# Employee Engagement and Sustainable Development: A PRISMA Systematic Review of Strategies for Responsible Corporate Performance

## Dr. Maryem Id Machiche[1], Dr. Mouna Boudribila[2]

**Abstract**

At a time when sustainable development has become a strategic imperative for companies, employee commitment is a key lever for ensuring the success and sustainability of ecological and social initiatives. Nevertheless, effectively mobilizing employees around these issues remains a challenge requiring structured, evidence-based approaches.

This article adopts a rigorous methodology, based on the PRISMA approach, to carry out a systematic review of the literature on strategies to encourage employee involvement in sustainable initiatives. Through a process of selection and analysis of existing studies, we will highlight several key levers: awareness-raising and training to develop a culture of environmental responsibility, internal communication to foster adherence to sustainable objectives, recognition and incentives to encourage proactive behavior, and the integration of sustainable development into human resources management and organizational processes.

Thanks to this analytical approach, we will identify best practices and emerging trends enabling companies to transform their employees into true ambassadors of change. By adopting evidence-based strategies, organizations can not only improve their environmental and social impact, but also boost the motivation, loyalty and overall performance of their teams.

**Keywords:** sustainable development; strategies; environmental responsibility.

## 1. Introduction

Sustainable development has become a major strategic challenge for companies in the 21st century. Employee involvement in sustainable initiatives plays a central role in the success of these projects, particularly in the face of growing societal expectations and ever-increasing ecological pressures. To meet these challenges, companies need to deploy effective strategies aimed at fully integrating their employees into these initiatives.

However, for these initiatives to be truly successful, it is essential that employees are actively involved. This requires a thorough understanding of engagement mechanisms and the adoption of appropriate managerial practices. Companies therefore need to identify and implement concrete strategies to effectively motivate and involve their employees in the ecological transition. This raises the question: what are the most effective strategies for engaging employees in sustainable initiatives?

This article explores the strategies used to strengthen employee commitment to sustainable initiatives. Based on a systematic review of existing studies, we aim to identify effective strategies and analyze their

theoretical and practical applications.

The first part of the paper will focus on the theoretical context of employee engagement in sustainable initiatives, exploring the psychological and organizational mechanisms that influence this engagement. We will also address the challenges of integrating sustainable development into corporate business practices.

Secondly, we will present the results of the selected research, highlighting the key factors and strategies that influence employee commitment. This analysis will enable current practices and innovative approaches to sustainable engagement to emerge.

Finally, we will propose concrete strategies to reinforce this commitment, providing practical examples of implementation in companies. We conclude with practical recommendations to help companies strengthen their employees' commitment to sustainability.

## 2.     Literature review

### 2.1.    Evolution of the concept of sustainable development

Since the publication of the Brundtland[1] Report in 1987, the concept of sustainable development has become widely accepted and has been integrated into many policies and institutions. However, its relationship with classical development theories remains unclear, although it is often presented as an alternative or an evolution of the latter. Different actors interpret it in their own way, using it mainly to justify their actions.

according to a consensus among the authors. That same year, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) introduced the idea in its World Conservation Strategy, stressing that sustainable development must integrate not only economic considerations, but also social and ecological aspects. It should also take into account natural resources, both biotic and non-biotic, and the short- and long-term impacts of different alternatives.

Seven years later, in 1987, the Brundtland Commission proposed a more accessible and widely adopted definition: sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition has become the major reference for policy and research on the subject.

The concept of sustainable development is at the heart of many scientific and academic debates, due to its multidimensional and evolving nature. In order to analyse it in greater depth, we propose to break it down into two distinct but interdependent notions: development and sustainability.

Economic researchers focus on the dynamics of growth and the mechanisms for ensuring balanced, inclusive development, taking into account both social and economic dimensions. For their part, experts in the environmental sciences study the impact of human activities on ecosystems and explore strategies for preserving natural resources and limiting ecological pressures.

As a concept, sustainable development is constantly evolving and redefining itself, prompting scientific debate about its true nature: does it constitute a new development paradigm, or is it simply an adaptation designed to fill the gaps left by previous approaches? This literature review analyses these questions by

---

[1] The Brundtland Commission Report ha." made a great contribution by empha."izing the importance of sustainable development and in effect forcing it to the top of the agenda of the United Nations and the multilateral development banks. To achieve this remarkable consensus, the Commission had to be less than rigorous in avoiding self-contradiction », Daly, 1990, p. I.

exploring the various theoretical and empirical perspectives that structure the debate on sustainable development.

The social sciences, particularly anthropology and sociology, play a key role in the study of sustainable development by analyzing how cultural, historical and community dynamics influence the interactions between societies and their environment. For their part, public health experts examine the impact of sustainable development policies on living conditions, access to healthcare and health inequalities.

