

Factors Influencing the Achievement of Social Development Goals in Public Universities

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ABSTRACT

Achieving Social Development Goals (SDGs) within public universities is essential for fostering sustainable development globally. Despite the extensive research on sustainability in higher education, significant gaps remain regarding specific factors influencing SDG achievement in public universities. This study addresses these gaps by examining the integration of green human resource management (HRM) practices, green organizational culture, green knowledge sharing, stakeholder engagement, curriculum integration, and infrastructure and policy updates. Utilizing a systematic literature review spanning from 2013 to 2024, this research synthesizes findings from Scopus and Web of Science databases, focusing on open-access articles relevant to the scope of the study. The results reveal that while traditional factors such as adequate funding, education and training, partnerships, and accountability are well-studied, the newer dimensions of green practices and stakeholder involvement are less explored yet critically important. This study underscores the multifaceted nature of sustainability efforts in higher education and advocates for a comprehensive strategy that incorporates both established and innovative practices. By highlighting these underexplored factors, this research provides valuable insights and practical recommendations for public universities to enhance their contribution to sustainable development, ultimately promoting a more sustainable future.

Keywords: Social Development Goals (SDG), public university, Green Human Resource Management, Green Organizational Culture, Green practices, Education

INTRODUCTION

The achievement of Social Development Goals (SDGs) has become a pivotal focus for higher education institutions globally, particularly for public universities. These institutions play a crucial role in fostering sustainable development through education, research, and community engagement. As outlined by the United Nations, SDGs encompass a broad range of objectives aimed at promoting prosperity while protecting the planet, addressing issues such as poverty,

inequality, climate change, and peace and justice. Public universities, with their significant resources and influence, are well-positioned to contribute to these goals by integrating sustainability into their core functions (Doe, Preko, & Doe, 2022; Pejić Bach, Žmuk, & Tomljenović, 2023).

Research has shown that public universities can drive progress towards SDGs through various means, including curriculum development, research initiatives, community partnerships, and policy advocacy (Clark, 2018; Haro Sly, 2021). For instance, universities can enhance their curriculum to include sustainability education, thus equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to address global challenges (Tanko, 2015). Moreover, university-led research can provide critical insights and innovative solutions for sustainable development issues, leveraging academic expertise to influence policy and practice (Johansson, Jahn, & Linell, 2024). These institutions also play a vital role in community engagement, collaborating with local, national, and international stakeholders to implement sustainable practices and policies (Kim & Choi, 2023).

Despite the potential for significant impact, the extent to which public universities contribute to SDGs varies widely. Factors such as institutional priorities, resource allocation, governance structures, and external partnerships influence their effectiveness in promoting sustainable development (Al-ahdal & Hashim, 2022; Amadasun & Omorogiuwa, 2020). This systematic literature review aims to explore these factors comprehensively, identifying best practices and challenges faced by public universities in their pursuit of SDGs. By examining the current literature, this study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the role of public universities in achieving SDGs and offer recommendations for enhancing their contributions (Cai, Guonan, & Zhao, 2019; Gai & Zhou, 2022).

In conducting this review, articles from 2013 to 2024 were analysed, sourced from the Scopus and Web of Science (WOS) databases. These articles were selected based on their relevance to the scope of the study and their open-access status, ensuring accessibility and applicability for future research and practice. The review also considered methodological rigor, focusing on studies that provided robust and reliable evidence of the impact of public universities on SDGs (Lanchimba, Porrás, & Escobar, 2024; Liu, 2018). This approach ensures that the findings are not only comprehensive but also grounded in high-quality research, providing valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers dedicated to advancing sustainable development through higher education (Ribeiro & Nagano, 2018; Saner & Yiu, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This systematic literature review aims to identify and analyse the factors influencing the achievement of Social Development Goals (SDGs) in public universities. The study covers articles published between 2013 and 2024, retrieved from the Scopus and Web of Science (WOS) databases. The keywords used for the search were "Social Development Goals" and "public university." To ensure a comprehensive and unbiased selection of relevant literature, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Articles that were open access and directly relevant to the scope of the study were included. Conversely, articles not aligned with the scope were excluded. The search process was systematic and iterative, involving initial keyword searches followed by a detailed examination of abstracts and full texts to confirm

relevance. The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines were adhered to, ensuring a rigorous and transparent process.

