

## The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Have A Symbiotic and Mutually Enforcing Relationship with Human Rights

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### Abstract

Human rights, equity, and social justice are integral to sustainable development, forming its ethical core by ensuring fair resource distribution, inclusive opportunities (health, education, jobs), and dignity for all, especially the vulnerable, moving beyond mere economic growth to address systemic inequalities, poverty, discrimination, and environmental harms through integrated policies, legal frameworks (like the SDGs), and grassroots action for a truly just and sustainable future. Achieving sustainable development requires an inseparable link between human rights, equity, and social justice, ensuring that environmental and economic progress does not come at the cost of human dignity or fairness, but rather serves to uplift the most vulnerable and build just, resilient societies for all generations. Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Social justice and human rights are deeply linked concepts focused on fairness, equality, and dignity, with human rights being inherent entitlements for all people (like rights to health, education, freedom), while social justice is the principle of ensuring equitable access to resources, opportunities, and rights within society, often tackling systemic issues like poverty, discrimination, and inequality. Think of human rights as the foundational entitlements, and social justice as the application of those rights and fairness in real-world structures, aiming for a just distribution and participation for everyone, which is why movements for one often support the other.

### Keywords

Human right, Equity, Social justice, Economic growth, discrimination

### Introduction

The humanities and social dimensions of sustainability explore how human values, cultures, institutions, and behaviours interact with environmental and economic needs to create lasting well-being, focusing on equity, justice, education, health, and inclusive governance for current and future generations, moving beyond just environmental protection to ensure quality of life, social cohesion, and effective societal responses to global challenges like climate change. The human dimensions of sustainability encompass the social, cultural, economic, and political factors that influence and are affected by environmental sustainability initiatives. This

area considers human behaviour, governance structures, equity, and well-being as central components of a lasting ecological balance. Social sustainability means building and maintaining healthy, equitable, and resilient communities where people thrive by ensuring well-being, social cohesion, human rights, and fair access to resources, opportunities, and services for both current and future generations. It focuses on human welfare, reducing inequality, fostering strong relationships, and creating inclusive societies, extending beyond environmental and economic concerns to include fair labour, community development, and cultural competence.

### **Literature Review**

A literature review deepens understanding of a research field (Jin et al., 2018). With the increasing interest in community-level studies, various reviews have been conducted. For example, Shirazi and Keivani (2017) critically analysed the theory and practice of social sustainability in the general built environment, identifying ten key formative characteristics of social sustainability through a qualitative meta-analysis methodology. Hofstad (2023) reviewed research carried out in Scandinavia and the Global North, establishing a common conceptual understanding of community social sustainability and operational understanding. However, these either address social sustainability in the general built environment from individual buildings to communities and cities or provide a regional summary, leaving a gap in systematic reviews specifically on community social sustainability. Therefore, this study aims to understand the social sustainability of communities through a systematic approach. Specifically, this study addresses two research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How is community social sustainability conceptualized?

RQ2: What are the strategies for improving community social sustainability?

Social sustainability pertains to human quality of life and well-being, encompassing issues such as equitable access to good facilities and services for everyone, safety, inclusion, participation, etc. (Karji et al., 2019). Initially, following the Brundtland Report in 1987, which introduced the concept of sustainable development, emphasis was placed on economic and environmental sustainability (Colantonio, 2009), while social sustainability was forgotten, neglected, and marginalized (Opp, 201

This study is dedicated to conducting an SLR to synthesise and compare findings from various studies, aiming to address specific research questions (Klein and Müller, 2020). Initially developed within medical sciences, systematic reviews have now been adopted in social sciences (Palmatier et al., 2018). This method involves synthesising research findings in a systematic, transparent, and reproducible manner. It includes identifying and critically evaluating relevant studies.

### **Objective Of the Study**

The core objective of studies regarding the humanities and social dimensions of sustainability is to transition from a purely technical or environmental view of sustainability to

a people-oriented, holistic approach. Such studies aim to understand the cultural, historical, ethical, and behavioural processes that drive environmental change and to create socially just and inclusive solutions. Key objectives of this research area include:

### **1. Understanding Human Drivers of Change**

- Analysing Behaviours and Cultures: Researching how societal values, habits, and cultural norms drive consumption patterns and impact ecosystems.
- Interpreting Human-Environment Interactions: Examining the historical and cultural context in which human life is embedded, recognizing that environmental crises are deeply rooted in human activities.

### **2. Ensuring Equity and Social Justice**

- Promoting Social Equity: Focusing on the fair distribution of environmental burdens and benefits, ensuring that sustainability efforts do not disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.
- Alleviating Poverty and Insecurity: Identifying pathways to meet basic human needs (health, education, employment) without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own.