Researchers in political science and public management explore the institutional implications of sustainable development, studying the public policies, regulatory frameworks and governance mechanisms that foster the adoption of sustainable practices at local, national and international levels.

Finally, the literature on sustainable development is constantly evolving, driven by an interdisciplinary approach that integrates economic, environmental and social perspectives. This dynamic field of study reflects the complexity and urgency of contemporary challenges, while fuelling reflection on the strategies and policies needed to reconcile economic growth, environmental preservation and social equity.

The concept of development has a complex, multidimensional meaning, encompassing various economic, social and environmental aspects. According to Gendron et al (2004), development can be compared to a metaphor from biology, where plant growth symbolizes the evolutionary process that enables a society to achieve a higher level of well-being.

Development is generally perceived as a dynamic process aimed at improving people's living conditions. It includes dimensions such as economic growth, the reduction of inequalities, the improvement of infrastructures, access to essential services (education, health, water, energy), as well as the protection and sustainable management of natural resources. In this way, development is not limited solely to the accumulation of wealth, but seeks to ensure an equitable distribution of opportunities and a balance between economic progress, social inclusion and environmental preservation.

This concept has evolved over time, gradually integrating ecological and social concerns to promote more responsible and sustainable development. From this perspective, sustainable development sees itself as a response to the limitations of traditional models, emphasizing a more holistic and intergenerational approach to human progress.

the concept of development is based on a multidimensional vision of progress, encompassing economic, social and environmental aspects that shape the well-being of individuals and societies. According to Mensah (2019), development manifests itself through the establishment of new structures, the effective management of societal challenges and efforts to achieve innovative goals, all driven by the human capacity to generate transformations.

Similarly, Reyes (2001) stresses that development is not limited to economic growth alone, but is a complex, multidimensional process involving changes in mentalities, the evolution of institutions, social structuring, the reduction of inequalities and the eradication of absolute poverty. From this perspective, development is seen as a global and integrated phenomenon, in which economic, social and environmental dimensions interact to guarantee sustainable and inclusive progress.

This holistic vision of development highlights the importance of a balanced approach that promotes effective governance, sustainable management of natural resources and equitable distribution of wealth. Thus, development is not limited to economic growth, but embraces a complex dynamic aimed at improving living conditions, reducing inequalities and building more resilient and inclusive societies.

Development theories, notably modernization theory and dependency theory, offer two distinct perspectives on the economic and social evolution of societies.

## a) Modernization theory

Modernization theory is based on a distinction between traditional and modern societies. Traditional societies are characterized by rigid social structures, conservative beliefs and agricultural modes of production, while modern societies are distinguished by their industrialization, rationalization and openness to technological progress. According to this approach, development is seen as a linear process in which traditional societies must adopt the values, institutions and modes of production of modern societies in order to modernize and prosper.

In other words, this theory assumes that the development model followed by industrialized nations can be reproduced by developing countries. According to Tipps (1976), evolution towards modernity involves a gradual transformation of economic and socio-cultural structures, with a gradual abandonment of traditional beliefs and values deemed to be an obstacle to progress.

## b) dependency theory

dependency theory offers a critical reading of modernization, emphasizing the structural inequalities between developed and developing countries. According to this theory, international economic relations are marked by a dynamic of dependence, in which developed countries exploit the resources and labor of developing countries, thus perpetuating their state of economic subordination.

Authors such as Bodenheimer (1970) and Webster (1984) have highlighted how industrialized countries benefit from their economic lead at the expense of developing countries, limiting their own capacity to develop. Unlike modernization theory, this approach highlights the structural and historical obstacles that prevent the emergence of equitable and sustainable development on a global scale.

The concept of sustainability, derived from the English term sustain (Seghezzo, 2009), has become a major issue in modern society, extending beyond the academic sphere. Originally associated with biology and the development capacity of organisms, it is now at the heart of debates on environmental preservation and social well-being. Sustainability aims to meet current needs without compromising those of future generations, by integrating the economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions of development. However, its meaning varies according to regional and cultural contexts.

The limitations of classical development theories, such as modernization theory and dependency theory, have led to the emergence of the concepts of "sustainability" and "sustainable development" as a response to the challenges posed by globalization and economic inequalities between developed and developing countries (Bodenheimer, 1970; Tremblay, 1999; Reyes, 2001). These new approaches take into account not only economic growth, but also social justice, natural resource management and social transformations.