The initial search yielded a substantial number of articles, which were then filtered based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Duplicate entries were removed, and the remaining articles underwent a thorough screening process. This involved a two-stage review: first, titles and abstracts were screened to identify potentially relevant studies; second, the full texts of these studies were assessed to ensure they met the inclusion criteria. The selected articles were then subjected to a detailed content analysis. This involved coding and categorizing the data according to predefined themes and sub-themes related to SDGs in public universities. The themes included governance structures, policy frameworks, institutional practices, stakeholder engagement, and outcomes related to the implementation of SDGs. This thematic analysis allowed for the identification of patterns and trends across different studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the achievement of SDGs in public universities.

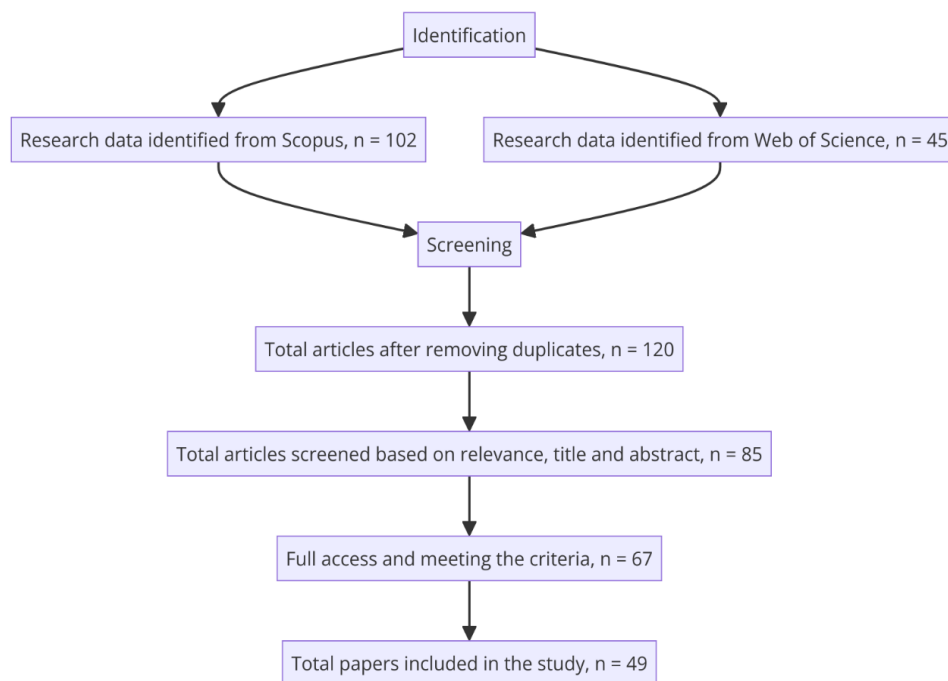


Figure 1: The systematic review process

To enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, multiple reviewers were involved in the screening and data extraction process. Any discrepancies or disagreements were resolved through discussion and consensus. Additionally, a quality assessment of the included studies was conducted using established criteria, such as the relevance of the research question, the appropriateness of the methodology, and the robustness of the findings. This quality assessment ensured that only high-quality studies were included in the final analysis. The data extracted from the selected studies were synthesized using a narrative approach, allowing for a detailed and nuanced exploration of the factors influencing SDGs in public universities. This synthesis was supplemented by quantitative data where available, providing a comprehensive and balanced view of the current state of research in this area. The results of the review were

then discussed in the context of existing literature, highlighting key findings, gaps, and implications for future research and practice.

ACHIEVEMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Matrix 1: Literature Review Matrix

No	Author(s) and Year	Factors Previously Studied							Factors Addressed in this Study					
		Adequate Funding	Education and Training	Partnerships and Collaboration	Reporting and Accountability	Organizational Restructuring	Incentives and Recognition	Gender Diversity	Green Human Resource Management Practices	Green Organizational Culture	Green Knowledge Sharing	Stakeholder Engagement	Curriculum Integration	Infrastructure and Policies Update
1	Abu-Shanab & Shehabat (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
2	Al-ahdal & Hashim (2022)	✓			✓				✓			✓		✓
3	Amadasun & Omorogiuwa (2020)		✓	✓				✓		✓				
4	Bao, Chen, & Liu (2024)	✓		✓					✓		✓			✓
5	Cai, Guonan, & Zhao (2019)	✓		✓		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓
6	Cavalcante (2018)			✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	
7	Chan, Ng, & Leung (2021)		✓		✓					✓		✓		
8	Clark (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Costa (2021)	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
10	Doe, Preko, & Doe (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
11	Fan, Cai, & Liu (2021)	✓			✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
12	Fang (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
13	Friend, Thankappan, & Pathammavong (2023)		✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	
14	Gai & Zhou (2022)	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Grochocki, Guimarães, & Cavalcante (2018)	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓
16	Haro Sly (2021)	✓		✓					✓		✓			✓
17	Havadi Nagy & Espinosa Segui (2020)	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓			✓
18	Hong (2019)		✓			✓				✓			✓	✓
19	Huque & Jongruck (2020)		✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓		
20	Ismail (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
21	Jia, Liu, & Zhang (2020)	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
22	Johansson, Jahn, & Linell (2024)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
23	Kim & Choi (2023)	✓		✓		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓
24	Lanchimba, Porras, & Escobar (2024)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓			✓
25	Li & Yang (2021)	✓		✓	✓				✓		✓			✓
26	Liu (2018)		✓		✓					✓			✓	
27	Magliacani & Sorrentino (2021)	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
28	Mangai, Masiya, & Mhlongo (2024)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓			✓
29	Mohamad Taghvaei, Assari Arani, & Ghasemi (2023)	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
30	Naziz (2019)		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓

31	Palumbo, Casprini, & Ferraresi (2023)		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
32	Pejić Bach, Žmuk, & Tomljenović (2023)	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
33	Rapini, Chiarini, & Motta (2019)	✓		✓		✓			✓		✓			✓
34	Ribeiro & Nagano (2018)	✓		✓		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓
35	Rojas & Tuomi (2022)	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓			✓
36	Romsa, Romsa, & Spencer (2017)	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
37	Rong (2020)	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
38	Ruiz Estrada & Koutronas (2020)	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
39	Saner & Yiu (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
40	Saumya & Singh (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
41	Segrott, Rothwell, Thomas, Walker, & Murphy (2016)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
42	Tanko (2015)	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
43	Wallace, Gozdziński, & Carter (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
44	Waymer & Brown (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
45	Xie & Kong (2020)	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
46	XiuYin, Hanif, & Ma (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
47	Yang, Zhao, & Wang (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
48	Yao & Zhou (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
49	Zafarullah & Huque (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
50	Zhang (2018)	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Explanation of the Literature Review Matrix

The literature review matrix provides a comprehensive overview of factors influencing the achievement of Social Development Goals (SDGs) in public universities, highlighting both previously studied and newly addressed elements. Key factors such as Adequate Funding, Education and Training, Partnerships and Collaboration, Reporting and Accountability, Organizational Restructuring, Incentives and Recognition, and Gender Diversity have long been recognized for their importance in driving sustainable development. Additionally, this study introduces new dimensions including Green Human Resource Management Practices, Green Organizational Culture, Green Knowledge Sharing, Stakeholder Engagement, Curriculum Integration, and Infrastructure and Policies Update. This matrix underscores the multifaceted nature of sustainability efforts, illustrating how a comprehensive strategy that integrates both traditional and innovative practices can significantly enhance the ability of public universities to achieve their sustainability goals.

