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# Employee Perception of Training Programmes and Sustainability: Implications for Addressing SDG 13

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## Abstract

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The study explores the employee perceptions and implications of sustainability training programmes within organisations, particularly in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 13, Climate Action. Through a comprehensive analysis of employee perceptions, participation in sustainability initiatives and organisational practices, the study aims to understand the impact of sustainability training on organisational culture and commitment to SDG 13. Findings reveal significant variations in employee perceptions and engagement, influenced by factors such as gender, age, industry sector, and company size. The study highlights the importance of aligning training initiatives with employee expectations and needs, promoting inclusivity, and fostering a culture of sustainability within organisations.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management, Sustainability Development Goal 13, Employee Perception, Sustainability Training Programmes, Climate Action

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the Study

In between challenges related to climate change and the growing awareness that the fate of our planet is at stake, the concept of sustainability emerges as a mission that goes beyond conventional corporate boundaries. In this context, sustainability is presented not only as a business strategy, but as a fundamental response to the urgent call of the Earth itself. In this context, employee perception of sustainability training programmes and business practices related to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 13 Climate Action becomes crucially important. The objective of this study is to explore how employees perceive sustainability training programmes and business practices related to SDG 13, and what the implications of these perceptions are for effectively addressing SDG 13 in organisations. This problem lies in the need to understand how companies' internal actions, in terms of sustainability and training, contribute, not only to global efforts to address climate change but also to their employees' perception and actions both inside and outside of the company.

This response is not simply a business duty, but a moral imperative that urges us humans to preserve our home for future generations. Sustainability, in this sense, becomes a collective concern and commitment. It goes beyond short-term profitability and stands as an essential pillar for the survival and continued well-being of our planet. This collective commitment implies recognising the interdependence between the actions of companies and the global ecological balance. It is a response to the imperative need to coexist harmoniously with our environment, recognising that the health of the Earth is fundamental to the health and prosperity of all forms of life that inhabit it.

## 1.2 Clear Statement

The relevance of this problem lies in the urgency of climate change and the unavoidable responsibility of preserving our planet for future generations. Despite the fact that sustainability is a collective commitment, it cannot be denied that a company could make a much greater change than what a simple person can do, just as it could produce a greater negative impact than a person, if it were not a sustainable company. The search for sustainability in the business environment, then, is not simply a trend, but an absolute necessity in the current era. Although the importance of sustainability training and the adoption of sustainable business practices is a growing trend, there is a lack of attention on how the employees' perceptions can influence the implementation and success of initiatives related to SDG 13. This research gap highlights the need for further studies to fully understand these relationships and their practical implications. This study not only addresses a current trend, but a

pressing need in the current era, where the ability of companies to confront climate change and address specific objectives, in this case SDG 13, becomes essential for their relevance and success to long term. Additionally, the communication of these efforts to employees and how they perceive them is crucial for the overall advancement of sustainability practices and, ultimately, for the well-being of humanity.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this research is to examine employee perceptions of sustainability training programmes and practices, and to analyse the implications of these perceptions for effectively addressing SDG 13 in organisations. In addition, it seeks to identify the factors that affect the effectiveness of sustainability training programmes and the barriers to the implementation of sustainable practices in organisations. Through this study, it is hoped to provide practical recommendations to improve the integration of sustainability in the business environment and contribute to the advancement of global climate goals.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Relevant Definitions

#### 2.1.1 Sustainability

Sustainability can be defined as the ability to satisfy the needs of the present without compromising the future (United Nations, n.d.).

#### 2.1.2 Green Human Resources Management

Green Human Resources Management (GHRM) can be described as the implementation of practices, policies and systems aligned with environmental sustainability objectives, aimed at cultivating the capabilities, motivation, and commitment of employees, as well as their active participation in supporting those objectives at the organisational level. Its main goal is to forge an organisational culture that is respectful of the environment, efficient in the use of resources and socially responsible (O'Donohue and Torugsa, 2015).

#### 2.1.3 Sustainable Development Goal 13

Sustainable Development Goal 13, or SDG 13, is not just a distant concept. This is "Climate Action" and is part of a broader global effort by the United

Nations to address the challenges we face globally. This goal paves the way for addressing climate change and its negative impacts on the planet. As we see and feel the effects of global warming around the world, SDG 13 becomes a global call to act immediately and meaningfully to reduce climate risks. It recognises that individual and collective action is essential to ensure a sustainable future. Among its goals, there are measures to strengthen resilience and the capacity to adapt to extreme climate events, seeking to integrate sustainable practices into government and business policies and strategies. In addition, the objective seeks to improve education and awareness about climate change, as well as strengthen human and institutional capacity to mitigate it (United Nations, 2023). It can be said therefore, that SDG 13 aligns closely with the proposed research, which focuses on the impact of sustainability training on companies and their ability to specifically address the climate goals outlined in SDG 13. The understanding and effective application of sustainable practices in the business environment therefore, become key elements to contribute to the achievement of this objective and, ultimately, to face the challenges of climate change at a global level.

## 2.2 Implementation of Green Human Resources Management

### 2.2.1 Measurement, organisational implications, and challenges in Green Human Resource Management

In exploring GHRM, various studies have provided valuable insights into its measurement, organisational implications, and challenges in implementation.

Tang, Chen, Jiang, Paillé and Jia (2018) address the need to develop a valid measurement of GHRM and propose an instrument for this. The authors identify five key dimensions of GHRM, including green recruitment and selection, green training, green performance management, green remuneration and green participation. This comprehensive approach provides a solid foundation for future research and business practices.

On the other hand, Obeitoh, Ridzwana and Olusegun (2018) investigate the relationship between corporate sustainability initiatives and employee and financial performance. Their study highlights the importance of improving employee well-being to increase productivity and financial performance. This suggests that promoting GHRM practices can have a positive impact on both organisational performance and employee well-being.

Another point of view for the implementation of GHRM is showcased by Bolgari, Chakravarti and Delaney (2020), who address the challenges that companies face when adopting sustainable practices and highlight the need to develop sustainable work policies to promote a culture of sustainability in organisations. The focus on the role of private sector actors in building a more sustainable

future highlights the importance of multi-sector collaboration and commitment to business sustainability.

These studies provide a comprehensive view of GHRM and its implications for business sustainability. While Tang et al. focus on the precise measurement of GHRM practices, Obeitoh et al. and Bolgari et al. explore how these practices influence employee performance and organisational sustainability from different perspectives. This diversity of approaches highlights the complexity of GHRM and underlines the need to adopt comprehensive strategies to promote a more sustainable business culture.

### 2.2.2 Integration of Human Resources Management and Environmental Management

The intersection between environmental management and human resource management (HRM) has gained relevance in the contemporary business area, with a growing focus on the adoption of GHRM practices in response to rising environmental concerns (Ahmad, 2015). Existing literature suggests that the integration of both disciplines is essential to address environmental challenges and promote business sustainability (Renwick, Redman, and Maguire, 2013). GHRM practices, ranging from personnel selection to employee development, have become a crucial component in promoting a green organisational culture (Saeed, Afsar, Hafeez, Khan, Tahir, and Afridi, 2019).

Based on this, it can be understood that the effective integration of GHRM and environmental management is essential to develop sustainable and socially responsible organisations. It is evident that GHRM practices not only promote environmental conservation, but also have the potential to improve employee engagement and overall organisational effectiveness. It is also clear that organisations wishing to move towards a more sustainable future should consider adopting GHRM policies and procedures as an integral part of their business strategy.

### 2.2.3 Key Dimensions of Green Human Resources Management

Effective implementation of GHRM involves, as mentioned before, consideration of various dimensions such as recruitment and selection, training, performance management and rewards (Ahmad, 2015). Saeed et al. (2019) highlight how organisations that prioritise environmental management in their human resources practices tend to attract and select environmentally conscious candidates. Furthermore, GHRM practices have been shown to influence employees' pro-environmental behaviour, encouraging the adoption of sustainable behaviours in the workplace (Ansari, Farrukh, and Raza, 2020). Ideally, Green Human Resource Management could also be implemented in the retirement process, for example by transferring knowledge and experience from retiring employees to younger generations which would reduce the need for

excessive hiring and training, thus having a positive impact on environment. During this process, organisations could also encourage employees to return company equipment for reuse or recycling, and resources for retirees to engage in sustainable activities in their personal, post-employment lives could be provided.

Based on this, it is understood that organisations can improve their environmental performance by incorporating GHRM practices at all stages of the employee life cycle, from recruitment to retirement. It is evident that companies that align their human resources policies with environmental objectives promote a more sustainable organisational culture and strengthen their commitment to corporate social responsibility.

#### 2.2.4 Impact of Employee Participation in Environmental Initiatives

Active employee participation in environmental initiatives is a fundamental aspect of GHRM and has been shown to have a significant impact on the efficiency of resource use and waste reduction (Renwick et al., 2013). Saeed et al. (2019) suggest that employee involvement in environmental decision-making can foster greater awareness and commitment to sustainability across the organisation. Ahmad (2015) emphasises the importance of modifying performance appraisal systems to include environmental criteria, which can motivate employees to actively contribute to the company's environmental objectives. Adding to this, Molina-Azorin, López-Gamero, Tarí, Pereira-Moliner, and Pertusa-Ortega (2021) suggest that it is important for organisations to analyse employee perceptions and promote green teamwork to encourage pro-environmental behaviours, specific recommendations for management practice are proposed, such as integrating sustainability into reward systems and promoting green teamwork.

Considering these findings, it can be understood that organisations can enhance their environmental impact by empowering employees and encouraging their participation in environmental initiatives. It is understood that GHRM practices that promote employee participation and engagement can generate both long-term environmental and organisational benefits. Consequently, companies should consider implementing policies and programmes that foster a culture of sustainability and promote active employee participation in environmental protection.

### 2.3 Organisational Sustainability

#### 2.3.1 Strategies to Improve Organisational Sustainability

The influence of GHRM on improving organisational sustainability, highlighted by Amjad, Abbas, Zia-UR-Rehman, Baig, Hashim, Khan, and Rehman (2021),

shows the critical importance of considering global strategies. Their call for more research, especially in developing countries, underscores the need to understand sustainability as a global effort. Although Dumont, Shen, and Deng (2017) address the importance of GHRM on employees' green behaviour, and this approach should not only be limited to established companies. The implementation of GHRM practices must be adapted and expanded globally, thus reflecting the need for a global vision to address environmental problems. The influence of these strategies not only drives green behaviour at work, but also highlights the relevance of sustainability training, advocating for a global approach in creating solutions to environmental challenges. In an interconnected world, understanding and addressing sustainability as a global enterprise is essential to the success of these initiatives (Amjad et al., 2021). Dumont et al. (2017) reinforce the idea by pointing out that adapting GHRM practices to various business realities is not only crucial but also imperative, in order to maximise the effectiveness of efforts towards sustainability.

### 2.3.2 Connection between Sustainability Training and Organisational Practices

The positive relationship between sustainability training and sustainable practices in organisations, highlighted by Longoni, Golini, and Cagliano (2014), reveals how this approach not only builds specific skills, but also fosters a culture rooted in employee engagement. In turn, Paulet, Holland, and Morgan (2021) expand this perspective by highlighting the need to deeply understand the relationships between organisational practices and sustainability, impacting both internal operations and employee perception and participation.

The research by Longoni et al. (2014), exploring the implementation of Human Resources and New Forms of Work Organisation (NFWO), highlights the direct and positive connection between training and sustainable performance. It demonstrates how training has a direct and positive impact on environmental and social performance, pointing to the need for additional qualitative research. In turn, Paulet et al. (2021), through their ten-year meta-analysis of GHRM, provide a detailed view of its evolution.

This interweaving of perspectives highlights the relevance of not only internal strategies, but also the crucial role of employees in implementing sustainable practices. The authenticity and effectiveness of these initiatives are fundamental to addressing environmental and economic challenges, forging a future where sustainability is not only a goal, but an intrinsic part of the organisational culture.

