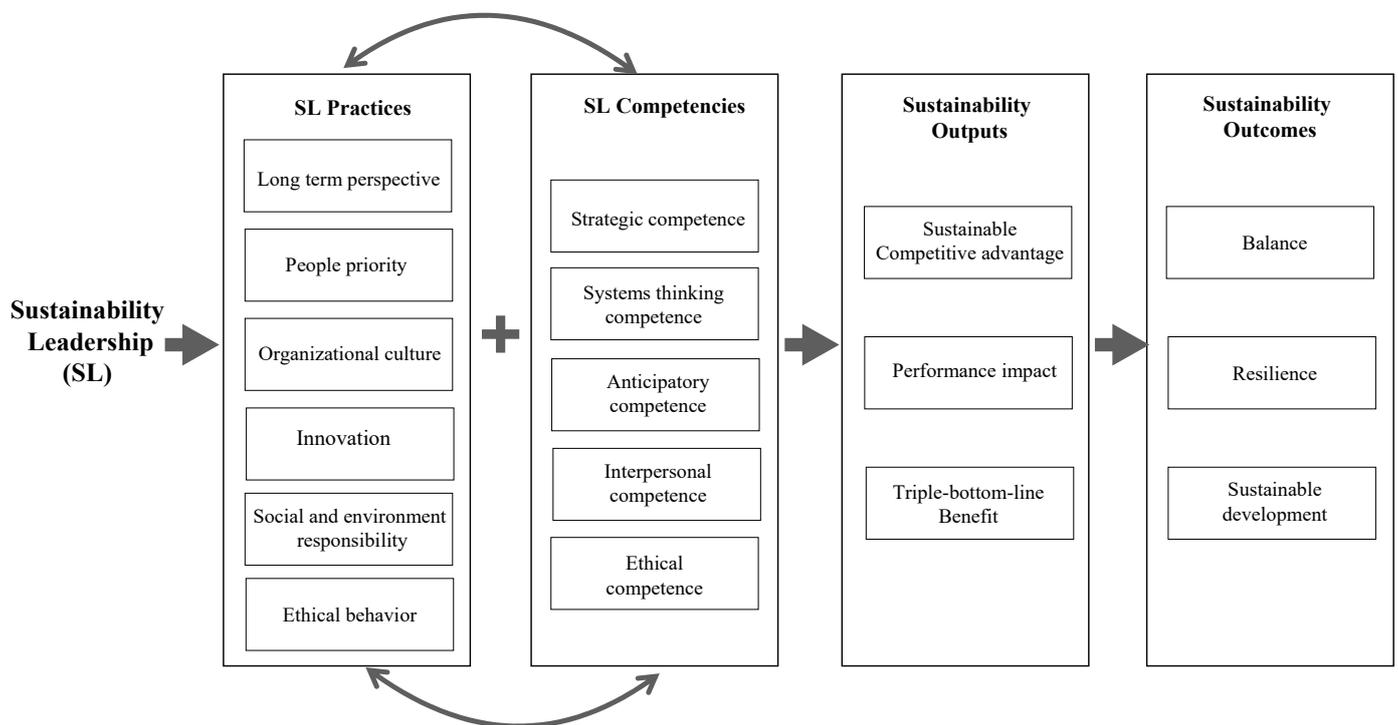


Figure 1. Proposed sustainable business model for sustainability and resilience. Source: Authors.

In practice, we suggest that sustainability leaders, sustainable entrepreneurs and modern managers should apply the alternative sustainable business model in their business to achieve sustainable results, as depicted in Figure 1. They can pragmatically apply the essential six-category SL practices (i.e., long-term perspective, people priority, organizational culture, innovation, social and environmental responsibility and ethical behavior) together with the key competencies (i.e., strategic, system thinking, anticipatory, interpersonal and ethical competencies) to their firms. As a result, they can achieve the sustainability outputs (i.e., sustainable competitive advantage, performance impact and triple-bottom-line benefit) and gain from diverse sustainability outcomes toward future balance, resilience and sustainable development.

Further, this paper offers the following managerial suggestions. We recommend that modern sustainability leaders, entrepreneurs and managers in Thailand and possibly other developing countries or emerging economies should embrace and embed the essential value-based sustainable leadership practices and necessary competencies to withstand all weathers, such as the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, as well as achieve corporate sustainability and resilience, as evidenced in the case study. Here are the following how-to guidelines.