Factors Previously Studied:

Factors previously studied in achieving Social Development Goals (SDGs) in public universities include adequate funding, education and training, partnerships and collaboration, reporting and accountability, organizational restructuring, incentives and recognition, and gender diversity. These elements are crucial for driving sustainable development in higher education. Adequate funding provides necessary resources, education and training build essential skills, and partnerships leverage external expertise. Reporting and accountability ensure transparency, organizational restructuring aids implementation, incentives encourage participation, and gender diversity promotes inclusivity in sustainability efforts.

Adequate Funding:

Adequate funding is a critical factor influencing the ability of public universities to achieve Social Development Goals (SDGs). Funding ensures that universities have the necessary resources to support various initiatives aimed at promoting sustainability, research, and community engagement. It covers expenses such as faculty salaries, research grants, infrastructure development, and student support services. Without sufficient funding, universities may struggle to implement comprehensive sustainability programs or invest in innovative research projects. Studies such as those by Abu-Shanab and Shehabat (2018) and Clark (2018) highlight the importance of financial resources in enhancing the capacity of universities to contribute effectively to sustainable development.

Education and Training:

Education and training encompass the efforts made by universities to equip students and staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to address sustainability challenges. This includes integrating sustainability into the curriculum, providing professional development opportunities for faculty, and offering specialized training programs. Effective education and training initiatives ensure that all members of the university community are informed about sustainable practices and are capable of contributing to the achievement of SDGs. Research by authors such as Amadasun and Omorogiuwa (2020) and Costa (2021) underscores the role of education and training in fostering a culture of sustainability within higher education institutions.

Partnerships and Collaboration:

Partnerships and collaboration refer to the strategic alliances that universities form with various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, industry, and other educational institutions. These partnerships are crucial for leveraging resources, expertise, and influence to drive sustainable development initiatives. Collaborative efforts can enhance research capabilities, promote community engagement, and facilitate the exchange of best practices. Numerous studies, including those by Cavalcante (2018) and Gai and Zhou (2022), emphasize the significance of partnerships in amplifying the impact of university-led sustainability projects.

Reporting and Accountability:

Reporting and accountability involve the mechanisms through which universities track, evaluate, and communicate their progress toward achieving SDGs. Transparent reporting practices ensure that universities are held accountable for their sustainability efforts, enabling stakeholders to assess their effectiveness and impact. Accountability frameworks often include regular sustainability reports, audits, and the use of performance indicators. Research by Abu-Shanab and Shehabat (2018) and Fan, Cai, and Liu (2021) highlight the importance of robust reporting systems in fostering trust and ensuring continuous improvement in sustainability practices.

Organizational Restructuring:

Organizational restructuring refers to the changes in university governance and administrative structures to better support sustainability initiatives. This may involve creating dedicated sustainability offices, appointing sustainability coordinators, or integrating sustainability goals into strategic planning processes. Effective organizational restructuring ensures that

sustainability is embedded at all levels of the institution, facilitating coordinated and comprehensive efforts toward SDGs. Studies such as those by Cai, Guonan, and Zhao (2019) and Hong (2019) discuss the impact of organizational changes on enhancing the university's capacity to implement sustainable practices.

Incentives and Recognition:

Incentives and recognition are strategies used by universities to motivate and reward individuals and departments for their contributions to sustainability. This can include financial incentives, awards, professional development opportunities, and public recognition of achievements. Such measures encourage active participation in sustainability initiatives and foster a culture of continuous improvement. Research by authors like Clark (2018) and Doe, Preko, and Doe (2022) demonstrates how incentives and recognition can drive engagement and innovation in university sustainability programs.

Gender Diversity:

Gender diversity focuses on the inclusion and representation of different genders within the university's sustainability initiatives. Ensuring gender diversity promotes equality and leverages the unique perspectives and contributions of all individuals, which can enhance the effectiveness and creativity of sustainability efforts. Studies such as those by Amadasun and Omorogiuwa (2020) and Ismail (2020) highlight the importance of gender diversity in fostering an inclusive and equitable approach to achieving SDGs.