The concept of sustainability was first introduced as part of the World Conservation Paper Charter in 1982, before being adopted by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature). According to Yavuz (2010), sustainability is the most effective way to preserve water, land, atmospheric resources and ecosystems. This notion has evolved in response to growing awareness of the devastating impacts of unsustainable practices, ranging from the depletion of natural resources to the degradation of global ecosystems. The aim of this exploration of the concept of sustainability is to trace its emergence, analyze its various dimensions and highlight its crucial role in the way we approach the present and build the future.

Many authors, such as Mensah & Enu-Kwesi (2019), Milne & Gray (2013) and Tjarve & Zemite (2016), assert that sustainability is a means of maintaining and improving human development through an economic, social and ecological system. Ben-Eli (2015) defines sustainability as an environment capable

of supporting a large population without negative effects on it. According to Stoddart (2011), sustainability is based on a distribution of resources within the limits of ecosystems, taking place both intragenerationally and intergenerationally. Gosling-Goldsmith (2018) stresses that sustainability must be based on a dynamic and aligned equilibrium. For Hussain et al. (2014) and UNSD (2018), the integration of economic models and their prioritization are essential to solving human challenges and delivering lasting benefits to people, in line with contemporary sustainability theories.

The sustainable use of financial and natural capital, through economic models that harness and collect this capital, focuses on ecological integrity according to environmental models. In parallel, social models aim to guarantee human well-being and dignity, while promoting the improvement of cultural, educational, religious, health and political systems, as highlighted by Acemoglu & Robinson (2012) and Evers (2018). By analyzing the factors that have contributed to the collective awareness of the importance of sustainability, we can better understand how this complex concept has acquired such relevance in our contemporary world. Furthermore, by studying the different dimensions of sustainability, we can grasp its breadth, which encompasses both the preservation of the environment, the promotion of social equity and the pursuit of balanced economic prosperity.

Sustainable development was first mentioned in 1980 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, then popularized by Mensah's (2019) definition as development that meets present needs without compromising those of future generations. Relations between developed and developing countries are marked by economic inequalities, with the former maintaining their dominance through the exploitation of natural resources, unfair trade agreements and international financial flows. Although dependency theory highlights these inequalities, it is criticized for failing to take into account all the economic and social dynamics that underpin them. These inequitable relationships are reinforced by factors such as industrialization and global economic structures. Globalization introduces new factors into development, such as changing cultural values, sustainable resource management and economic and social policies, playing a central role in the emergence of more equitable and sustainable development.

The concept of sustainable development is essential to establishing a thorough understanding of this complex notion. Sustainable development is much more than just a fad: it represents a paradigm that integrates environmental, social and economic dimensions with the aim of ensuring a viable future for present and future generations. In the face of global challenges such as climate change, the depletion of natural resources and growing inequalities, sustainable development is emerging as both a moral and practical necessity. This introduction will examine the key aspects of sustainable development, highlighting its increasingly central role and underlining the importance of striking a balance between human needs and planetary limits. As the Brundtland Report (1987) points out, "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." According to Arnaud Diemer (2013), sustainable development can be defined as economic rationality, in other words "ecodevelopment", aimed at guaranteeing a dignified life for Man. Sustainable development recognizes that human activities have a considerable impact on the planet, whether through the consumption of natural resources, waste production or greenhouse gas emissions. It underlines the importance of reducing these negative impacts by adopting environmentally-friendly practices, such as the transition to renewable energies, the preservation of biodiversity and the reduction of pollution.

| Researchers / Year | Definition of Sustainable Development |
|---|---|
| Allen (1980) | Sustainable development aims to meet basic human needs while improving quality of life, without compromising the capacity of resources to support that improvement. |
| WCED (1987) | According to this definition, sustainable development is about meeting current needs without harming the ability of future generations to meet theirs, thus preserving intergenerational balance. |
| Pearce et al. (1989) | Sustainable development focuses on building strong social and economic systems to improve areas such as education and health, while ensuring long-term income sustainability. |
| Harwood (1990) | It involves managing resources in balance with the environment, ensuring that necessary developments occur over the long term without harming system efficiency. |
| Lélé (1991) | Sustainable development is a continuous process of change or growth, never static, allowing societies to adapt and transform in a sustained manner. |
| Vander-Merwe & Van-der Merwe (1999) | This concept ensures that a basic decent life can be guaranteed through the balance between economic development and ecosystem protection. It emphasizes the need to combine prosperity and preservation. |
| Meadows (2004) | Sustainable development is described as a social construct that combines economic development with an awareness of natural resource limits, paying special attention to human interaction with nature and ecosystems. |
| Beck & Wilms (2004) | According to these authors, sustainable development is seen as a complex challenge tied to knowledge and modern lifestyles, especially in Western societies where excessive consumption strains natural resources. |
| Abubkar (2017), Cerin (2006) | In this approach, sustainable development is embedded in global policy agendas as a way to avoid the depletion of natural resources while offering a framework for responsible future resource management. |
| Sterling (2010) | This definition views sustainable development as aiming to balance long-term economic and environmental imperatives, enabling a harmonious coexistence between the two. |
| Banon-Gomis et al. (2011) | According to this approach, sustainable development is a conscious process aimed at preventing negative impacts on economic, social, and environmental dimensions, to create a more equitable and viable future. |
| Barter & Russell (2012) | Here, sustainable development is seen as a process where human survival takes precedence over mere environmental preservation, placing human societal sustainability at the core. |
| Mari et al. (2012) | This definition emphasizes that sustainable development enables harmonious interaction with natural resources and ecosystems over the |