### 2.3.3 Organisations' Commitment to Sustainability as Understood by Employees

According to Jerónimo, Henriques, Lacerda, da Silva, and Vieira (2019) employee perceptions of organisations' commitment to sustainability, highlight

the importance of human resource management in employees' emotional connection to sustainable practices. Employee perception emerges as a key indicator of the success of sustainable practices, raising questions about how this perception translates into employees' willingness to engage beyond usual expectations.

As Muster and Schrader (2011) introduce the intriguing idea of "Green Work-Life Balance", exploring how work-life balance policies influence employees' environmental behaviour, Chaudhary (2019) delves into the impact of GHRM practices on employees' environmental performance, highlighting the relevance of organisational identification as a crucial mediator. These approaches point to the need to not only train employees in sustainable practices, but also instil a deep understanding of how these actions improve not only the work environment but also in their personal lives.

In this context, the issue goes beyond technical training, it is about creating emotional connections and cultivating a sense of purpose. Sustainability should not simply be a task, but a commitment rooted in the understanding and desire to contribute to a better present and future.

#### 2.3.4 From Sustainability Training to Organisational Culture

The interconnection between Green Human Resource Management, sustainability training and green transformational leadership, as noted by Singh, Giudice, Chierici, and Graziano (2020), highlights the crucial relevance of these elements in innovation and environmental performance. This connection is fundamental, as demonstrated by the study of Birou, Green and Inman (2019), which brings a valuable perspective by demonstrating the real impact of sustainability training on the sustainable supply chain. This study establishes a direct link between sustainability training and operational and economic results, raising crucial questions about how training impacts operational practices and, consequently, the corporate carbon footprint. In the context of the sustainable supply chain practices, training is transformed into sustainable business practices that comprehensively address environmental and operational challenges.

This understanding leads us to recognise that sustainability training not only affects internal operations, such as the supply chain, but also influences organisational culture and leadership, thus impacting innovation capacity and improving environmental performance.

As we contemplate methodologies for incorporating sustainability into large corporations, as described by Haugh and Talwar (2010), reflection arises on how this process involves not only establishing policies, but also fostering a culture rooted in training and development. Sustainability is revealed not only as a set of policies, but as a way of business life. Sustainability training and its integration into business culture are presented as essential pillars to forge a

more sustainable business future, thus transcending daily operations towards practices and leadership rooted in the vision of a more sustainable world.

### 2.3.5 Balance between Sustainability and Profitability

Considering the perspective presented in the case studied by Gansbeke (2021), which highlights the need to balance sustainability with financial viability, the critical question arises of how companies can achieve changes necessary for sustainability without compromising their profitability. This dilemma is linked to the reflection of Birou et al. (2019), which also highlights the importance of evaluating the relationship between sustainability training and operational and economic results. The critical evaluation of costs and benefits then becomes an essential element to effectively implement sustainable practices in the business environment. This balance between sustainability and profitability is not only a financial concern, but also a strategic consideration to ensure long-term success.

We must then evaluate sustainability from an economic perspective, providing a broader point of view that addresses not only those environmental and social implications, but also the economic aspects of implementing sustainable practices, i.e. their cost, and the evaluation of not losing investors to the wanting to have a company that is as sustainable as possible. Effectively implementing sustainable practices in the business environment then requires not only a holistic approach but also careful consideration of the associated costs and benefits.

#### 2.3.5.1 Obstacles for the Balance between Sustainability and Profitability in Companies

There are several barriers that may arise in this regard, such as the initial costs of implementing sustainable practices, which may require significant investments in more efficient technologies or staff training, which could affect short-term profitability. Furthermore, possible resistance to change by employees or stakeholders could generate internal tensions and affect the company's efficiency and profitability in the short term. Another risk to consider is reputation risks; If a company fails to meet its sustainable commitments or engages in irresponsible practices, it could face significant risks to its reputation and profitability (Bolgari et al., 2020).

However, these barriers are manageable, and sustainability can have very positive results on the profitability of companies. For example, the adoption of sustainable practices could improve the image and reputation of the company, generating a positive perception among consumers and society in general, which in turn would increase clients' demand for the company's products and services. Likewise, the implementation of sustainable measures, such as energy efficiency or proper resource management, could help reduce operating

costs in the long term. Additionally, more and more consumers value and prefer sustainable brands and products, which could open up new market opportunities and expand the company's customer base, and companies committed to sustainability are increasingly attractive to employees, especially for new generations who value purpose and social responsibility in their work, which can contribute to the aforementioned attraction and retention of talent (Cajiga Calderón, n.d.).

## 2.4 Implications for Addressing Sustainable Development Goal 13 through Green Human Resource Management

### 2.4.1 Integration of Human Resources Management with the Organisational Strategy

The effective integration of Human Resources Management with business strategy is a crucial component for organisational success in any context. Regardless of the nature of the strategy adopted by an organisation, whether oriented towards sustainability, innovation or operational efficiency, human resources policies and practices must be appropriately aligned to support and facilitate the implementation of that strategy. This fundamental principle highlights the interdependence between human resource management and strategic direction, recognising that human capital is a critical factor in a company's ability to achieve its objectives.

The strategic approach to HRM involves not only being a passive executor of strategic decisions, but also actively participating in their formulation, providing experience and knowledge of human capital. The integration of HRM with business strategy, at both the macro and micro levels, enhances organisational success and improves the company's ability to achieve its strategic objectives. In this sense, the strategic choice must consider the adaptation of human resources practices to the available resources and the business strategy, recognising the dynamic nature of the environment and the need to adapt personnel policies to constantly evolving strategic needs. Thus, effective alignment between HRM and business strategy not only maximises organisational efficiency, but also ensures greater adaptability to market changes and sustainable competitive advantage (Peña García-Pardo and Hernández Perlines, 2007).

### 2.4.2 Sustainable Recruitment and Selection

Sustainability practices have a crucial influence on talent attraction and business reputation. First, companies that adopt sustainable measures are perceived with greater trust and respect, which translates into strengthened stakeholder loyalty, a greater ability to attract talent, and a competitive advantage in the market. By anticipating future challenges such as stricter

regulations or changes in consumer demands, sustainable companies also reduce future risks and improve their adaptability in changing environments. Additionally, by optimizing resources and reducing waste, sustainability practices promote operational efficiency and long-term cost reduction (Salgado, 2023).

On the other hand, new generations of professionals seem to be looking for employers who share their values, including sustainability, making companies with a strong reputation in this regard more attractive to diverse and highly qualified talent, thus stimulating innovation and growth (Graff, 2023). In addition, sustainability initiatives also generate a sense of shared purpose among employees, which increases their motivation and commitment to the company (Cajiga Calderón, n.d.). Therefore, adopting sustainability practices in Talent Attraction and Selection would not only contribute to a better business reputation, but would also strengthen the company's ability to attract and retain valuable and committed talent, as well as to foster a better work environment, motivating and oriented towards a shared and sustainable purpose.

#### 2.4.2.1 Impact of Commitment to Sustainability on the Future Behaviour of Employees

Assessing candidates' commitment to sustainability before integrating them into the company could have a significant impact on future employee behaviour. A clear and ethical recruitment process, based on good practices and the evaluation of appropriate skills and behaviours, can lead to happier workers committed to sustainability. This approach not only reduces employee turnover, but also contributes to the creation of a company culture that values sustainability and promotes sustainable behaviours among employees (CDG, n.d.).

Identifying and selecting candidates with a strong commitment to sustainability could generate long-term benefits for the company, as these employees tend to be more aligned with the organisation's sustainability values and goals. Furthermore, the degree of identification of an employee with the company for which they work is essential, since the greater the affinity and belonging, the greater the commitment to achieving results, which can positively influence the future behaviour of employees in relation to sustainability (Litwin and Stringer, 1968). For this reason, evaluating candidates' commitment to sustainability during the selection process can influence the future behaviour of employees, promoting a more sustainable business culture aligned with the organisation's values.

#### 2.4.2.2 Sustainable Selection Practices

As recruitment strategies play a critical role in assessing candidates' commitment to sustainability and its potential impact on future employee behaviour, it is important to mention some possible practices. During interviews,

various techniques can be used by the hiring manager, such as Performance-simulation tests, which consist of asking questions or presenting cases to identify how the candidate commits to the assigned tasks and whether they can act with integrity, respecting company values (Robbins and Judge, 2017).

In addition, an analysis of values and behaviours could be applied through written tests to observe how the candidate has demonstrated their commitment to sustainability in previous experiences or similar situations. These written evaluation tests are also valuable in measuring the candidate's level of commitment, addressing aspects such as environmental awareness, social responsibility, and business ethics (Arranz, 2016; Robbins and Judge, 2017).

Finally, obtaining references and recommendations from former employers or colleagues, or other types of background checks could provide additional insight into the candidate's commitment to sustainability in the work environment, but it should be kept in mind that applicants usually choose references that would tell good experiences with them, or would make them look good with the company (Sembrena, 2008; Robbins and Judge, 2017).

These selection practices are critical to ensuring that upcoming employees align with the company's values and sustainability goals. Even if a candidate has not been fully aware of sustainability practices in the past, there is a chance that they will demonstrate a quick learning ability or the capacity to adapt effectively to company strategies. They could also show a genuine interest in sustainability and the ability to apply this knowledge in a business environment committed to sustainability.

### 2.4.3 Integrating Sustainability into the Orientation Process

Companies integrate sustainability into their mentoring programmes in a variety of ways. This implies, in addition to incorporating sustainability into the corporate culture, effectively communicating the importance of sustainable practices in all areas of the company also in the orientation process, since at that moment the new employee begins to understand well how everything works in the company, and what is important there.

During the orientation process, companies could provide sustainability training and awareness programmes to new employees, such as those covered in section 2.4.6 of this research. This would help provide information about the company's sustainable policies and practices, as well as highlight the importance of sustainability in job performance from the beginning, allowing new employees to experience first-hand how sustainability is integrated into the daily operations of the company and how they can contribute to it (Ecoembes, 2022).

In addition, sustainable companies usually establish specific goals and objectives related to sustainability; these should be communicated to new

employees during orientation, thus highlighting their importance and at the same time being more transparent with them. This helps focus attention on sustainability and aligns employees with the company's sustainability efforts (Craig, 2018).

It can be said then that the integration of sustainability in business orientation programmes represents a crucial step towards building a corporate culture committed to environmental and social responsibility. By providing sustainability training and awareness from the beginning, companies not only inform new employees about their sustainable practices, but also offer them the opportunity to actively participate in achieving sustainability goals. Additionally, by transparently communicating sustainability-related goals, a clear framework is established, which allows employees to align their actions with the organisation's values and objectives. This not only strengthens employee engagement, but also fosters a shared sense of purpose around creating a positive impact on society and the environment.

#### 2.4.4 Sustainable Performance Management

The alignment of the company's objectives, in this case sustainability, with the performance objectives of employees, significantly influences their commitment and perception. Performance appraisal serves several purposes, such as facilitating human resource decisions and identifying training needs. It also provides feedback to employees and determines rewards. Although its importance varies depending on the focus, which for us would be sustainability, we focus on its role as feedback and the allocation of rewards (Robbins and Judge, 2017).

As previously mentioned, integrating the concept of sustainability from the beginning, and constantly communicating the importance of sustainability in the company are key strategies to engage employees in sustainability. Therefore, effectively integrating the organisation's sustainability goals with employee performance evaluation criteria not only strengthens their commitment to sustainability, but also shapes their perception of their individual contribution to organisational success. It is crucial to recognise that sustainability-based feedback and rewards not only motivate employees, but also reinforce an organisational culture rooted in environmental and social responsibility.

##### 2.4.4.1 Performance Feedback in Terms of Sustainability

Feedback on sustainability performance can be a critical tool to motivate employees and improve their participation in sustainable initiatives. Performance feedback at the end of the evaluation and based on the results obtained allows managers to know and promote the employee's strengths, establishing guidelines to work on weaknesses. This feedback becomes a fundamental support tool to seek motivation and contribute to the employee's

improvement, thus improving their performance and impact within the organisation (Cawley, Keeping and Levy, 1998).