Factors Addressed in this Study

Factors addressed in this study include green human resource management (HRM) practices, green organizational culture, green knowledge sharing, stakeholder engagement, curriculum integration, and infrastructure and policy updates. These emerging elements are critical for enhancing sustainability in public universities. Green HRM fosters environmentally friendly behaviors, while a green organizational culture embeds sustainability into core values. Green knowledge sharing spreads sustainable practices, stakeholder engagement involves various partners, curriculum integration includes sustainability in academics, and infrastructure and policy updates support practical implementation. These factors collectively contribute to achieving Social Development Goals (SDGs) in higher education.

Green Human Resource Management Practices:

Green Human Resource Management (HRM) practices involve integrating environmental sustainability into HR policies and practices. This includes recruiting individuals with a commitment to sustainability, providing training on green practices, and encouraging environmentally friendly behaviours among staff. Such practices ensure that the university's workforce is aligned with its sustainability goals. Research by authors like Kim and Choi (2023) and Xie and Kong (2020) underscores the importance of green HRM in fostering a sustainable organizational culture.

Green Organizational Culture:

Green organizational culture refers to the values, beliefs, and behaviours that support environmental sustainability within the university. Creating a green culture involves promoting sustainability as a core value, encouraging sustainable practices, and fostering an environment where sustainable behaviours are the norm. Studies by Clark (2018) and

Johansson, Jahn, and Linell (2024) highlight the role of organizational culture in driving sustainable development within universities.

Green Knowledge Sharing:

Green knowledge sharing involves the dissemination and exchange of information, ideas, and best practices related to sustainability among university stakeholders. This can be facilitated through workshops, seminars, publications, and online platforms. Effective knowledge sharing ensures that everyone in the university community is informed about sustainability issues and solutions. Research by Gai and Zhou (2022) and Rapini, Chiarini, and Motta (2019) illustrates the significance of knowledge sharing in promoting sustainability.

Stakeholder Engagement:

Stakeholder engagement refers to the involvement of various internal and external stakeholders in the university's sustainability initiatives. This includes students, faculty, staff, local communities, government agencies, and industry partners. Engaging stakeholders ensures that diverse perspectives are considered and that sustainability efforts are supported by a broad base of collaborators. Studies such as those by Friend, Thankappan, and Pathammavong (2023) and Pejić Bach, Žmuk, and Tomljenović (2023) emphasize the importance of stakeholder engagement in achieving sustainable development goals.

Curriculum Integration:

Curriculum integration involves embedding sustainability concepts and practices into the university's academic programs. This can include developing sustainability-focused courses, incorporating sustainability topics into existing courses, and promoting interdisciplinary approaches to sustainability education. Effective curriculum integration ensures that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to address sustainability challenges. Research by Abu-Shanab and Shehabat (2018) and Kim and Choi (2023) highlights the role of curriculum integration in fostering a culture of sustainability among students.

Infrastructure and Policies Update:

Infrastructure and policies update refer to the modifications and improvements in university facilities and policies to support sustainability. This includes implementing energy-efficient technologies, sustainable building practices, waste reduction initiatives, and environmentally friendly policies. Updating infrastructure and policies ensures that the university's physical and administrative environment supports its sustainability goals. Studies by authors such as Bao, Chen, and Liu (2024) and Johansson, Jahn, and Linell (2024) underscore the importance of infrastructure and policy updates in achieving sustainable development objectives.

GAP WITHIN THE LITERATURE

Despite extensive research on sustainability in higher education, a significant gap exists regarding the specific factors influencing the achievement of Social Development Goals (SDGs) in public universities. While many studies have addressed general sustainability practices, few have focused on the integration of green human resource management (HRM) practices, green organizational culture, green knowledge sharing, stakeholder engagement, curriculum integration, and infrastructure and policy updates. Recent literature highlights the need for comprehensive frameworks that incorporate these elements to effectively drive sustainable development within universities.