Firstly, they should adopt a long-term perspective and strategies for organization-wide management practices to achieve corporate sustainability and resilience in the long run. Secondly, they should set people as the top priority by enabling team orientation from the humanistic management and sustainable development perspective, such as sustainable HRM to HRD, with the focus on the satisfaction of all stakeholders. We put emphasis on enabling human capital with care for stakeholders as a key to drive all-inclusive sustainable growth. Thirdly, they need to cultivate a sustaining organizational culture through strong values and a shared vision to support the ecological conservation and cultural heritage preservation that can be transferred from this generation to the next. Next, they must foster shared social innovation in conjunction with high quality and systemic knowledge-sharing or retention to support sustainable growth. This paper also highlights that continuing social innovation is critical for sustainable CBSEs due to intense competition and unexpected changes in today's environment. Additionally, successful CBSE leaders, entrepreneurs and team members should co-design or co-create social innovation for long-term sustainable benefits for the community. Fifthly, they must integrate pro-environmental behavior, social responsibility and sustainability-oriented actions to support the natural ecosystems as well as to develop lasting triple-bottom-line benefits to all stakeholders. Lastly, they need to establish strong ethical principles, moral behaviors and altruism conduct in all business decision-making and management activities to achieve sustainable results and create long-lasting sustainable enterprises. It is thus suggested that high ethical and moral values should be regularly practiced in sustainable CBSEs. Further, successful social enterprises need to go beyond the regulatory and law requirements to benefit its community growth, resilience and sustainable development.

Furthermore, our study proposes that the sustainability leaders and sustainable entrepreneurs should be the change agents and become the key players in bringing about change to the business and society as a whole. Additionally, they should invest in developing the necessary competencies to create ongoing sustainability and resilience in firms. They need to purposefully and systematically build in the strategic (management) competence in their socio-environmental strategies as well as integrate sustainability criteria into business processes and all management systems to balance the triple-bottom-line benefits. They need to put emphasis on the importance of systems thinking competence, so that everyone understands how their parts are related to sustainability values and behaviors. Moreover, they can contribute accordingly to create corporate success and sustainability in the long run. They should also develop anticipatory (foresight thinking) competence to set a strong and shared long-term sustainability vision as well as be mindful of their impending actions that create impacts or forge ahead sustainable futures.

Finally, the existing sustainability challenges require sustainability leadership and strategic foresights from multi-lateral parties and diverse stakeholders to take corrective and transformative actions for sustainable growth. For policy-makers, our evidence-based study may be a foundation for the further development of sustainability leadership programs (e.g., social innovation capacity-building or sustainable HR management and development) in the SME sector, particularly in the community-based social enterprises at the bottom of the pyramid settings. Our study also implies that an integrative sustainability development policy for the social enterprises is required and should be incorporated in national plans and strategies for sustainable futures. In particular, the key policy should center on systemic and strategic sustainability implementations for all-inclusive capacity-building and social human capital development. Lastly, our proposed model may be an alternative sustainable business model that can guide and support balancing social-economic and ecological progression in the society toward achieving the UN SDGs or our global common goals toward sustainable futures together.

7. Limitation and Suggested Future Research

The study strives for high quality in providing insightful investigation and results. It may be the first case study that explores the SL theory in practice for sustainability and

resilience in the CBSE context during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. More future research is needed, since the analysis is based on a single case study within a critical time span. The contextual findings and understandings may fit the CBSE context only. Thus, the results may not be generalized to other businesses. Future studies may include additional case studies for comparison. In particular, we hope further research may explore CBSEs concerning sustainability leadership practices and competencies in different countries and settings for further theoretical advancement. Additionally, upcoming studies can look at empirical-testing effects between the sustainable practices and/or mediating relationships between the sustainability leadership competencies and sustainability performance outcomes. Lastly, prospective studies may advance the theoretical development in the multidisciplinary fields of sustainability leadership, sustainable entrepreneurship and social development in business as well as broaden our limited knowledge in this realm.

8. Conclusions

This evidence-based research article investigates the sustainability leadership theory in practice in an underdeveloped SME context, particularly the community-based social enterprise at the bottom of the pyramid. Importantly, the study reveals how the social enterprise can pragmatically survive and thrive for sustainable futures, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. The findings identify which sustainability leadership principles, values and actions are essential for future sustainable development in the CBSE context. The strong evidence suggests how sustainability leaders and sustainable entrepreneurs can strategically think long-term, purposefully care for its people and stakeholders, ethically and innovatively manage the business and systematically balance the socio-environmental responsibilities and economic benefits to achieve sustainable growth. Additional necessary competencies are also required to further develop sustainability leadership skills and abilities. Our study also proposes an alternative sustainable business model for the future development of social enterprises that can benefit the society. Our managerial implications suggest that CBSE leaders, social entrepreneurs and SME managers in Thailand and possibly other developing countries or emerging economies should apply the sustainable business model to withstand all weathers, such as the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, and achieve sustainability and resilience in the long run. Moreover, our policy implication put forward further capacity-building and human capital development. In conclusion, this paper broadens our limited scholarly knowledge and provides the integrative sustainability leadership perspectives for theoretical advancement and practical implications in this developing realm.

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