Feedback plays a critical role in employee development by providing them with a clear understanding of how their performance aligns with company expectations. This transparency not only gives them confidence in their work, but also reinforces the areas in which they are excelling. Additionally, by identifying specific areas that need improvement and offering guidance on how to do so, feedback shows the manager's genuine interest and concern for the employee's personal and professional growth. This individualised approach not only fosters a sense of value and belonging in employees but can also serve as a powerful motivator for them to actively engage in sustainable initiatives, feeling that their contribution is recognised and valued within the organisation. (Conexión ESAN, 2017; Robbins and Judge, 2017).

Given that performance feedback can motivate employees by demonstrating the company's interest and concern for their personal development either individually or in a group, it could arguably in turn improve their participation in sustainable initiatives, provided that these initiatives are communicated in the feedback session of the performance evaluation.

#### 2.4.5 Sustainability and Employee Retention

Integrating sustainability practices into companies' orientation programmes has a significant impact on both employee attraction and retention and the perception of the company as an employer. According to a 2022 study across continental Europe, around two-thirds of workers mention that sustainability is important when considering a job offer, and 6 out of 10 workers admit that their decision to join a company would be influenced if it did not have any sustainability program (Michael Page, 2022).

But in order to retain employees who consider sustainability important and who really act in line with the objectives, companies must be genuinely committed to the environment, since once inside the company employees see how everything is managed and if the commitment is real or just "Greenwashing" (Cajiga Calderón, 2023).

Therefore, employee retention and commitment to sustainability depend not only on the integration of environmental practices into company orientation programmes, but also on the authenticity of the company's commitment to the environment in all its operations. It is essential that companies move from words to action, implementing concrete policies and fostering an organisational culture that promotes environmental responsibility. In this way, a solid and trusting relationship can be built with employees, thus promoting long-term sustainability objectives.

## 2.4.6 Sustainable Career and Skills Development: Sustainability Training Programmes

Employees do not usually maintain and upgrade their competence indefinitely, nor can it be assumed or expected that they arrive at the company knowing everything necessary for their job, which makes it necessary to invest in formal training to maintain and update skills. These trainings can range from basic skills to executive leadership, and focus on areas such as technical, interpersonal, and problem-solving skills, as well as work ethics and civility. The effectiveness of training will always depend on the design of the program and subsequent support from the company, as well as the willingness of employees to apply what they have learned (Robbins and Judge, 2017; Zona BIC, 2023).

In this context, sustainability training would fall into the category of technical skills, specifically in the field of ethics and corporate social responsibility. This type of training could provide employees with knowledge about sustainable practices, environmental awareness, and how to integrate specific ethical considerations into their work roles. In addition, it could include information on how individual decisions and actions affect the environment, the community and society in general to promote an organisational culture committed to social and environmental responsibility not only within the company but also outside of it, in the personal life of the employees.

### 2.4.6.1 Sustainability Training Example

As an example of a sustainability training option, we introduce SDG4BIZ, which is presented as more than an educational exercise, being an essential tool that not only generates awareness, but also empowers organisations to translate the Sustainable Development Goals into tangible business initiatives (SDG4BIZ, n.d.). This project was designed with the intention of addressing both the education and business sectors, and the main focus was the recognition of sustainable business opportunities, covering areas such as healthcare, agriculture, engineering and cities. This holistic approach demonstrates how educational tools can become catalysts for the effective implementation of sustainability across multiple sectors and it is valuable for companies seeking to not only understand sustainability principles, but also implement them effectively in their structures and operations.

This project stands out for its practical approach and its ability to train organisations in the effective translation of the Sustainable Development Goals into concrete and profitable actions. It not only educates, but also empowers organisations to become active agents of sustainable change, contributing to both the improvement of business sustainability and the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. This innovative and scalable approach allows companies and educational institutions adapt and thrive in a world increasingly focused on sustainability, leading the way toward a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

### 3 Research question

By exploring how sustainability training directly impacts companies' carbon emissions reduction and meeting SDG 13 climate goals, a specific research problem is identified. Although existing literature supports the importance of sustainability and GHRM training to improve organisational sustainability, there is a lack of attention on how these factors concretely impact the addressing of specific SDG 13 goals, as well as the perception of employees about climate action and training in their workplaces. This gap highlights the need for more research to fully understand these relationships and overcome specific challenges.

As the focus of this study is on employee perceptions and current sustainability practices, the research will focus on assessing how sustainability training and practices currently influence companies' ability to address the Sustainable Development Goal 13 on Climate Action.

We then get the research question: *How do employees perceive sustainability training programmes and business practices related to Sustainable Development Goal number 13 on Climate Action, and what are the implications of these perceptions for effectively addressing SDG 13 in their organisations?*

#### 3.1 Secondary Questions

In order to attempt to reach a complete answer to the main question, it is essential to address a series of secondary questions that will guide us in our research process. These questions will act as key components that break down the complexity of the problem and help us gain a deeper understanding of the various aspects involved. Only by addressing these secondary questions we can obtain detailed information that will contribute to our overall understanding and the formulation of solid conclusions.

Secondary questions:

*What is employee perception of the importance of sustainability training within their organisations?*

*What type of sustainability training programmes do companies offer their employees and how are they perceived by them?*

*What is the level of employee participation in the sustainability practices implemented by their organisations?*

*How do employees perceive the influence of sustainability practices on organisational culture and commitment to SDG 13?*

*What barriers do employees face in participating in sustainability initiatives in their workplaces?*

*How does sustainability training and business practices relate to employee motivation and commitment towards addressing climate change?*

*Are there significant differences in employee perception and engagement regarding sustainability training and practices across different industry sectors or company sizes?*

*What strategies can be implemented to improve employee perception and increase their participation in sustainability initiatives, specifically in relation to SDG 13?*

## **4 Data Collection Methods**

To address the research question comprehensively, a mixed approach that combines both primary and secondary data will be used. This blended approach will allow for a holistic understanding of employee perceptions of sustainability training programmes and business practices related to SDG 13 Climate Action.

### **4.1 Secondary Data**

The previously conducted literature review provided a solid foundation for understanding the context and key theories related to corporate sustainability and addressing SDG 13. This secondary information includes data and findings from previous research related to employee perceptions of the programmes, training in sustainability and business practices related to SDG 13. This process provided us with a solid foundation and allowed us to identify gaps in the existing research, and based on that, create the research questions.

### **4.2 Primary Data: Quantitative Data Collection**

In addition to secondary information, an employee survey was conducted to collect primary data on their perceptions. This quantitative method provides numerical and statistical data that allows employees' perceptions to be analysed in an objective and quantifiable way. The combination of secondary information and primary data in this study allow for a complete and contextualised understanding of employee perceptions and their impact on companies' ability to effectively address climate change and reduce their carbon footprint.

#### 4.2.1 Sampling Method

The sampling method used was systematic random sampling. In this process, 10 different industries were identified, and each of them was searched for people on LinkedIn and 20 people were randomly selected from each industry. To make this selection, the search results were examined and one person in five was selected. Next, it was checked if the person was currently employed and had their email address available in the contact information on their profile. Those who met these criteria were selected and sent the survey. In the event that a profile did not have contact information, the next profile on the list was selected. It is important to note that this approach may not ensure accurate representation of each industry, as search results may include individuals with diverse interests or work experiences.

#### 4.2.2 Sampling Target

The sampling target in this study focuses on employees in general, regardless of their hierarchical level, functional area, or seniority in the organisation. The selection of this broad group of workers seeks to capture a variety of perspectives and experiences in relation to sustainability training programmes and business practices related to SDG 13. By including workers from different areas and levels within the organisation, seeks to obtain a representative and exhaustive view of employee perceptions in relation to these issues.

The survey's demographic questions include relevant categories such as age range, gender, industry, and company size. These demographic categories will later be used as subgroups in the analysis of the collected data. By dividing the target population into these subgroups, we seek to understand how perceptions and experiences vary between different segments of the population. This strategy will provide a more complete and detailed view of employee attitudes and opinions in relation to sustainability training programmes and business practices related to SDG 13.

#### 4.2.3 Sampling Size

The sample size was deliberately set at 200 individuals as an initial target to ensure meaningful representation of the target population. However, during the data collection process, a total of 56 responses were obtained from the participants. Although the final sample was smaller than anticipated, it was considered adequate for the purposes of the study as it provided a solid basis for the analysis and interpretation of the results.

#### 4.2.4 Survey Design

To collect information on perceptions and practices related to sustainability, we designed a questionnaire covering a variety of aspects. The questionnaire consisted of several sections, starting with demographic questions that help contextualise and compare the responses. These questions include data on the respondent's age, gender, company size, and the industry in which they work, and these will later be used to contrast and analyse sustainable perceptions and practices against different demographic groups.

In addition to this, we address awareness and perception of climate change and sustainability initiatives, followed by questions about participation in company-provided awareness and training activities on sustainability issues. Next, we assess knowledge about the Sustainable Development Goals 13 on climate action, and perception of the respondents' workplaces' contribution to this goal.

Additionally, we explore the perception of organisational culture in relation to sustainability, as well as the motivating factors and barriers to participating in sustainability initiatives in the workplace. Sustainability training programmes offered by the company were also asked about and suggestions for improving sustainability in the workplace were gathered.

Finally, open-ended, non-obligatory questions were included to obtain additional comments and suggestions from respondents. The questionnaire was designed to be anonymous, allowing participants to share their opinions more openly and honestly, without worries or inhibitions about the disclosure of information.

## 5 Preliminary Conclusion

As we explore the impact of sustainability training on organisations, we recognise the possibility of two main anticipated outcomes.

As a positive outcome, we anticipate that companies that have invested in sustainability training experience substantial improvements in their business practices. In this positive outlook, we hope to observe a more positive perception by employees towards the company's commitment to sustainability and a greater willingness on their part to participate in initiatives related to SDG 13. Thus, having an organisational culture and daily operations that are effectively aligned with the climate objective.

As a negative result, we anticipate the possibility of finding that some companies do not apply sustainability trainings and practices or, despite receiving sustainability trainings, face difficulties in positively influencing the perception of their employees or in fostering active commitment to initiatives

related to SDG 13. Obstacles could limit the real impact on employee perception and approach to sustainability in the workplace.

The first scenario offers an encouraging horizon, where investment in training translates into significant and sustainable changes, as well as a good perception of them by employees. However, the second scenario urges us to address the complexities and challenges that could hinder the full integration of sustainable practices and their communication to employees. This duality highlights the critical need for a comprehensive and adaptable approach to business sustainability. It is important to note that these two perspectives, although different, are not necessarily exclusive. In fact, it is plausible that our study reveals that both situations are real and coexist in different organisational contexts. By recognising the possibility of both realities, we aim to provide a more complete understanding of the challenges and opportunities organisations face in their pursuit of sustainability. Ultimately, these forward-looking reflections reinforce the continued importance of research in this area, as businesses play an essential role in creating a more sustainable future. As we move toward a more sustainable future, these areas of research can provide valuable insights and best practices for organisations seeking to effectively integrate sustainability into their operations and business culture.

## **6 Results and Analysis**

### **6.1 Analysis of Individual Results**

#### **6.1.1 Demographic**

In this section, answers to demographic questions will be briefly presented and analysed. These questions were included primarily to provide a basic profile of the study participants, to be used in Section 6.2 to compare and contrast with responses to other survey questions. By examining how the demographic factors correlate with responses to other specific survey questions, it is sought to gain a deeper understanding of potential patterns or associations within the data.