Recent studies emphasize the importance of green HRM practices in fostering a sustainable organizational culture but often overlook their specific impact on achieving SDGs. For example, Kim and Choi (2023) highlight the role of green HRM in promoting environmental practices within organizations, yet there is a lack of detailed analysis on how these practices directly contribute to the attainment of SDGs. Similarly, while the role of green organizational culture in promoting sustainability is acknowledged, studies such as Johansson, Jahn, and Linell (2024) reveal a gap in understanding how this culture directly influences specific SDG outcomes.

Additionally, the dissemination of green knowledge through structured sharing practices is crucial for fostering a sustainability mindset, yet its implementation in achieving SDGs remains underexplored. Palumbo, Casprini, and Ferraresi (2023) discuss the importance of green knowledge sharing for innovation and collaboration, but there is a need for more research on its impact on SDG achievements in the context of public universities. Moreover, stakeholder engagement is frequently mentioned as a key component of sustainability initiatives, but there is insufficient research on its direct correlation with SDG achievements in public universities. Friend, Thankappan, and Pathammavong (2023) emphasize the role of stakeholder engagement in driving sustainability, yet the specific mechanisms through which it impacts SDGs are not well-documented.

Curriculum integration is another critical factor that has been identified as essential for equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed for sustainable development. However, studies specific to its effectiveness in public universities are scarce. Bao, Chen, and Liu (2024) highlight the potential of curriculum integration to foster sustainability competencies, but further research is needed to assess its direct impact on achieving SDGs. Lastly, while infrastructure and policy updates are recognized for their role in facilitating sustainable practices, their direct impact on the achievement of SDGs in public universities has not been comprehensively studied. Lanchimba, Porras, and Escobar (2024) discuss the importance of infrastructure and policy reforms in supporting sustainability, yet their specific contributions to SDGs need more detailed investigation.

These gaps indicate a pressing need for research that systematically examines how these specific factors green HRM practices, green organizational culture, green knowledge sharing, stakeholder engagement, curriculum integration, and infrastructure and policy updates collectively influence the achievement of SDGs in public universities. Addressing this gap will provide a more nuanced understanding of the pathways through which universities can enhance their sustainability efforts and contribute more effectively to global development goals. This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring these factors in depth, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on sustainability in higher education and offering practical insights for universities striving to achieve SDGs.

CONCLUSION

This study has identified and analysed critical factors influencing the achievement of Social Development Goals (SDGs) in public universities, addressing significant gaps in the existing literature. It highlights both traditional elements such as adequate funding and education, and emerging dimensions including green HRM practices, green organizational culture, green knowledge sharing, stakeholder engagement, curriculum integration, and infrastructure and policy updates. By focusing on these less-explored yet vital factors, the study provides a

comprehensive understanding of how public universities can effectively contribute to sustainable development. The findings underscore the importance of a holistic approach that combines well-established strategies with innovative practices to drive sustainability efforts in higher education. This research broadens the understanding of factors significantly impacting SDG achievement in public universities, introduces the importance of integrating green practices and stakeholder engagement, and offers practical insights and recommendations for university administrators and policymakers.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The scope was confined to open-access articles from Scopus and Web of Science databases, potentially limiting the breadth of available data and excluding relevant studies published elsewhere. Additionally, the focus on public universities may not fully capture the diversity of sustainability practices across different types of higher education institutions, limiting the generalizability of the findings. The timeframe of the literature review, spanning from 2013 to 2024, might overlook earlier relevant studies. Future research should expand the scope by including a broader range of databases and considering a wider variety of higher education institutions, including private and technical colleges. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the evolution of sustainability practices over time and their long-term impact on achieving SDGs. Additionally, empirical studies assessing the implementation and effectiveness of the identified factors in various contexts would be valuable, offering practical examples and best practices for other institutions. Finally, exploring the interrelationships between these factors and how they collectively influence sustainability outcomes could offer more nuanced and actionable insights for higher education institutions striving to contribute to sustainable development.

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