| | |
|---|---|
| | long term, without degradation, integrating society and all living beings. |
| Ivascu (2013) | Sustainable development ensures system stability by considering not only economic and social aspects but also environmental and technological dimensions, without compromising future needs. |
| Mohieldin (2017) | Here, sustainable development is understood as preserving natural resources for future generations while optimizing their use in the present, thus allowing for harmonious and environmentally respectful development. |
| Browning & Rigolo (2019) | This paradigm proposes maximizing the improvement of human living conditions while avoiding negative impacts on the environment, seeking to maintain a lasting balance between social progress and ecological preservation. |

In short, sustainable development can be defined as a process aimed at meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is a global concept that integrates three main dimensions:

- The environmental dimension: Ensuring the preservation of natural resources and ecosystems by reducing the negative impacts of human activities, such as resource depletion, pollution and loss of biodiversity.
- The social dimension: Promoting social equity and improving people's quality of life by guaranteeing equitable access to resources, education, health and a safe, healthy living environment.
- The economic dimension: Fostering inclusive and sustainable economic growth that enables a continuous improvement in human well-being, while preserving ecological integrity and ensuring the long-term sustainability of economic systems.

These three pillars are essential to ensuring development that is both sustainable and equitable, and although other dimensions may complement this approach, these three strands remain the foundations of sustainable development.


**Sustainable development indicators :**

tors are essential for assessing the performance of an economy or society, taking into account the interconnection of economic, social and environmental dimensions. They enable us to analyze the effectiveness of policies and actions implemented to promote sustainable development. According to Candice Stevens (2006), it is essential to define precise indicators for each aspect of sustainable development. The OECD has developed a series of core indicators to help its members track their progress towards sustainable development, divided into different categories. Economic indicators include adjusted GDP per capita, which measures economic well-being while taking into account inequalities and environmental impacts; R&D investment, which assesses innovation and sustainable growth efforts; and green growth, which compares economic growth with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

On the environmental front, indicators include greenhouse gas emissions, use of renewable energies and sustainable management of natural resources, which respectively assess emissions reduction, the share of renewable energies in energy consumption, and the ecological footprint in relation to the planet's capacity to support this consumption. Other environmental indicators measure per capita energy consumption,

waste management, and air and water quality. In terms of social dimensions, indicators include unemployment rate, poverty rate, and access to education and health, which assess economic stability, social precariousness and quality of life respectively. In terms of biodiversity, the indicators track changes in the surface area of protected areas and the rate of biodiversity loss, to measure efforts to conserve ecosystems and the disappearance of species and habitats.

Governance indicators, such as the governance index and transparency, assess the quality of institutions and their ability to fight corruption. Finally, resilience indicators, such as climate and economic resilience, measure the ability to cope with climatic and economic risks while preserving social well-being. These indicators play a crucial role in guiding public policy and monitoring progress towards sustainable development.

**Sustainable development goals :**

The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been defined by the United Nations to guide global efforts towards a more equitable and sustainable future. Here is a brief explanation of each of these goals:

- No poverty: Eradicate extreme poverty in all its forms, everywhere in the world.
- Zero hunger: Ensure food security, better nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- Good health and well-being: Guarantee a healthy life and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- Quality education: Ensure equitable, inclusive, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.
- Gender equality: Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls.
- Clean water and sanitation: Guarantee access to drinking water and sanitation for all, as well as the sustainable management of water resources.
- Clean, affordable energy: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- Decent work and economic growth: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, as well as full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Industry, innovation and infrastructure: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- Reduced inequalities: Reduce inequalities within and between countries.
- Sustainable cities and communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Responsible consumption and production: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Action to combat climate change: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- Aquatic life: Conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources.
- Terrestrial life: Preserve and restore terrestrial ecosystems and promote sustainable land use.
- Peace and justice: Promote access to justice, as well as effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.
- Partnerships for achieving the goals: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

These goals are interconnected and aim to meet global challenges while ensuring a prosperous, equitable and sustainable future for all. Through the Rio Declaration in 1992, sustainable development was based on a set of principles to achieve these goals, guiding nations to subdivide values and promote global cooperation for sustainable and harmonious development.