### Q1. Select your age range

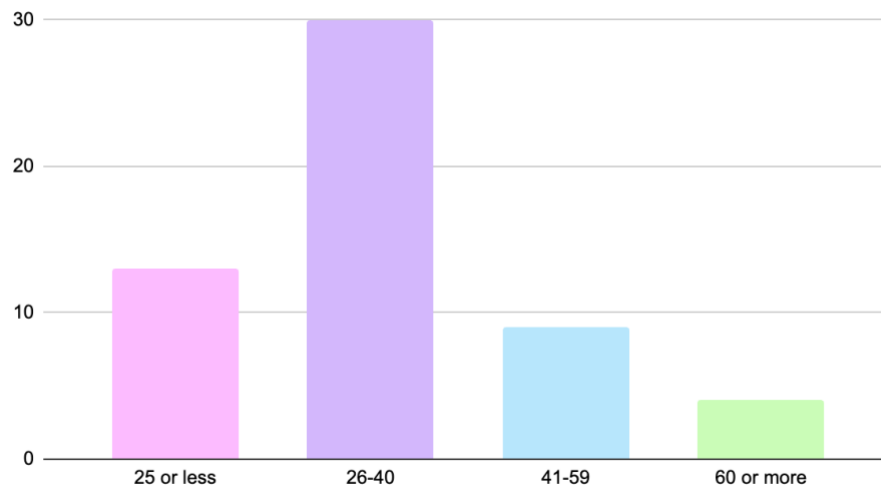


Figure 1 - Q1. Age Range

In Figure 1 it can be observed that the majority of respondents are in the age range of 26 to 40 years, suggesting that young and middle-aged adults are well represented in the sample. This could reflect a significant interest in sustainability among this demographic.

Although there is a considerable participation of people aged 25 or less, their representation is lower compared to the group aged 26 to 40. The older (41-59 and 60 years or older) age groups have relatively low participation in the sample. This may indicate that these demographic groups could be less interested in sustainability or that there is less participation in the survey in general by these groups, or, connecting this to this project's section 2.3.5.1, which discusses how larger companies may have financial resources to implement sustainable practices, and could attract younger generations of employees, while smaller companies could have fewer resources to do so, this could be affecting the representation of different age groups in the survey. This suggests that the availability of financial resources in companies can influence the perception of the importance of sustainability, especially among younger employees.

### Q2. Select your gender

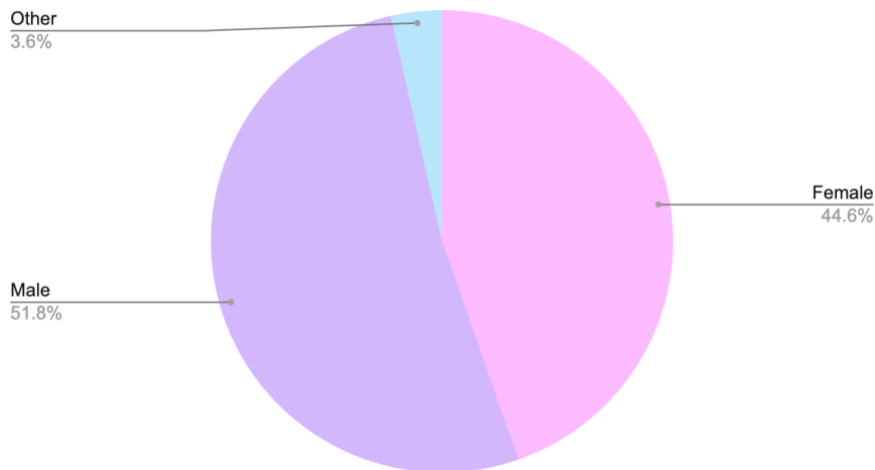


Figure 2 - Q2. Gender

The gender responses, as shown in Figure 2, reveal that the majority of respondents identify as “Male”, followed by a significant representation of “Female” respondents and a few “Other” responses. This distribution highlights the importance of recognising and respecting the diversity of gender identities when designing sustainability strategies and training programmes, thus promoting an inclusive work environment that is respectful of diversity.

### Q3. What is the size of the company you currently work at? (Number of employees)

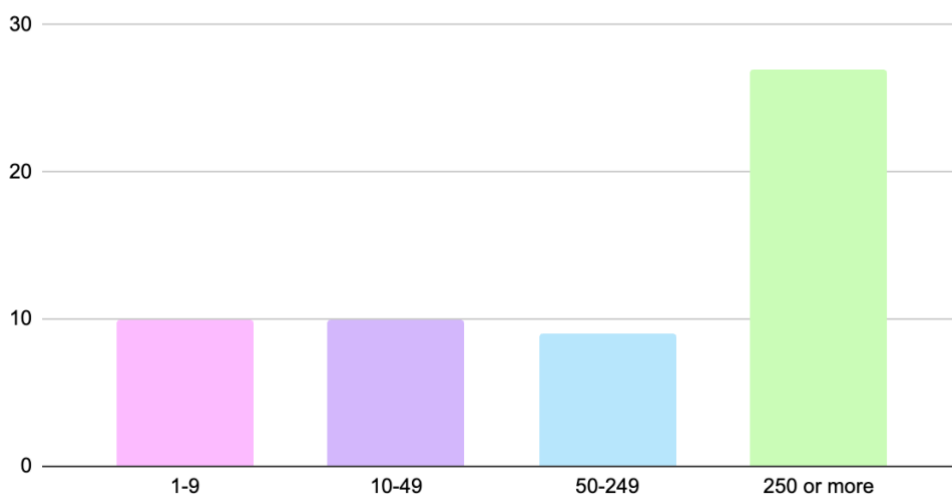


Figure 3 – Q3. Company Size

Responses to the question shown in Figure 3 reveal a high representation of respondents employed in large companies, with the majority indicating that they

work in companies with 250 or more employees. Although smaller companies are also represented in the sample, their presence is less prominent compared to larger companies, it can be said that small and medium-sized companies have an intermediate representation in the sample. This could suggest that employees of large companies feel more capable or comfortable when responding to a survey on organisational sustainability, and it could be due to, as mentioned in section 2.3.5.1 of this project, the possible high initial cost of implementing sustainable practices, which could imply that only the largest companies have the financial resources to meet these "large" expenses.

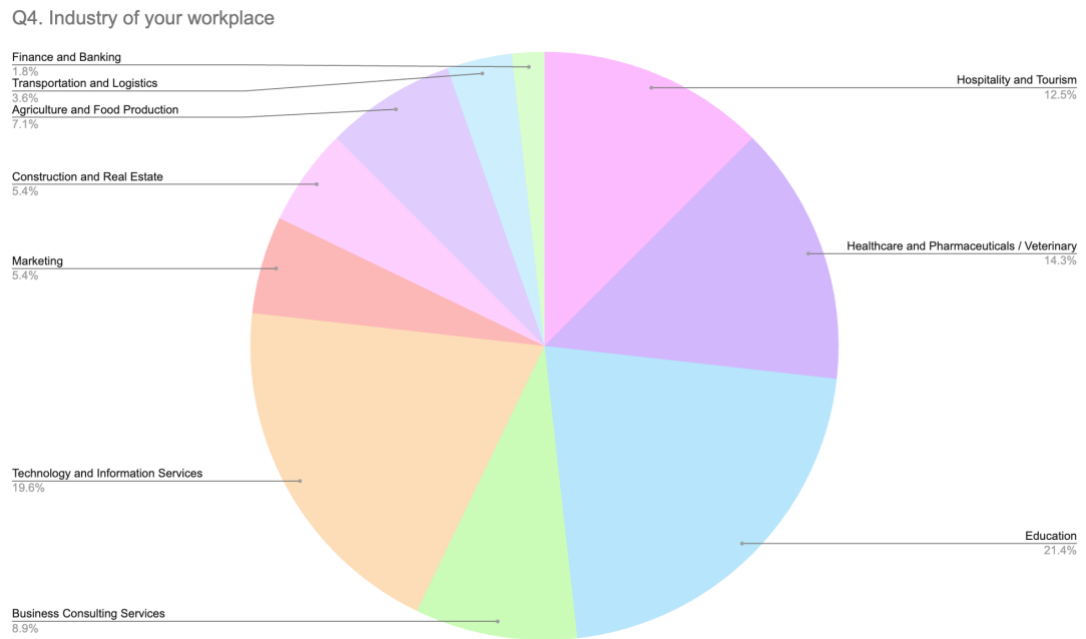


Figure 4 - Q4. Workplace Industry

When examining responses about the workplace industry, presented in Figure 4, there is a diversity of sectors represented. Among the most common are Technology and Information Services, Education, and Health Care and Pharmaceuticals/Veterinary. These results suggest a wide variety of work areas among respondents, which indicates a significant scope in terms of the applicability of the research findings or a representative sample of various industries in the study.

### 6.1.2 Awareness and Perception on Sustainability and Climate Change

In this section, participants' awareness and perception of global sustainability and climate change initiatives will be explored. It will be examined whether

participants are aware of these topics and whether they consider them relevant to their work and personal lives.

### Q5. Are you aware of climate change and global sustainability initiatives?

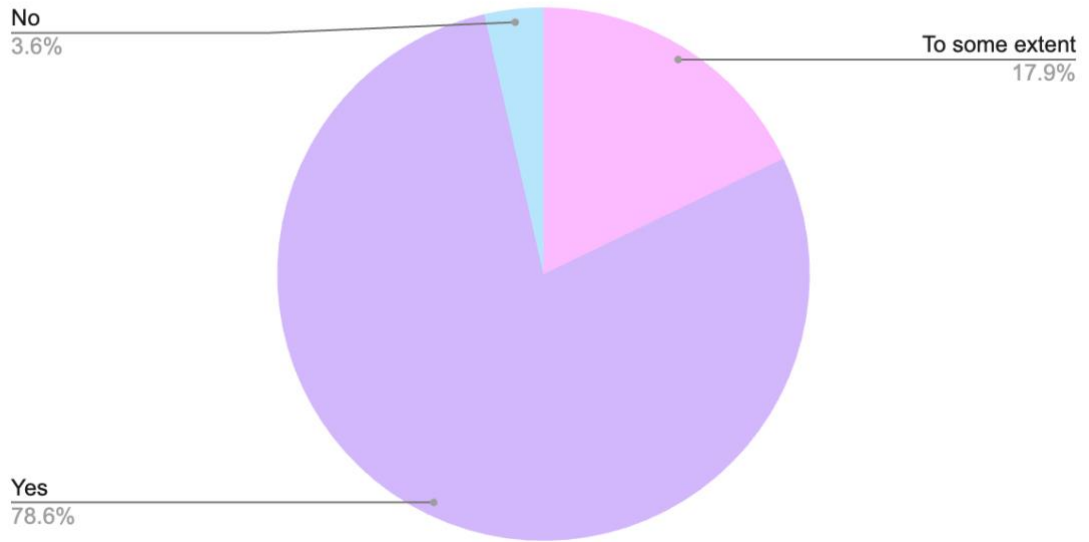


Figure 5 - Q5. Climate Change Awareness

Looking at Figure 5, a general trend toward climate change awareness and global sustainability stands out, with the majority of respondents indicating they are informed about these issues, and a good number of respondents answering they are at least informed to some extent. However, the presence of negative responses suggests the need for greater education or awareness in certain segments of the sample.

Q6. Do you consider climate change and sustainability to be relevant topics for your work and/or personal life?

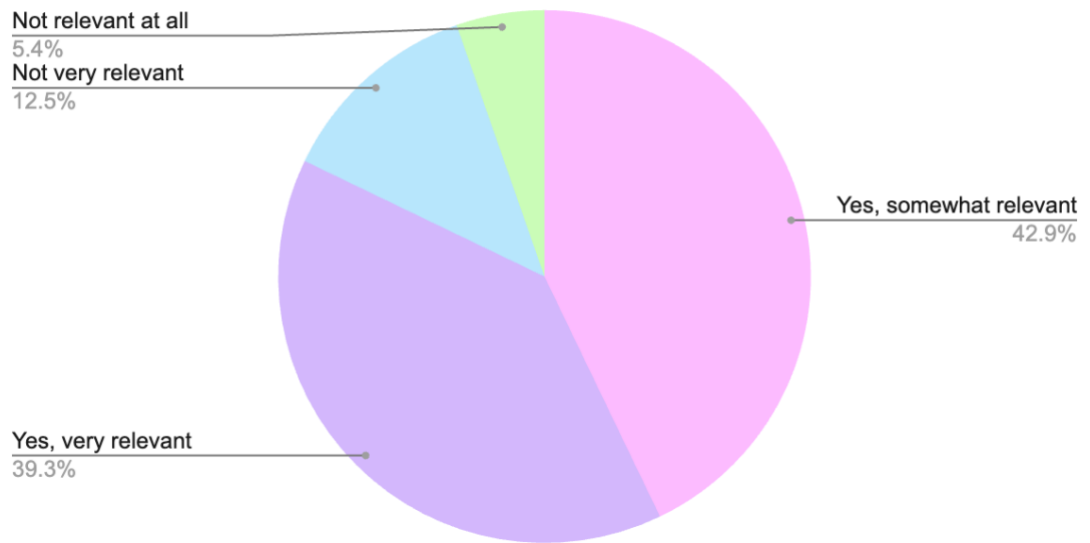


Figure 6 - Q6. Climate Change Relevance in Work and/or Personal Life

As seen on Figure 6, there is a general trend toward perceiving the relevance of climate change and sustainability for respondents' work and personal life as relevant, with a majority of respondents expressing varying levels of importance. However, the presence of responses that indicate less or no relevance implies a need of companies in effectively communicating the relevance of these topics.