### **3. Fostering Societal Transformation**

- Developing Ethical Frameworks: Using ethics and philosophy to address the "why" behind environmental issues, rather than just the "how".
- Facilitating Policy Adoption: Understanding how to influence policy, taxes, and regulations to accelerate the transition to a sustainable economy.
- Building Resilience: Strengthening community resilience against climate impacts and supporting the "just transition" to green economies.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Sampling Technique**

Cluster sampling has been used in this study.

### **Sample Size**

100 customers in Varanasi region including eastern Uttar Pradesh

### **Hypothesis Testing**

H1: Humanities and social dimensions of sustainability involves the systematic, evidence-based evaluation of assumptions regarding human behaviour.

H2: Unlike pure environmental science these studies often grapple with complex sometimes non-replicable, “natural experiments”

H3: In urban sustainability research indicates that higher density, mixed use urban forms have a positive measurable impact on social sustainability.

H4: In social behaviour studies suggest that individual behaviour such as sustainable consumption are more heavily influenced by social and cultural norms than by individual choice alone.

### **SWOT Analysis**

A SWOT analysis focusing on the humanities and social dimensions of sustainability involves evaluating the internal capacities (Strengths/Weaknesses) and external factors (Opportunities/Threats) that affect how social, cultural, ethical, and behavioral aspects contribute to sustainable development. This approach moves beyond purely technological or environmental solutions to include human values, social equity, and community engagement.

### **Data & Actionable Insights**

a) Data collection, Reliability, validity and pilot study and also, we conclude in this part cross sectional data, longitudinal data, panel data.

### **Categorical Versus Quantitative Data**

a) Categorical data use labels or names to identify categories of like items (Nominal and ordinal)

b) Quantitative data are numerical values that indicate how much are how many (Internal and ratio)

### **Univariate, Bivariate & Multivariate Data**

Data distribution, normal distribution, sample population, sampling distribution, central limit theorem, Degrees of freedom.

### **Descriptive Inferential Analysis & Predictive Analysis**

Correlational, regression, hypothesis testing, parametric and non-parametric test, multivariate linear regression (MLR), Logistic regression, Cluster analysis, Factor analysis, Conjoint analysis, SEM

### **Types Of Data**

QUALITATIVE DATA: a) Nominal data b) Ordinal data

QUANTITATIVE DATA: a) Discrete data b) Continuous data

### **Factor Analysis in Humanities and Social Dimensions**

Factor analysis is a critical statistical method in the humanities and social sciences for measuring, reducing, and interpreting complex data related to social sustainability. It extracts underlying, unobserved factors from large sets of observed variables, helping to quantify abstract concepts like social equity, quality of life, and community well-being. Factor analysis in research is a statistical method for data reduction, condensing many observed, correlated variables into fewer, underlying latent factors that represent shared concepts, simplifying complex datasets for easier interpretation, like grouping many survey questions into core themes (e.g., "service quality," "food quality") to understand unmeasured constructs. It helps identify hidden structures, validate measurement scales, and uncover patterns, with main types being Exploratory (EFA) for discovering structures and Confirmatory (CFA) for testing pre-defined models. Here is an analysis of how factor analysis is applied to the humanities and social dimensions of sustainability based on recent studies:

## 1. Key Social Dimensions Identified

Research employing factor analysis generally identifies several core dimensions of social sustainability:

- **Social Equity and Justice:** Focusing on fair distribution of resources and opportunities.
- **Community Well-being and Safety:** Covering health, security, and quality of life.
- **Social Capital and Cohesion:** Involving trust, interaction, and social networks.
- **Education and Human Development:** Focusing on access to knowledge and skill development.
- **Participation and Governance:** Involving civic engagement, decision-making, and labor rights.

## 2. Applications in Social Sustainability Research

Factor analysis (both Exploratory FA and Confirmatory FA) is used to validate models and indicators:

- **Urban Regeneration and Housing:** Studies in urban planning use factor analysis to identify critical factors in historic city centers, such as safety, accessibility, and solidarity, which are crucial for social sustainability.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Used to assess the impact of business activities on communities, including labor rights, safety, and community integration.
- **Sustainable Consumption Behavior:** Research models social factors (e.g., social pressure, environmental awareness, education) that influence consumer choices, finding that environmental influences and education are key drivers of sustainable behavior.
- **University Sustainability:** Studies validate instruments measuring sustainability in education, covering environmental, economic, social, and educational dimensions.

## Multiple Linear Regression (MLR)

Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) is a widely used statistical method in the humanities and social dimensions of sustainability to model the relationship between a single dependent variable (e.g., quality of life, sustainability awareness) and multiple independent variables (e.g., socioeconomic status, education, urban green space access). It allows researchers to quantify how various factors, such as social and economic indicators, simultaneously impact sustainability outcomes.

## Sem In Humanities and Social Dimensions of Sustainability

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is a sophisticated, interdisciplinary statistical technique widely employed in the humanities and social sciences to analyse complex, indirect, and multi-level relationships between variables. In the context of sustainability, SEM is crucial for mapping how human attitudes, behaviours, social institutions, and cultural factors interact with environmental and economic systems.

## Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) In Humanities and Social Dimensions of Sustainability

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a robust structural equation modelling (SEM) technique used in the humanities and social sciences to validate that observed survey data matches pre-defined theoretical structures of social sustainability. It moves beyond merely describing sustainable behaviours to confirming underlying, unobserved (latent) concepts—such as eco-anxiety, community resilience, or ethical consumption—by testing whether specific indicators (survey items) accurately measure these concepts.

### **Applications in Social & Human Dimensions of Sustainability**

CFA is crucial for transforming abstract social sustainability concepts into validated, measurable, and reliable metrics.

- **Social & Cultural Validation:** CFA validates that social sustainability frameworks (e.g., community cohesion, well-being) are applicable across different populations.
- **Sustainable Behaviours:** It confirms groupings of behaviours (e.g., cycling, recycling, ethical buying) to validate overarching concepts like "sustainable lifestyle" or "regenerative habits".
- **Perceptions & Attitudes:** CFA tests models regarding public perceptions of climate risks, environmental responsibility, or "sustainable happiness".
- **Managerial & Organizational Sustainability:** It validates instruments that measure managerial competencies related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as responsible management, employee engagement, and ethical leadership.
- **Specific Examples:** Research has used CFA to validate "climate justice" constructs based on the capability approach, utilizing indicators for human development and well as measuring adaptation, as "sustainable consumption behaviours".

### **Discriminant Validity**

Discriminant validity in the humanities and social dimensions of sustainability ensures that distinct concepts—such as community engagement, cultural diversity, social equity, and environmental justice—are accurately distinguished from one another in research and evaluation, rather than being conflated. It confirms that survey items or indicators designed to measure one aspect of sustainability do not inadvertently measure a different construct, which is essential for reliable, evidence-based decision-making.

### **Results And Discussion**

The results and discussion of research into the humanities and social dimensions of sustainability emphasize that sustainable development is not merely a technical or environmental issue, but deeply embedded in human behaviour, social equity, and cultural practices.

### **Key Results in Social Sustainability Research**

- **Social Practices Over Individual Choice:** Research indicates that unsustainable lifestyles are embedded in daily routines. Efforts to change behaviour are more successful when targeting

social practices (shared, repeated activities) rather than relying solely on individual attitude changes.

- **The "Social Dimension" of Performance:** Studies often find that social sustainability is frequently neglected in favour of economic or environmental metrics. However, incorporating social aspects (equity, labour rights, community development) increases workforce morale and improves long-term organizational reputation.
- **Materialistic Values as Barriers:** Higher consumption levels, often driven by materialistic values and commercial marketing, directly correlate to higher carbon emissions, creating a major barrier to sustainability.
- **Positive Impact of Community Engagement:** Studies in urban development show that spatial planning, which allows for better community connectivity (e.g., in Hammarby Sjöstad, Sweden), positively motivates citizens to adopt sustainable living practices.

### Discussion And Analysis

- **The Role of Social Capital:** A central finding is that building "social capital"—positive relationships and networks within communities—is essential for sustaining rural livelihoods and fostering community resilience.
- **Limitations of Technical Solutions:** Discussions often highlight that technical or green solutions (e.g., new infrastructure) fail if they are not aligned with local social values and community participation.
- **Need for Contextualized Assessment:** Social Sustainability Assessment and Reporting tools (SARTs) are increasingly used, but there is a need to move away from one-size-fits-all frameworks towards tools that reflect local cultural, political, and historical contexts.
- **Shift to "Soft" Metrics:** There is an emerging trend in sustainability research to substitute traditional metrics (e.g., poverty, employment) with softer, less tangible measures such as happiness, social interaction, and quality of life.

### Conclusion

The humanities and social dimensions of sustainability emphasize that achieving a sustainable future is not merely a technical or environmental challenge, but a deeply human one that requires addressing equity, culture, and social well-being. The core conclusion is that social sustainability is as crucial as environmental and economic sustainability, requiring the integration of human needs, social justice, and community resilience. Key conclusions regarding the social dimensions of sustainability include:

- **People-Centric Approach:** Sustainable development must place people at the centre, prioritizing the satisfaction of basic needs, poverty reduction, and improved quality of life (health, education, equity).
- **Interconnectedness of Goals:** The social, economic, and environmental pillars are interdependent; lasting environmental solutions are unachievable without social equity and stability.

- **Role of Culture and Values:** Culture is the foundation and structure for sustainable development. Recognizing human values, ethics, and behaviours is essential to changing lifestyles and fostering stewardship.
- **Systemic Transformation:** Social sustainability necessitates long-term planning, fostering social cohesion, promoting inclusive governance, and strengthening institutions.
- **Redefining Progress:** The focus is shifting from purely economic indicators to include "soft" metrics like social interaction, happiness, and cultural diversity.
- **Empowerment and Participation:** Active participation, especially at the local level, is required to create resilient communities that can adapt to environmental and social shocks.

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