## 2.2. Corporate responsibility and employee commitment

In 1987, in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, the UN introduced a key concept for business: eco-efficiency. This concept suggests that industries and industrial processes should be more efficient in their use of resources, produce less pollution and waste, and use renewable energy sources rather than fossil fuels. In addition, eco-efficiency must minimize harmful impacts on human health and the environment. Analysis of this definition highlights three main axes of the eco-efficiency concept:

- Generate less pollution and waste: Reduce polluting emissions and waste to limit environmental impact.
- Use renewable sources of energy rather than fossil fuels: Encourage the adoption of sustainable and renewable energy sources to reduce dependence on polluting energies.
- Minimize harmful impacts on human health and the environment: Ensure that industrial processes do not harm human health or biodiversity.

These three axes form the framework for eco-efficiency, an approach designed to reconcile economic performance with respect for the environment.

Human resources management (HRM) is an essential function within the company, aimed at ensuring an optimum match between employees and their jobs, in terms of numbers, qualifications and motivation. Its main objective is the continuous optimization of employee skills to serve the company's strategy, within which it operates.

Definitions of sustainable development (SD), whether formulated from a macro-social angle in relation to economic development that does not threaten the well-being of future generations, or from the operational perspective of the triple bottom line (social, ecological and financial), also incorporate the social dimension. Indeed, "social" is one of the three pillars of performance, alongside economic and ecological aspects. This perspective underlines the fact that future generations, as human beings, are at the heart of sustainable development issues.

In this context, HRM plays a key role, as it is directly linked to the pursuit of sustainable development. Indeed, human resources management is an essential component of SD, ensuring that employee management practices support social, ecological and economic performance. Thus, for sustainable development to be effectively achieved, HRM must be integrated into this approach.

In this work, employee engagement is understood as the attitude they adopt towards the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies or programs implemented by their company. Before examining how employees concretely engage with the integration of a CSR strategy, it is essential to first define what employee engagement is.

Gill (2015) summarizes the definition of employee engagement proposed by Shuck and Wollard (2010) as follows:

Employee engagement focuses on building an engaging culture between staff and the organization, with the aim of promoting targeted outcomes such as increased productivity and solid profits. These outcomes stem from healthier, safer employees who are less likely to leave the company and more willing to put in discretionary (extra) effort.

In other words, employee engagement is key to strengthening the relationship between workers and the organization, leading to significant benefits for the company, particularly in terms of performance, loyalty and extra effort.

Gill's (2015) article refers to the definition given by Shuck and Wollard (2010), which defines employee engagement as "the cognitive, emotional and behavioral state of an employee oriented towards desired organizational outcomes". This definition, which encompasses the behavioral, cognitive and emotional aspects of employee engagement, offers a clarity that seemed to have eluded practitioners. It is not only comprehensible to business and organizational leaders, but also robust enough to support future academic research. In summary, employee engagement involves an overall state of motivation, where the employee brings his or her mind, emotions and actions into play to achieve the organization's goals.

## 3. Research methodology

The Method section describes in detail how the study was carried out, including conceptual and operational definitions of the variables used. A rigorous presentation of the methods employed enables readers to assess their relevance, as well as the reliability and validity of the results. This research adopts a descriptive systematic review approach to identify and analyze scientific articles dealing with employee commitment to sustainable development.

### 3.1 Method

A systematic review follows a rigorous, transparent and reproducible process aimed at identifying, selecting, evaluating, analyzing and integrating research findings on a given topic in a comprehensive manner (Transfield et al., 2003; Moynihan, 2004). Today, systematic reviews are widely recognized as the most objective and methodical way of synthesizing research findings, providing the best available knowledge on a given topic (Moynihan, 2004; Fox, 2005).

The main steps in a systematic literature review are as follows (Transfield et al., 2003; Moynihan, 2004; Alderson et al., 2004; Hemsley-Brown and Sharp, 2003):

- Define a clear research question.
- Establish inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Identify relevant studies.
- Select studies according to defined criteria.
- Evaluate the quality of selected articles.
- Synthesize and integrate results of selected studies.
- Interpret results of systematic review.

This systematic review seeks to answer the following question: What strategies enable a company to be both responsible and successful in employee engagement?

To be included in this systematic review, an article had to focus on employee engagement and sustainability, and have been published in a peer-reviewed journal. Books, master's theses, conference proceedings and book reviews were excluded due to time and resource constraints. However, we assume that major scientific contributions from these sources are generally published as peer-reviewed articles.