### Q7. To what extent do you act on sustainability considerations in your personal life?

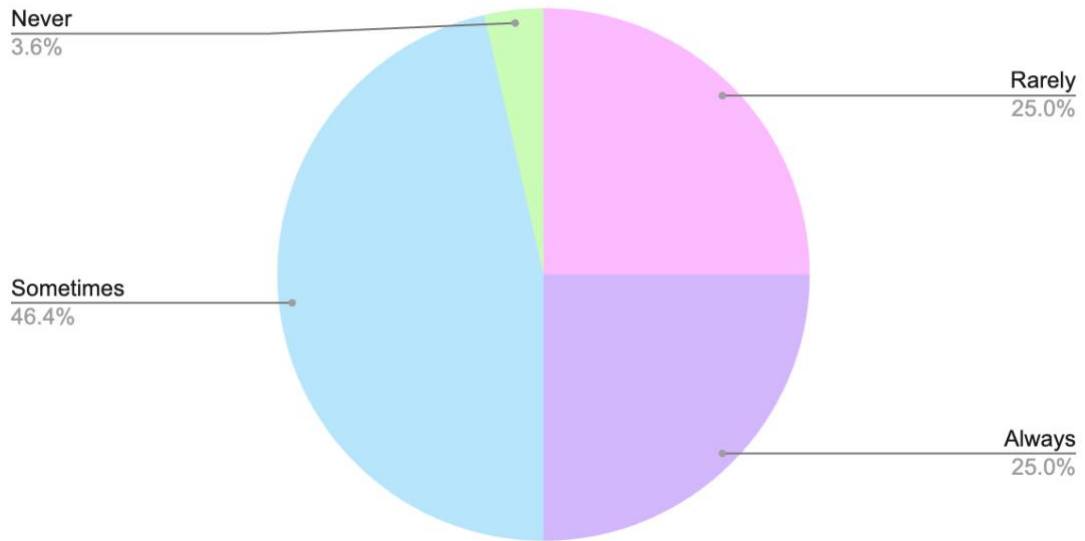


Figure 7 - Q7. Sustainability Actions in Personal Life

When analysing the responses to the question shown in Figure 7 a diverse distribution is observed. While a significant group indicates that they sometimes incorporate sustainable practices, it is followed by groups that always do so, and rarely act on sustainability considerations in equal proportions. This balance between those who consistently prioritise sustainability and those who rarely do so underscores the need to address barriers and foster greater awareness and commitment to sustainable practices among all respondents. Furthermore, 3.6% of respondents indicated that they never acted considering sustainability, although this figure represents a minority, it would be more favourable if it were not present.

The results to questions 5, 6 and 7 underscore the importance of continuing to promote awareness of climate change and encourage participation in sustainability initiatives to address current environmental challenges.

#### 6.1.3 Participation in Sustainability Awareness and Training Activities

Respondents' participation in awareness-raising and training activities provided by their companies on sustainability and climate change issues will be studied in this section, as well as the importance they give to receiving training in sustainability practices in their workplace.

Q8. Have you participated in awareness-raising or training activities provided by your company on sustainability issues,...

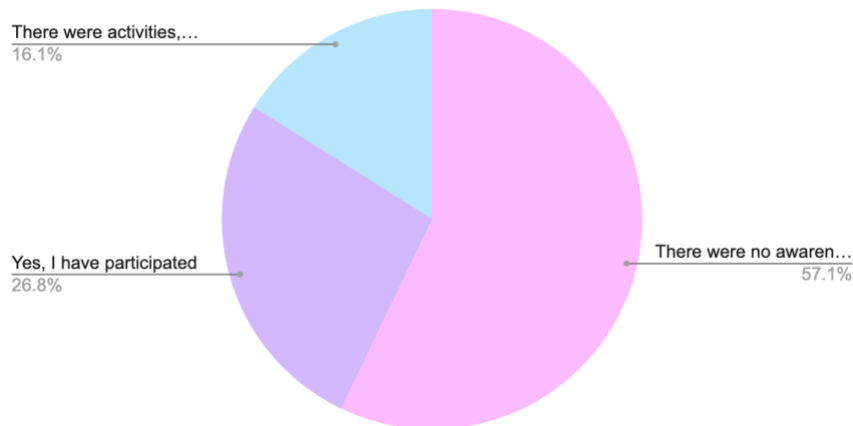


Figure 8 – Q8. Sustainability Training Participation

When examining responses shown in Figure 8, of participation in company-provided sustainability awareness or training activities, a clear split is observed in the sample. While a significant portion of respondents report the absence of such activities in their workplace, another group indicates having participated in them. However, the presence of responses that indicate activities in which respondents did not participate suggests a possible disconnection between the offer of these initiatives and their promotion or effective communication within the company.

Q9. Do you consider receiving training on sustainability practices in your workplace important?

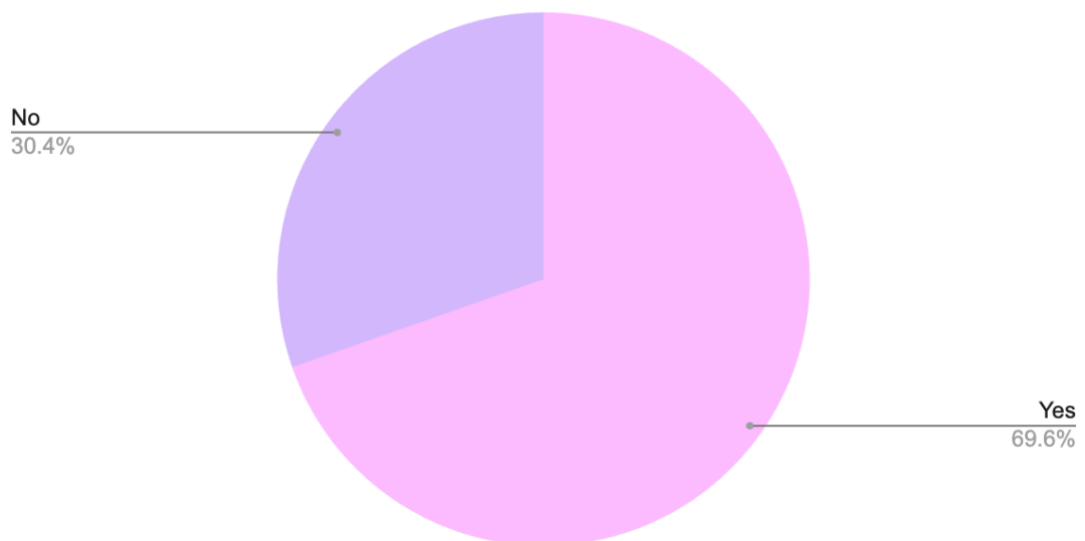


Figure 9 - Q9. Perception of Sustainability Training Importance

Figure 9 shows an important split that should be taken under consideration. While the majority of respondents expressed that they consider receiving sustainability training important, represented by affirmative responses, the 30,4% of respondents mentioned that they do not perceive it as relevant.

These results highlight the importance of improving dissemination and participation in sustainability awareness activities in the work environment to encourage greater commitment to these issues, as well as the need of having more sustainability awareness-raising or training activities in companies.

#### 6.1.4 Organisational Culture and Commitment to Sustainability

In this section, participants' perception of their companies' commitment to sustainability, especially in relation to meeting Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG 13) on climate action, will be addressed. How they perceive the organisational culture and shared values in their workplace in terms of sustainability will also be explored.

Q10. Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG 13): SDG 13 focuses on combating climate change and its effects by seeking urgent actions to combat climate change and its impacts.

Were you familiar with this SDG?

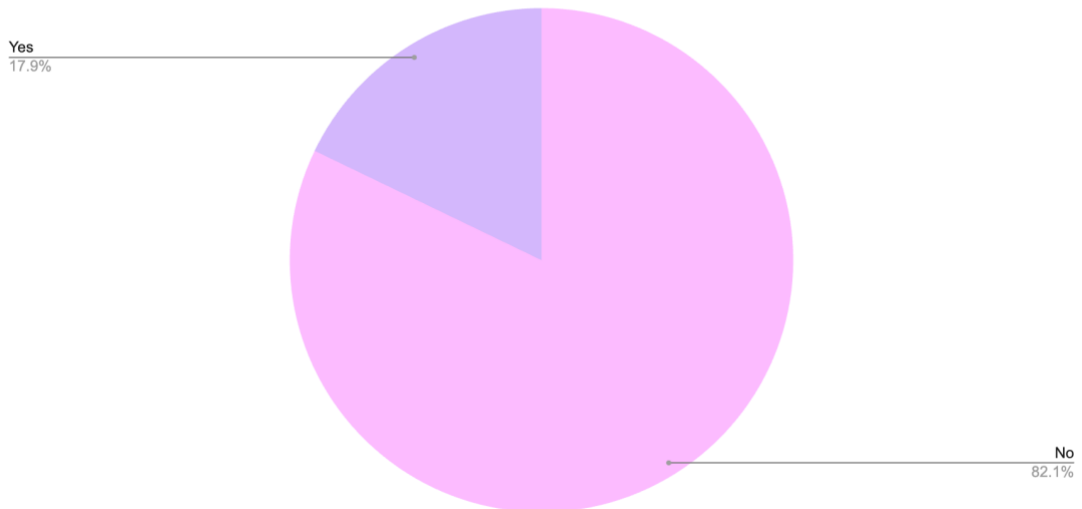


Figure 10 - Q10. Familiarity with SDG 13

When analysing the responses to the question about familiarity with Sustainable Development Goal 13 shown in Figure 10, it can be observed that the majority of respondents indicated that they were not familiar with this specific goal. This finding could be highlighting a significant gap in understanding and awareness about the importance of climate change and sustainability, although not knowing about SDGs does not necessarily mean that a person is not aware of sustainability. However, a minority group of respondents did indicate familiarity

with SDG 13, suggesting a level of knowledge and commitment to the topic among some participants.

Q11. Do you believe that your company is contributing to addressing SDG 13 on climate action and is committed to mitigating climate change through its actions and policies?

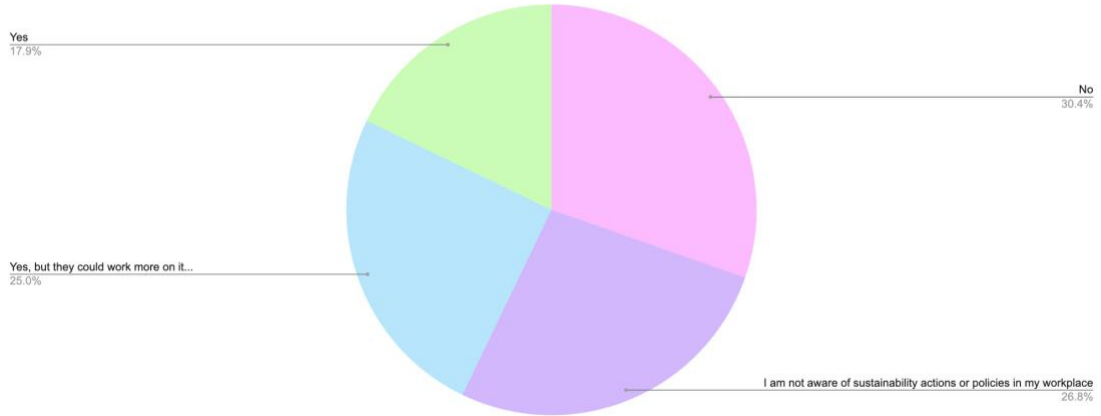


Figure 11 - Q11. Perception of Workplace's Commitment to Sustainability

In Figure 11 above, it can be seen that more than 50% of respondents indicated that they do not believe their companies are contributing to addressing SDG 13 on climate action or that they are not aware of sustainability actions or policies in their workplace. This suggests a lack of importance or knowledge about sustainability initiatives by their companies. A significant number of respondents indicated that they believe their companies could do more to mitigate climate change, suggesting that although there may be some actions in their workplaces, these respondents perceive that greater efforts are needed. Only a relatively small percentage of respondents expressed confidence that their companies are effectively contributing to addressing SDG 13 on climate action.