This review covers the period from 2022 to 2024. A systematic electronic search strategy was adopted, mobilizing keyword strings in English and French to examine articles published in both languages. The search was carried out on three multidisciplinary databases: Google Scholar, Hall and ScienceDirect.

The table below shows the results of a systematic review and the document selection stages that led to the final selection of studies for analysis. Here is a detailed explanation of the various stages of the systematic review:

1. Initial selection: At this stage, an initial selection of documents was made on the basis of titles and abstracts. This stage allowed us to identify and exclude 340 reports that did not meet at least one of

the inclusion or exclusion criteria. These criteria are often defined in advance and concern aspects such as the relevance of the subject, the methodology, the study period, or the language of the documents.

2. In-depth full-text analysis: Once the initial selection had been made, the full-text analysis of the remaining 49 documents was carried out. This step allowed us to exclude a further 12 documents that did not meet the rigorous selection criteria established for the review. This may concern methodological issues, inconsistencies in results, or the absence of a significant contribution to the research question.

3. Double selection: The remaining 22 documents were then subjected to a double selection. This means that they were evaluated by two independent researchers to ensure objectivity and avoid bias. This step allowed us to verify the relevance of the documents through a process of cross-validation.

4. Assessment of methodological quality: The 22 documents submitted for the double selection were assessed for their methodological quality. This included analysis of the rigor of the research, the validity of the conclusions, and the robustness of the data used. Following this evaluation, 8 documents were excluded on the grounds of insufficient methodological quality.

5. Retained papers: Finally, after all these selection and evaluation stages, 7 papers were retained for the systematic review. These papers met all the selection criteria and demonstrated sufficient methodological quality to be included in the final analysis.

This rigorous approach ensures that only the most relevant, high-quality studies are taken into account, guaranteeing the reliability and validity of the systematic review results.

These databases bring together a large number of publications on employee engagement and sustainable development. A total of 386 publications have been identified.

**Table 1: Results**

| Database | Keywords | Document Type | Research Area | Research Period | Open Access | Language |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Google Scholar | 67,6 | 495 | 495 | 196 | 196 | 195 |
| Hall | 20,852 | 87 | 34 | 15 | 14 | 13 |
| Science Direct | 36,195 | 31,257 | 1,138 | 497 | 179 | 178 |

**Source:** Compiled by the authors

An initial selection, based on reading titles and abstracts, led to the exclusion of 340 reports that did not meet at least one of the inclusion or exclusion criteria. An in-depth full-text analysis of the remaining 46 papers led to the exclusion of a further 12. Thus, 22 documents were subjected to a double selection.

The methodological quality of these papers was rigorously assessed, resulting in the exclusion of 8 papers. Finally, 4 documents were retained for this systematic review.

**Table 2: Selection Process**

| Selection Step | Details |
|---|---|
| Initial selection | 340 reports were excluded based on titles and abstracts, as they did not meet at least one of the inclusion or exclusion criteria. |
| Full-text in-depth analysis | 49 remaining documents were analyzed in depth. An additional 12 documents were excluded after this analysis. |

| Final selection | 22 documents were subjected to a double review process. |
|---|---|
| Methodological quality assessment | The methodological quality of the 22 documents was rigorously assessed, leading to the exclusion of 8 documents. |
| Documents retained | 7 documents were retained for the systematic review. |

**Source**: Compiled by the authors

As previously mentioned, Figure 1 illustrates the results obtained during the various phases of the search, which can be broken down into four distinct stages: identification, selection, eligibility (these two intermediate stages are based on the exclusion of articles not corresponding to the field of study) and finally, presentation of the articles selected. It should be noted that doctoral theses and conference proceedings were not included in this analysis.

Seven articles directly address employee engagement in the context of sustainable development, as well as the interrelationships and mutual influences between engagement and sustainable development. These articles are divided into the following themes: corporate management, sustainable development and performance. A content analysis of the seven articles reveals that each covers several areas. More specifically, the seven articles, which are directly related to our research, deal with four to six of the predefined topics. The relevant sections of these articles, which aroused the greatest interest and which we finally selected, are compiled and listed at the end.



Organigramme de la revue systématique

Sélection initiale → Analyse approfondie du texte intégral → Double sélection → Évaluation de la qualité méthodologique → Documents retenus

## 4. Discussion

A review of the 4 articles selected for this study revealed that before focusing on the commitment of employers we must first look at the commitment of entrepreneurs in terms of the sustainability of their businesses.