Q12. How do you perceive your workplace's commitment to sustainability in terms of organisational culture and shared values?

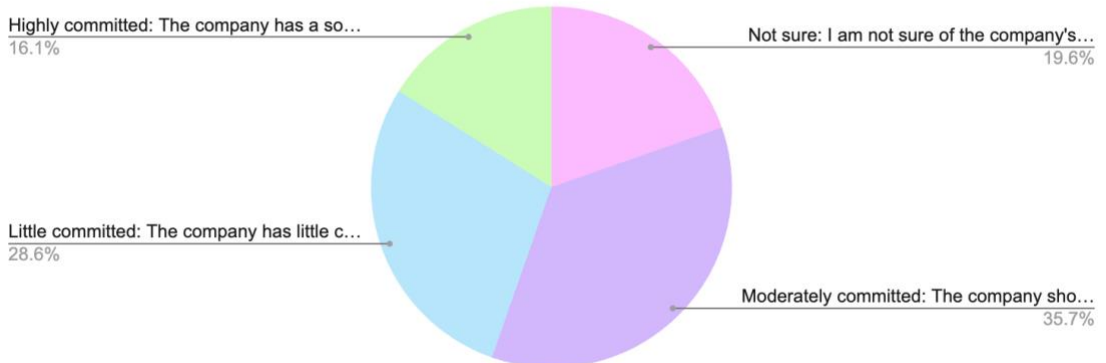


Figure 12 - Q12. Perception of Organisational Culture and Shared Values

When analysing the responses to the question presented in Figure 12, about how respondents perceive their workplace's commitment to sustainability in terms of organisational culture and shared values, a considerable number of respondents, 35,7%, indicated that they perceive that their companies show a moderate commitment to sustainability, although they believe that the promotion of sustainable values could be more consistent or visible. Another group of 19,6%, expressed some uncertainty about the position of their companies in terms of commitment to sustainability in their organisational culture. Additionally, a significant part of the participants, 28,6% indicated that they perceive their companies to have little commitment to sustainability in their organisational culture and shared values, which although not being completely negative, it could be fixed. On the other hand, only 16,1% of the respondents expressed that they perceive that their companies have a solid organisational culture focused on sustainability and actively promote values related to social and environmental responsibility.

These findings underscore the importance of greater clarity and communication by companies about their sustainability initiatives, as well as greater transparency regarding sustainability policies and practices, as part of the problem could lie in the lack of information among some employees about their companies' sustainability practices. Apart from this, they imply the need to strengthen companies' commitment to sustainability both in terms of concrete actions and in the integration of sustainable values into organisational culture. In this sense, it would be beneficial for more companies to actively engage in sustainability to address current environmental and social challenges.

#### 6.1.5 Motivators, Barriers, and Suggestions

This section will examine the factors that could motivate participants to participate more actively in sustainability initiatives, as well as the barriers that could hinder their participation. Also, suggestions for improving sustainability in the workplace and additional comments on sustainability practices and training programmes will be discussed.

Q13. What factors would motivate you to participate more actively in sustainability initiatives in your workplace? (Select all that apply)

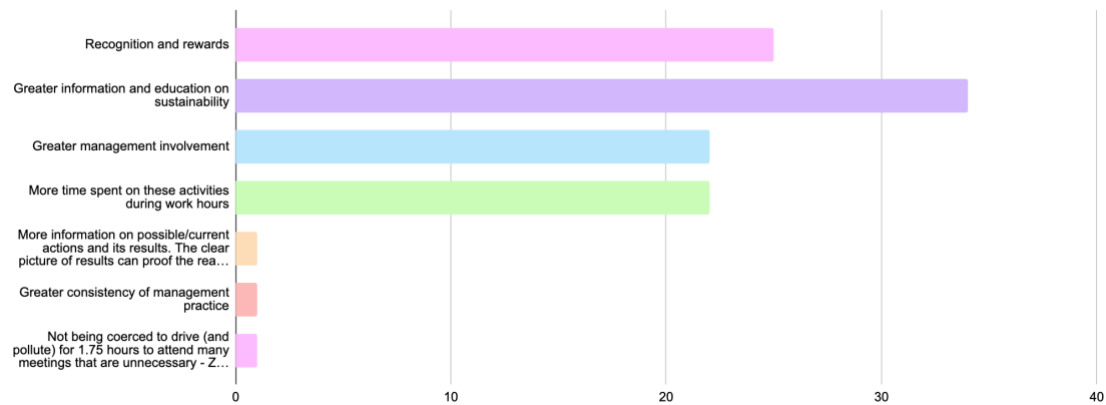


Figure 13 - Q13. Motivating Factors for Participation in Sustainability Initiatives

When analysing the responses from Figure 13 regarding factors that would motivate respondents to participate more actively in sustainability initiatives in their workplace, several notable motivators are noted. First, “Greater information and education on sustainability” was selected by the majority of respondents, indicating a desire to better understand sustainability initiatives and their impacts. This highlights the importance of transparency and effective communication about sustainable practices within the company. Additionally, “Recognition and rewards” was the second most chosen option, suggesting that employees value recognition for their sustainability efforts and seek to feel valued and appreciated for their contribution. This search for recognition can be essential to maintaining employees’ commitment and motivation.

Another important factor was “More time spent on these activities during work hours,” suggesting that employees value the availability of time and resources to engage in sustainability-related activities while at work. This need for adequate time and resources shows the importance of integrating sustainable practices into daily work routines. Finally, some responses also mentioned the importance of “Greater consistency of management practice” and “Greater management involvement,” indicating that leadership and example from top management may be key factors in motivating employee involvement in sustainability. However, it is important to note that a specific response, “Not being coerced to drive (and pollute) for 1.75 hours to attend many meetings that are unnecessary - Zoom should be utilised more for instance” was added by one participant and highlighted the importance of minimizing the environmental impact of work activities, such as travel, by adopting more sustainable alternatives, such as virtual meetings whenever possible. In summary, these results suggest that a combination of recognition, information, resources, and effective leadership may be instrumental in motivating active employee participation in workplace sustainability initiatives.

Q14. What do you consider to be the main barriers to participating in sustainability initiatives in your workplace? (Select all that apply)

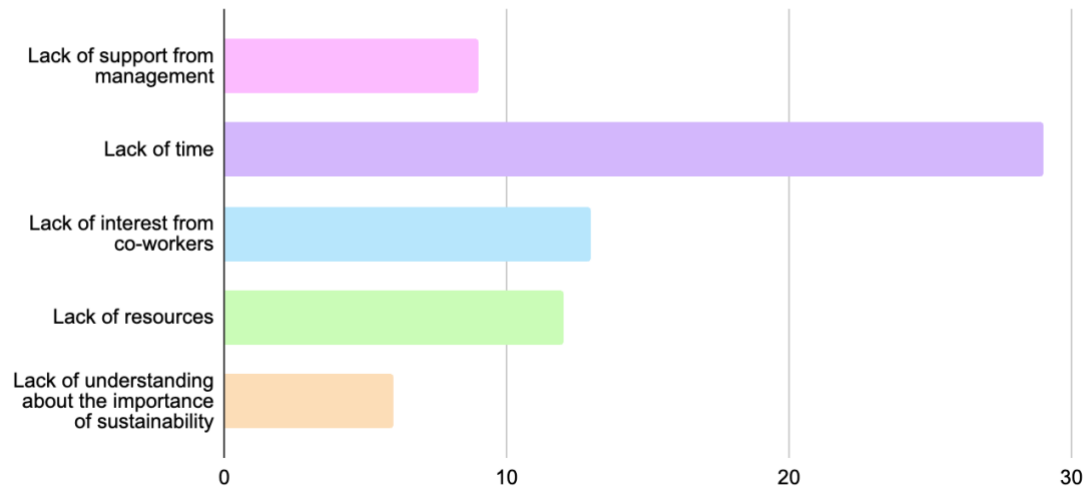


Figure 14 - Q14. Main Barriers for Participation in Sustainability Initiatives

In Figure 14 above, responses on the main barriers to participating in sustainability initiatives in the workplace can be seen, several common obstacles are identified. “Lack of time” was highly chosen as a significant barrier, suggesting that employees feel they do not have enough time to devote to sustainability activities in addition to their regular work responsibilities. This perceived lack of time can be a major obstacle to active participation in sustainability initiatives. Another common barrier is “lack of interest from co-workers” was also selected as an important barrier, indicating that the work environment and organisational culture can influence employees' willingness to participate in sustainability activities. Then, “Lack of resources” is selected by some participants, which indicates that employees may feel that they lack the necessary resources, such as funding or equipment, to effectively participate in sustainability activities.

Additionally, “lack of management support” was chosen quite a bit, suggesting that a lack of support or leadership from the top can demotivate employees to participate in sustainability initiatives. Finally, “lack of understanding about the importance of sustainability” was selected in several responses, suggesting that education and awareness about the importance of sustainability may be necessary to overcome these barriers. In summary, these responses highlight several challenges that can hinder employee participation in sustainability initiatives and suggest key areas that companies can focus on to improve employee engagement and participation in sustainability.

Q15. What type of sustainability training programmes has your workplace offered its employees? (Select at least one)

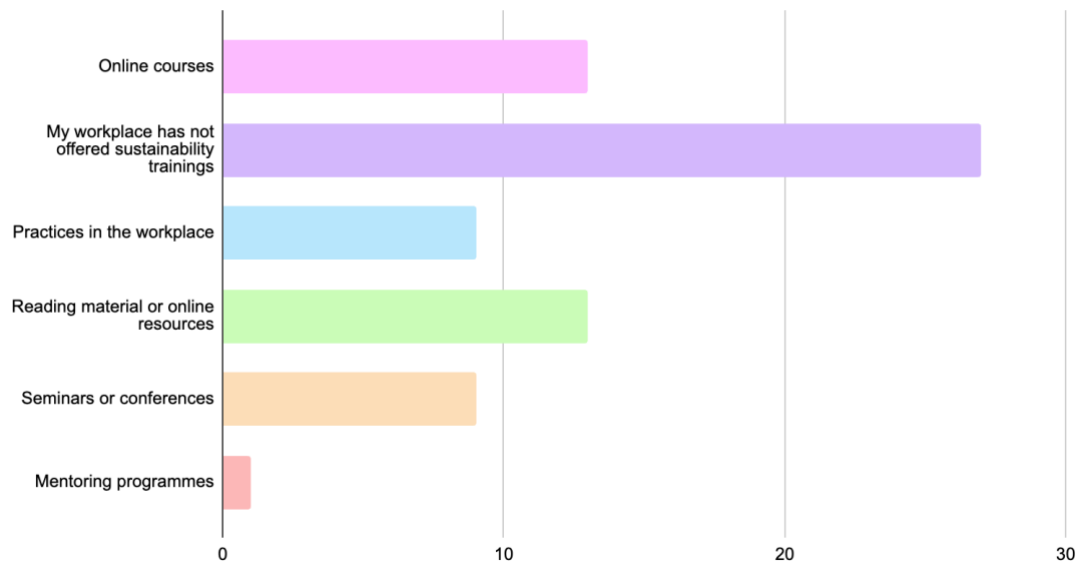


Figure 15 - Q15. Programmes Offered by the Workplace

When observing Figure 15, it can be seen that the majority of respondents indicated that their workplaces have not offered sustainability training programmes, which suggests a lack of formal sustainability training initiatives in a significant proportion of the workplaces represented in the survey. Among the programmes mentioned, online courses were the most common. This indicates that companies may be using online resources to provide sustainability training in an accessible and convenient way for their employees.

The provision of reading material or online resources was selected by a similar number of respondents, suggesting that the provision of information and educational resources on sustainability may be a strategy used by some companies. Additionally, seminars or conferences were mentioned by a lower, but still important, proportion of respondents, indicating that some companies are opting for more interactive or in-person training programmes. Finally, mentoring programmes were the least selected option, suggesting that this approach may be less common compared to other forms of sustainability training. Taken together, these results suggest that there are a variety of approaches used by workplaces to provide sustainability training, but also indicate that many companies are yet to implement sustainability training programmes.

At the end of the survey, there were two open-ended and voluntary questions, Q16 - Do you have any suggestions that you think could help improve the sustainability of your workplace?, and Q17 - Are there any other comments you would like to add about sustainability training and practices in your workplace?,

which offered respondents the opportunity to provide additional, detailed feedback on sustainability in their workplaces.

These questions allowed for a deeper insight into individual perceptions and experiences in relation to sustainability practices and workplace training. Some key suggestions for improving sustainability in the workplace included a broader understanding of sustainability and greater consistency in management decisions. The importance of promoting awareness of sustainability and seeing tangible results from sustainable practices to encourage participation was also noted. The need to reduce the use of plastic and other disposable materials, as well as implement food donation and waste reduction programmes, was also highlighted. Additionally, there were mentions of concerns about a lack of real commitment to sustainability in some workplaces, as well as suggestions for sustainability training to be voluntary rather than coercive. These responses highlight the importance of addressing concerns and suggestions to move towards more sustainable work environments.

## 6.2 Analysis Based on Research Questions

### 6.2.1 What is Employee Perception of the Importance of Sustainability Training within their Organisations?

Table 1 - Participation in Sustainability Trainings Based on Perception of Sustainability Training Importance

| Q8. Have you participated in awareness-raising or training activities provided by your company on sustainability issues, such as climate change or natural resource management? | Q9. Do you consider receiving training on sustainability practices in your workplace important? |        |       |        |
|---|---|--------|-------|--------|
|   | No  |        | Yes   |        |
|   | Count   | %      | Count | %      |
| There were activities, but I did not participate  | 6   | 66.67% | 3     | 33.33% |
| There were no awareness-raising or training activities on sustainability issues in my workplace   | 8   | 25.00% | 24    | 75.00% |
| Yes, I have participated  | 3   | 20.00% | 12    | 80.00% |
| Total   | 17  | 30.36% | 39    | 69.64% |

Based on the data in Table 1, it appears that there is a significant correlation between participation in awareness-raising or training activities on sustainability

issues and the perception of the importance of receiving training on sustainability practices in the workplace. Of employees who reported participating in awareness-raising or training activities, 80% consider it important to receive training on sustainability practices. In contrast, among those who did not participate in such activities, only 33.33% consider this training important.

This suggests that direct exposure to sustainability training can positively influence the perception of its importance among employees, just as discussed in section 2.2.2 of this study, where the importance of effectively integrating GHRM practices to develop a sustainable organisational culture is highlighted. The results of the analysis, again, show that a high percentage of employees who have participated in training activities positively value these initiatives, which reflects the theory that effective integration can improve the perception of the importance of these practices. This finding suggests that organisations could benefit from reviewing how their GHRM practices support and reinforce environmental goals, seeking to improve participation and appreciation of sustainability training.

However, it is important to note that there is still a significant percentage of employees who do not consider sustainability training important, even after participating in awareness or training activities. This could indicate a need to improve the effectiveness or relevance of these training activities to address employee perceptions and attitudes towards sustainability in the workplace.

Table 2 - Perception of Sustainability Training Importance Based on Gender

| Q9. Do you consider receiving training on sustainability practices in your workplace important? |       |         |       |         |
|---|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| Q2. Select your gender  | No    |         | Yes   |         |
|   | Count | %       | Count | %       |
| Female  | 3     | 17.65%  | 22    | 56.41%  |
| Male  | 13    | 76.47%  | 16    | 41.03%  |
| Other   | 1     | 5.88%   | 1     | 2.56%   |
| Total   | 17    | 100.00% | 39    | 100.00% |

Based on the data presented in Table 2, there is a notable difference in the perception of the importance of receiving training on sustainability practices in the workplace based on the gender of the respondents. Among the respondents who consider it important to receive this training 56.41% identify as Female, while only 41.03% of people who share this opinion are considered Male. Between the people who do not consider training important, 76.47% are Males. This suggests that women tend to value sustainability training in the workplace more compared to men. However, there is still a significant proportion of both

genders who do not consider this training important, which indicates the need to address perceptions and attitudes towards sustainability in the workplace in a more inclusive and effective way.

Table 3 - Perception of Sustainability Training Importance Based on Age Range

| Q9. Do you consider receiving training on sustainability practices in your workplace important? |       |        |       |        |  |
|---|-------|--------|-------|--------|--|
|   |       | No     |       | Yes    |  |
| Q1. Select your age range   | Count | %      | Count | %      |  |
| 25 or less  | 2     | 15.38% | 11    | 84.62% |  |
| 26-40   | 12    | 40.00% | 18    | 60.00% |  |
| 41-59   | 2     | 22.22% | 7     | 77.78% |  |
| 60 or more  | 1     | 25.00% | 3     | 75.00% |  |
| Total   | 17    | 30.36% | 39    | 69.64% |  |

On the other hand, when analysing the data in Table 3, it can be observed that the perception of the importance of receiving training in sustainability practices does vary depending on the age group. Respondents between 26 and 40 years old show the highest proportion of those who consider this training important, with 18 respondents, followed by the group aged 25 or younger years old with 11 respondents and 84,62% of yes over no. Although in all groups the majority falls on the yes, and the total is 69,64% yes over no, these findings suggest that there is a relationship between age and the perception of the importance of sustainability training, highlighting the importance of adapting training strategies to different demographic groups to maximise their effectiveness.

Overall, the findings in Tables 1, 2, and 3 reveal that there is significant variability in employees' perceptions of the importance of sustainability training within organisations. Although a considerable proportion of respondents recognise the importance of receiving training in sustainability practices, there is also a considerable proportion who do not consider this training to be relevant. Furthermore, a disparity is observed in perceptions depending on the gender and age of the respondents. While women and younger age groups tend to value sustainability training more, there is still a significant proportion of employees who do not consider this training to be important, especially among men and younger respondents. This suggests the need to implement awareness-raising and training strategies that address differences in the perception of the importance of sustainability according to gender and age, as well as promoting an organisational culture that values and encourages commitment to sustainability at all levels.

## 6.2.2 What Type of Sustainability Training Programmes Do Companies Offer Their Employees and How Are They Perceived by Them?

When examining the responses to the question about participation in sustainability training shown in Figure 8, section 6.1.3 a clear division is observed in the sample. While a significant portion of those surveyed report the absence of these types of activities in their workplace, another group indicates having participated in them. This finding suggests that although some companies offer sustainability training programmes, communicating, or promoting these initiatives may not always be effective within the organisation.

Apart from this, most respondents indicated that their companies do not offer formal sustainability training programmes, as seen in Figure 15, section 6.1.5. Among those who did receive training, online courses and online resources were the most common. This suggests that companies can use online resources to provide sustainability training in an accessible way. Perception of these programmes may vary depending on the perceived relevance of sustainability training and the availability of time and resources to participate. Those who value sustainability training may be more inclined to participate and positively value the company's efforts, while others may be less receptive.

Furthermore, when considering the perception of the importance of sustainability training shown in section 6.1.3, in Figure 9, a significant division among respondents stands out. In section 2.3.2 of this research, it is argued that sustainability training could reinforce organisational culture and improve sustainable performance. However, the analysis indicates although the majority consider it important to receive training in sustainability, a significant percentage does not perceive trainings as relevant, highlighting a possible disconnection between training offerings and employee expectations. This suggests the need for closer alignment between the objectives of training programmes and the needs and perceptions of employees, potentially through more effective communication and an adaptation of content to the realities and expectations of staff. The lack of formal programme offerings in some companies highlights the need to promote effective training initiatives that meet employee needs and expectations related to sustainability.

Table 4 - Perceived Importance of Trainings Based on Type of Sustainability Training Offered by the Workplace

|  | Q9. Do you consider receiving training on sustainability practices in your workplace important? |     |
|--|---|-----|
| Q15. What type of sustainability training programmes has your workplace offered its employees? (Select at least one) | No  | Yes |
| Mentoring programmes   | 100.00%   |     |

|   |        |        |
|---|--------|--------|
| My workplace has not offered sustainability trainings | 25.00% | 75.00% |
| Online courses  | 9.09%  | 90.91% |
| Practices in the workplace                            | 50.00% | 50.00% |
| Reading material or online resources                  | 36.36% | 63.64% |
| Seminars or conferences                               | 25.00% | 75.00% |
| Total   | 28.00% | 72.00% |

Table 4 above reveals an interesting relationship between the perceived importance of receiving training in sustainability practices in the workplace and the types of training programmes offered. Those who find it important to receive training tend to participate more in a variety of training programmes, such as online courses, online reading materials, and seminars or conferences. On the other hand, employees who do not consider it important to receive training in some cases, show a lack of participation altogether when their companies do not offer any type of sustainability training. Having a 100% bad perception of mentoring programmes and 50% negativity towards practices in the workplace could imply the need of the GHRM to be interlaced with the overall company strategy, as mentioned in section 2.4.1. This also underscores the importance of aligning employee perceptions of the importance of sustainability training with the availability and diversity of programmes offered by companies to promote stronger commitment and deeper understanding of sustainability among employees.

### 6.2.3 What is the Level of Employee Participation in the Sustainability Practices Implemented by Their Organisations?

As discussed in section 2.2.4 of this study, active participation in sustainability initiatives can significantly improve resource use efficiency and waste reduction. The findings of the analysis, as can be seen in Table 1 in section 6.2.1, match that discussion, suggesting that participation in training and awareness-raising activities is indeed positively correlated with the perception of their importance. This implies that direct exposure to sustainability training can have a positive impact on the perception of its importance among employees. This could indicate a need to improve the effectiveness or relevance of these training activities, especially in companies that are yet to have trainings, in order to address employee perceptions and attitudes towards sustainability in the workplace.

#### 6.2.4 How Do Employees Perceive the Influence of Sustainability Practices on Organisational Culture and Commitment to SDG 13?

When considering the perception of workplace commitment to sustainability as seen in Figure 11, section 6.1.4, it is noted that more than 50% of respondents indicated that they do not believe their companies are contributing to addressing SDG 13 on climate action or that they are not aware of the actions or sustainability policies in your workplace. This finding suggests a lack of importance or knowledge about sustainability initiatives by companies. This perception may change how employees perceive the influence of sustainability practices on organisational culture and their commitment to SDG 13, as a lack of perceived commitment from the company could decrease trust and commitment of employees with these initiatives. Section 2.3.3 of the literature review highlights the perception of organisational commitment to sustainability as a key indicator of the success of sustainable practices, so if employees perceive a lack of organisational commitment to sustainability it is likely to be reflected in the employees' level of participation and support for sustainability initiatives in the workplace.

#### 6.2.5 What Barriers Do Employees Face in Participating in Sustainability Initiatives in Their Workplaces?

Observing again the results of Figure 14 analysed in section 6.1.5, regarding main barriers to participation in sustainability initiatives, several common obstacles are identified. Lack of time, lack of resources, and lack of management support were the most commonly mentioned barriers. These barriers could hinder employee participation in sustainability initiatives by limiting their ability to devote time and resources to these activities, as well as decreasing their motivation and confidence due to a lack of management support.

This is analysed in section 2.4.1 where the importance of aligning GHRM practices with organisational strategy is highlighted. The obstacles identified in the results could be mitigated through better integration of GHRM practices, where organisations should consider better strategies to reduce possible barriers, possibly through more flexible policies or by providing additional resources to facilitate employee participation in these initiatives.