Today, sustainable entrepreneurship is a central axis in the transformation of companies towards more responsible, high-performance models. It is not limited to the pursuit of profit, but integrates social and environmental dimensions, thus aligning innovation and digitalization strategies with sustainable development objectives (Sónia Avelar et al., 2024). Before analyzing the commitment of employees, it is essential to assess that of entrepreneurs, as their involvement directly influences the sustainability of their

companies. This notion is based on a long-term vision that goes beyond traditional economic considerations. It is part of a global approach integrating the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The United Nations' Agenda 2030 encourages companies to adopt responsible strategies.

Sustainable entrepreneurs don't just innovate to improve their competitiveness; they also aim to create societal value by integrating ethical practices and promoting social responsibility (Criado-Gomis et al., 2018). This dynamic is influenced by entrepreneurs' personal attitudes as well as social norms in favor of responsible engagement (Gieure et al., 2020).

- **Employee commitment for sustainable practices**

Employee commitment is an essential lever for implementing sustainable entrepreneurship strategies. A company adopting a sustainable vision must involve its employees in this transition, fostering a culture of innovation and responsibility (Bagheri, Newman, & Eva, 2022).

The study by Sónia Avelar et al. (2024) of 16,365 SMEs in the European Union and other countries highlights the positive impact of innovation and digitalization on companies' ability to adopt sustainable practices. However, the adoption of these practices depends on several factors:

- The maturity and financial resources of companies
- Motivation and training of entrepreneurs and employees
- awareness of sustainability issues and their integration into corporate strategy

- **Innovation, digitization and sustainability: a strategic triptych**

The study by Terán-Yépez et al. (2020) highlights the interconnection between innovation, digitization and sustainability as a driver of business transformation. Innovation fosters the exploration of new, responsible business models, while digitalization facilitates the adoption of sustainable solutions and improves resource management.

According to Schaltegger & Wagner (2011), this approach strengthens the resilience of companies by enabling them to adapt to market changes while reducing their ecological footprint. However, many entrepreneurs remain reluctant to adopt a sustainability agenda, limiting the impact of ecological and social initiatives (Johnson & Schaltegger, 2020).

- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and social performance**

CSR is a lever for sustainable performance by integrating social and environmental objectives into business models (Chakra, 2024). This approach offers several advantages:

- Improved image and reputation
- Strengthened relations with stakeholders
- Reduced risk and increased innovation

However, companies can encounter obstacles such as the initial cost of CSR initiatives, resistance to organizational change and the difficulty of measuring their real impact.

- **The importance of employer-employee relations for organizational sustainability**

Savall's socio-economic theory (1974, 1975, 1979) demonstrates that investment in employee well-being, particularly through training and proactive management, fosters employee recognition and involvement, thereby improving corporate social performance.

ISO 26000 underlines the importance of labor relations and employment conditions, particularly in terms of social dialogue, social protection and safety at work. In addition, studies highlight the impact of stress management, mental health, turnover and employment equity

Sustainable entrepreneurship and employee engagement are inseparable factors in the transition to responsible business models. By fostering innovation, digitalization and a CSR-focused organizational culture, companies can not only improve their economic, social and environmental performance, but also enhance their attractiveness and competitiveness. Implementing mobilizing HR strategies is thus becoming an imperative to ensure a sustainable and lasting transition.

## 5. Conclusion

Engaging employees in sustainable initiatives is an essential strategic lever for companies seeking to align their economic performance with sustainable development goals. This review has shown that engaging entrepreneurs in sustainability, through sustainable entrepreneurship practices, is essential to laying the foundations for a responsible organizational culture. The studies highlight that innovation, digitalization and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) play key roles in the integration of sustainable practices, offering solutions that are both economical and responsible.

The most effective strategies for engaging employees include raising awareness, ongoing training, promoting social responsibility and actively involving teams in defining sustainable practices. Companies must also invest in the well-being of their employees, thereby fostering their long-term commitment. However, challenges remain, including the costs associated with implementing these initiatives, resistance to change within organizations, and the difficulty of accurately measuring the impact of these actions.

Future research could further investigate the impact of new technologies on employee engagement in sustainable initiatives, particularly in sectors where digitalization is on the rise. Furthermore, the study of intergenerational diversity in the context of sustainable engagement could offer new insights into how to manage the varied expectations of different generations within organizations.

However, this study has certain limitations. On the one hand, the analysis is based mainly on sector-specific studies, which could limit the generalizability of the results to other sectors or types of company. Secondly, the long-term impact of sustainable commitment strategies has yet to be fully explored. The question of the real effectiveness of these practices in sustaining companies thus remains a crucial area for future research.