#### 6.2.6 How Does Sustainability Training and Business Practices Relate to Employee Motivation and Commitment Towards Addressing Climate Change?

When reconsidering the motivating factors for participation in sustainability initiatives from Figure 13 in section 6.1.5, it is observed that the majority of

respondents selected "Increased information and education about sustainability" as the main motivator.

Section 2.4.4 of this research indicates that integrating sustainability objectives into performance evaluation can enhance employee engagement. The findings of the results indicate that sustainability training acts as an important motivator. This, again, suggests that sustainability training can play a crucial role in motivating employees to participate in initiatives related to SDG 13 on climate action, emphasizing the need to explicitly link sustainability training outcomes to reward and recognition systems to reinforce this commitment.

Furthermore, management recognition and support were also identified as important factors, suggesting that business practices and leadership can influence employee motivation and commitment towards addressing climate change.

### 6.2.7 Are There Significant Differences in Employee Perception and Engagement Regarding Sustainability Training and Practices Across Different Industry Sectors or Company Sizes?

Table 5 - Sustainability Relevance Perception by Industry of Workplace

| Industry of your workplace                  | Q6. Do you consider climate change and sustainability to be relevant topics for your work and/or personal life? |        |                   |        |                        |         |                    |         |
|---|---|--------|-------------------|--------|------------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
|   | Not relevant at all   |        | Not very relevant |        | Yes, somewhat relevant |         | Yes, very relevant |         |
|   | Count   | %      | Count             | %      | Count                  | %       | Count              | %       |
| Agriculture and Food Production             |   |        | 1                 | 25.00% | 3                      | 75.00%  |                    |         |
| Business Consulting Services                | 1   | 20.00% | 1                 | 20.00% | 2                      | 40.00%  | 1                  | 20.00%  |
| Construction and Real Estate                | 1   | 33.33% | 1                 | 33.33% |                        |         | 1                  | 33.33%  |
| Education                                   |   |        | 2                 | 16.67% | 4                      | 33.33%  | 6                  | 50.00%  |
| Finance and Banking                         |   |        |                   |        | 1                      | 100.00% |                    |         |
| Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals / Veterinary |   |        |                   |        | 4                      | 50.00%  | 4                  | 50.00%  |
| Hospitality and Tourism                     |   |        |                   |        | 4                      | 57.14%  | 3                  | 42.86%  |
| Marketing                                   |   |        | 2                 | 66.67% | 1                      | 33.33%  |                    |         |
| Technology and Information Services         | 1   | 9.09%  |                   |        | 5                      | 45.45%  | 5                  | 45.45%  |
| Transportation and Logistics                |   |        |                   |        |                        |         | 2                  | 100.00% |

|       |   |       |   |        |    |        |    |        |
|-------|---|-------|---|--------|----|--------|----|--------|
| Total | 3 | 5.36% | 7 | 12.50% | 24 | 42.86% | 22 | 39.29% |
|-------|---|-------|---|--------|----|--------|----|--------|

In Table 5, a marked variation in the perception of the relevance of climate change and sustainability is observed between different industries. For example, in sectors such as Agriculture and Food Production and Education, as well as Technology and Information Services, there is a considerable proportion of employees who consider these topics very relevant to their work and personal lives. On the other hand, in industries such as Marketing, and Construction and Real Estate, the perception of relevance is lower, with the majority of respondents indicating that these topics are little relevant or not relevant at all. The industry that claims the most relevancy seems to be Transportation and Logistics. This variation may reflect differences in the nature of work and priorities of companies in each sector, as well as the degree of exposure of employees to sustainability-related issues in their work environment.

Table 6 - Sustainability Relevance Perception by Company Size

| What is the size of the company you currently work at? (Number of employees) | Q6. Do you consider climate change and sustainability to be relevant topics for your work and/or personal life? |        |                   |        |                        |        |                    |        |
|--|---|--------|-------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|
|  | Not relevant at all   |        | Not very relevant |        | Yes, somewhat relevant |        | Yes, very relevant |        |
|  | Count   | %      | Count             | %      | Count                  | %      | Count              | %      |
| 1-9  |   |        | 2                 | 20.00% | 5                      | 50.00% | 3                  | 30.00% |
| 10-49  | 1   | 10.00% | 1                 | 10.00% | 3                      | 30.00% | 5                  | 50.00% |
| 250 or more  | 2   | 7.41%  | 1                 | 3.70%  | 12                     | 44.44% | 12                 | 44.44% |
| 50-249   |   |        | 3                 | 33.33% | 4                      | 44.44% | 2                  | 22.22% |
| Total  | 3   | 5.36%  | 7                 | 12.50% | 24                     | 42.86% | 22                 | 39.29% |

Table 6 analyses the perception of the relevance of climate change and sustainability according to the size of the company. Significant differences are also seen here, with smaller (1-49 employees) and big (250 or more employees) companies showing a higher proportion of employees who consider these issues very relevant compared to medium sized (50-249 employees) companies. This finding suggests that, in general, employees at smaller or big companies may be more aware of and engaged with sustainability issues, possibly due to greater proximity to management and an organisational culture that values these issues more and big companies due to being able to apply more trainings and communicate more efficiently. On the other hand, in medium sized companies, employees may perceive lower relevance of these issues due

to lower visibility of sustainability initiatives or a disconnection from strategic business decisions by the company.

Therefore, it appears that employee perception and participation in sustainability initiatives vary significantly by industry and company size. These differences may be due to a combination of factors, including the nature of the work, organisational culture, and the degree of employees' exposure to sustainability-related issues in their work environment.

#### 6.2.8 What Strategies Can Be Implemented to Improve Employee Perception and Increase Their Participation in Sustainability Initiatives, Specifically in Relation to SDG 13?

Employee perception could be influenced and employee participation in sustainability initiatives could be increased, and especially in relation to SDG 13, several strategies could be implemented based on suggestions provided by employees themselves in responses to questions 16 and 17, as shown in section 6.1.5 of this project. For example, promoting a broader understanding of sustainability and its relevance to daily work could be achieved through specific training and awareness programmes. As well as, implementing tangible sustainable practices, such as reducing the use of plastic and other disposable materials, and introducing food donation and waste reduction programmes, could help demonstrate the direct impact of sustainable actions at the workplace.

A voluntary approach to sustainability training could be established, rather than taking a coercive approach in order to encourage participation. This could help remove barriers perceived by some employees and promote a sense of autonomy and commitment to sustainability initiatives. Additionally, promoting sustainability awareness and showing tangible results of sustainable practices in the workplace can increase employee motivation to actively participate in these initiatives.

Another important strategy would be to address concerns about the lack of real commitment to sustainability in some workplaces. This could be achieved through greater transparency and communication about the company's sustainability policies and practices, as well as by integrating sustainable values into organisational culture. This would help create an environment that supports and encourages employee participation in sustainability initiatives, specifically aligned with SDG 13.

### 6.2.9 How Do Employees Perceive Sustainability Training Programmes and Business Practices Related to Sustainable Development Goal number 13 Climate Action, and What Are the Implications of These Perceptions for Effectively Addressing SDG 13 in Their Organisations?

All the previous questions help us respond to the primary research question: How do employees perceive sustainability training programmes and business practices related to Sustainable Development Goal number 13 Climate Action, and what are the implications of these perceptions for effectively addressing SDG 13 in their organisations?

The data reveals that the perception of the importance of sustainability training varies significantly among employees, suggesting an urgent need to address these differences to promote a more inclusive organisational culture committed to sustainability. It is critical to recognise that the effectiveness of sustainability training initiatives depends not only on the availability of programmes, but also on how they are perceived and valued by employees.

Differences in perception by gender and age highlight the importance of designing training strategies that are sensitive to employees' diverse experiences and perspectives. This involves not only offering appropriate training programmes but also effectively communicating the benefits and relevance of sustainability in the workplace, especially as it relates to sustainable development goals such as SDG 13.

Additionally, it is crucial to address identified barriers, such as lack of time, resources, and management support, to encourage greater employee participation in sustainability initiatives. This could be achieved through more flexible and voluntary approaches that allow employees to commit to sustainability in a way that suits their individual circumstances.

Ultimately, to promote a culture of sustainability embedded in the organisation, a clear and visible commitment from senior management is needed. Transparency and open communication about sustainability policies and practices, along with integrating sustainable values into organisational culture, are essential to inspiring trust and commitment among employees, which brings us back to the whole section 2.4 and especially 2.4.1, explaining that a holistic approach is vital to addressing SDG 13 because it ensures that human resource management is aligned with business strategy. This maximises organisational efficiency and ensures greater adaptability to market changes, which is crucial for achieving effective and sustainable climate action.

### 6.3 Reflection on the Preliminary Conclusion

Reflecting on the preliminary conclusion in section 5 of this research project, we can see that our initial expectations about the possible outcomes of the impact of sustainability training on organisations have been largely reflected in the findings of this study.

On the one hand, evidence that companies that invest in sustainability training experience significant improvements in their business practices has been found, and this is then reflected in a more positive perception by employees towards the company's commitment to sustainability and a greater willingness on their part to participate in initiatives related to SDG 13. This suggests that an organisational culture aligned with climate objectives may be achievable through a strategic investment in sustainability training.

On the other hand, we have also identified challenges and obstacles that could limit the real impact of sustainable practices and training on employee perception and engagement. These findings underscore the importance of addressing the complexities inherent in integrating sustainable practices and communicating them to employees within organisations. Then, we recognise that the two perspectives raised in our preliminary conclusion, are not necessarily exclusive, and through the findings of this study it can be said that both scenarios coexist in different organisational contexts.

## 7 Conclusion and Future Research

Throughout this study the relationship between employee perceptions, sustainable business practices and sustainability trainings has been studied in detail. We have come to understand through the analysis, the real complexity and diversity of opinions and experiences within organisations in relation to sustainability and especially Sustainable Development Goal number 13, Climate Action.

Recognising the importance of employee perception involves understanding that each individual experiences the company uniquely, and that their well-being and motivation can be intrinsically linked to how employees feel valued and supported within the organisation. It is essential for companies to not only actively listen to the perceptions of their employees, but also constantly work to improve and strengthen that relationship, by communicating goals and values effectively, thus creating a work environment that fosters trust, respect, and a sense of belonging.

Based on this, employee perception and engagement are intrinsically linked to organisational culture and the company's commitment to sustainability. It has become clear that strong leadership and transparent communication are

essential to foster a culture that values and promotes sustainability at all levels of the organisation. However, challenges and limitations on the path to business sustainability have also been identified, from resource scarcity to lack of management support and resistance to change. These challenges remind us of the importance of taking a holistic and collaborative approach that involves all stakeholders, from business leaders to frontline employees.

Reflecting on these findings, it can be concluded that the need to collectively commit to addressing the found challenges with determination and boldness becomes evident. From promoting greater awareness and education about sustainability to implementing responsible business practices and promoting an organisational culture rooted in sustainable values, each step brings us closer to a world where economic, social, and environmental prosperity are seamlessly intertwined in a harmonious way. Ultimately, this study underscores that by addressing these challenges collaboratively and strategically, sustainability is not simply a goal to be achieved, but rather a continuous and collective journey towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

## 7.1 Future Research Suggestions

For future research, it is crucial to continue exploring how employee perceptions influence the effectiveness of corporate sustainability practices. It is recommended to examine how the integration of sustainability training at all levels of the company, and its alignment with business strategies can improve environmental and social performance while strengthening the organisational culture around sustainability.

It would also be valuable to explore this topic by studying specific company cases, examining the perception of both company representatives and employees. This would involve analysing in detail what the company offers and what its stated goals are in terms of sustainability and commitment to climate change. Then, this perception could be compared with the perception of the employees, who are both the receptors and executors of sustainability policies and practices on a day-to-day basis.

This approach would allow for the identification of discrepancies and alignments between the company's strategic vision and the perception of its employees. Additionally, it would provide a deeper understanding of how sustainability goals translate into organizational culture and concrete actions in the workplace. This comparison between the organisational vision and the individual experience of employees could shed light on possible areas of improvement in the implementation of sustainability policies and in the promotion of an organisational culture committed to climate action, especially if more than one company is studied.

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