## References

1. Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. (2012). Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity and poverty. New York: Crown Business.
2. Avelar, S., Borges-Tiago, T., Almeida, A., & Tiago, F. (2024). Confluence of sustainable entrepreneurship, innovation, and digitalization in SMEs. Journal of Business Research, 170.
3. Bodenheimer, S. (1970). Dependency and imperialism. NACLA Newsletter, 4(3), 18–27.
4. Brundtland, G. H., & World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). (1987). Our common future (Rapport Brundtland). United Nations.
5. Chakra, R. (2024). Effets de la RSE sur la performance sociale des sociétés : Revue de littérature. International Journal of Accounting, Finance, Auditing, Management and Economics, 5(10), 538–555.
6. **Criado-Gomis, A., Iniesta-Bonillo, M. Á., & Cervera-Taulet, A.** (2018). Sustainable entrepreneurial orientation within an intrapreneurial context: Effects on business performance. International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal, 14, 295–308
7. Evers, B. A. (2018). Why adopt the sustainable development goals? The case of multinationals in the Colombian coffee and extractive sector (Master's thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam).

8. Gendron, C., Lapointe, A., & Turcotte, M.-F. (2004). Responsabilité sociale et régulation de l'entreprise mondialisée. Relations industrielles, 59(1), 73–100.

9. **Gieure, C., Benavides-Espinosa, M. del M., & Roig-Dobón, S.** (2020). The entrepreneurial process: The link between intentions and behavior. Journal of Business Research, 112, 541–548.

10. **Gill, R.** (2015). Why the PR strategy of storytelling improves employee engagement and adds value to CSR: An integrated literature review. Public Relations Review, 41(5), 662–674.

11. Gosling-Goldsmith, J. (2018). Sustainable development goals and uncertainty visualization (Master's thesis, University of Twente).

12. Han, X., Zheng, Y., Prentice, C., & Chen, S. (2024). Firm engagement: Scale development and verification. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 80.

13. Hussain, F., Chaudhry, M. N., & Batool, S. A. (2014). Assessment of key parameters in municipal solid waste management: A prerequisite for sustainability. International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology, 21(6), 519–525.

14. **Johnson, M. P., & Schaltegger, S.** (2020). Entrepreneurship for sustainable development: A review and multilevel causal mechanism framework. Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 44(6), 1141–1173.

15. Liu, W., He, Q., Cao, J., & Kamar, A. (2024). Exploring the catalysts of eco-innovation: Employee ownership and sustainable practices. Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 207.

16. Mensah, J. (2019). Sustainable development: Meaning, history, principles, pillars, and implications for human action: Literature review. Cogent Social Sciences, 5(1), 1653531.

17. Mensah, J., & Enu-Kwesi, F. (2019). Implications of environmental sanitation management for sustainable livelihoods in the catchment area of Benya Lagoon in Ghana. Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences, 16(1), 23–43.

18. Milne, M. J., & Gray, R. (2013). W(h)ither ecology? The triple bottom line, the global reporting initiative, and corporate sustainability reporting. Journal of Business Ethics, 118, 13–29.

19. Reyes, G. E. (2001). Four main theories of development: Modernization, dependency, world-system, and globalization. Nómadas. Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas, 4(2), 109–124.

20. Savall, H. (1974, 1975, 1981). Enrichir le travail humain : l'évaluation économique. Paris : Dunod.

21. Seghezzo, L. (2009). The five dimensions of sustainability. Environmental Politics, 18(4), 539–556.

22. **Schaltegger, S., & Wagner, M. (**2011). Sustainable entrepreneurship and sustainability innovation: Categories and interactions. Business Strategy and the Environment, 20(4), 222–237.

23. **Shuck, B., & Wollard, K.** (2010). Employee engagement and HRD: A seminal review of the foundations. Human Resource Development Review, 9(1), 89–110

24. Stoddart, H. (2011). A pocket guide to sustainable development governance. Stakeholder Forum.

25. **Terán-Yépez, E., Marín-Carrillo, G. M., Casado-Belmonte, M. del P., & Capobianco-Uriarte, M. de las M.** (2020). Sustainable entrepreneurship: Review of its evolution and new trends. Journal of Cleaner Production, 252, 119742

26. Tjarve, B., & Zemīte, I. (2016). The role of cultural activities in community development. Acta Universitatis Agriculturae et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis, 64(6).

27. Tipps, D. C. (1976). Modernization theory and the comparative study of societies: A critical perspective. New York: Free Press.

28. Tremblay, S. (1999). Du concept de développement au concept de l'après-développement : trajectoire et repères théoriques.

29. Webster, J. G. (1984). Cable television's impact on audience for local news. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 28(1), 23–34.

30. Yavuz, V. A. (2010). Le concept de durabilité et les stratégies de production durable en termes d'entreprises. Journal de l'Institut des Sciences Sociales de l'Université Mustafa Kemal, 7(14), 63–86.