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Strategic Management and Sustainable Business Practices: A Systematic Literature Review on the Role of Entrepreneurship, Leadership, and Human Resource Management

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Abstract

Sustainability has become a central concern in contemporary strategic management as organizations are increasingly required to balance economic performance with environmental and social responsibilities. This study aims to systematically review the literature on strategic management and sustainable business practices, with a particular focus on the roles of entrepreneurship, leadership, and human resource management (HRM). A systematic literature review (SLR) approach was employed to synthesize relevant studies published between 2021 and 2025 from reputable academic sources. The findings indicate that strategic management plays a central role in integrating sustainability principles into organizational strategies through ESG alignment and long-term value creation. Entrepreneurship contributes to sustainability through innovation and the development of sustainable business models, while leadership functions as a key driver in shaping organizational culture and ensuring strategic alignment. In addition, HRM, particularly through green HRM practices, plays a crucial role in embedding sustainability into employee behavior and organizational routines. The study concludes that sustainable business practices emerge from the integration of these four interconnected dimensions within strategic management systems. This research contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive synthesis and proposing an integrative framework for sustainability-oriented strategic management, as well as identifying future research directions in this field.

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Introduction

In recent years, sustainability has emerged as a central concern in both academic discourse and managerial practice, driven by accelerating environmental degradation, increasing social inequality, and intensifying global regulatory pressures. Organizations are no longer evaluated solely based on financial performance, but also on their ability to generate long-term value across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. This shift reflects a broader transformation in global economic systems, where sustainability is increasingly recognized as a strategic imperative rather than a voluntary corporate initiative. Within this context, strategic management plays a pivotal role in aligning organizational resources, capabilities, and long-term objectives with sustainability-oriented outcomes.

Strategic management provides the foundational mechanism through which organizations design and implement long-term strategies that integrate economic performance with environmental stewardship and social responsibility. The growing emphasis on ESG integration into corporate strategy highlights the need for firms to adopt more holistic and adaptive approaches to decision-making. As emphasized in contemporary research, the incorporation of sustainability principles into strategic planning is not only essential for compliance and legitimacy but also for achieving sustained competitive advantage in dynamic and uncertain business environments (Hasanah et al., 2025). Similarly, empirical and conceptual studies

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indicate that firms that successfully embed sustainability into their strategic frameworks tend to demonstrate superior organizational performance, resilience, and stakeholder trust (Zahra et al., 2025).

However, the transition toward sustainable business practices is inherently complex and multidimensional, requiring coordinated efforts across various organizational domains. Sustainable business practices are not limited to operational efficiency improvements or environmental compliance measures; rather, they encompass a comprehensive transformation of organizational systems, values, and behaviors. In this regard, sustainability is increasingly conceptualized as an organizational capability that emerges from the integration of strategic intent, leadership influence, entrepreneurial orientation, and human resource systems.

Entrepreneurship plays a critical role in enabling sustainability transitions by fostering innovation, opportunity recognition, and value creation in response to environmental and social challenges. Sustainable entrepreneurship, in particular, emphasizes the development of business models that simultaneously address economic viability and societal needs. Abbas and Bulut (2024) highlight that sustainable entrepreneurship research has expanded significantly in recent years, focusing on how entrepreneurial activities contribute to environmental preservation and social well-being. Furthermore, entrepreneurial action is viewed as a key driver in bridging existing unsustainable systems with more regenerative and inclusive economic models (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2022). This perspective is reinforced by evidence suggesting that entrepreneurial orientation enhances firms' capacity to innovate and respond effectively to sustainability-related market demands (Muñoz & Cohen, 2023).

In addition to entrepreneurship, leadership is widely recognized as a critical determinant in shaping organizational sustainability outcomes. Leadership influences not only strategic direction but also organizational culture, employee behavior, and innovation capacity. Sustainable leadership emphasizes long-term orientation, ethical decision-making, and stakeholder inclusivity as core principles guiding managerial actions. Avery and Bergsteiner (2021) argue that sustainable leadership practices significantly enhance organizational resilience, particularly in volatile and uncertain environments. Furthermore, sustainability-oriented leadership has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that integrates environmental awareness, strategic vision, and organizational learning capabilities (Eustachio et al., 2023). Empirical studies further demonstrate that transformational and sustainability-oriented leadership styles positively influence environmental innovation and organizational performance (Iqbal et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2023).

Human resource management (HRM) also plays a fundamental role in embedding sustainability into organizational systems by shaping employee attitudes, behaviors, and competencies. In particular, green HRM practices have been widely studied as mechanisms for promoting environmentally responsible behavior among employees. Dumont et al. (2021) demonstrate that green HRM practices significantly influence employee workplace green behavior through psychological green climate and value alignment. Similarly, Renwick et al. (2022) emphasize that HRM systems are critical enablers of environmental management strategies, as they facilitate the alignment of organizational goals with individual behaviors. More recent studies further suggest that sustainable HRM involves complex paradoxes, as organizations must balance productivity objectives with long-term sustainability goals (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2024). In addition, green HRM has been identified as a key driver in fostering organizational sustainability transformation by reinforcing environmentally responsible practices at the individual and collective levels (Wiguna et al., 2025).

Despite the growing body of literature addressing sustainability from the perspectives of entrepreneurship, leadership, and HRM, existing studies remain fragmented and siloed. Each domain has been extensively studied independently, yet there is limited research that systematically integrates these perspectives within a unified strategic management framework. This fragmentation limits the development of comprehensive theoretical insights and reduces the practical applicability of sustainability research in organizational contexts. As a result, there is a clear need for integrative studies that synthesize existing knowledge and identify how these domains collectively contribute to sustainable business practices.

Therefore, this study addresses this gap by conducting a systematic literature review (SLR) that integrates strategic management, entrepreneurship, leadership, and human resource management in the context of sustainable business practices. By synthesizing recent scholarly contributions, this study aims to develop a more holistic understanding of how organizations can effectively implement sustainability-oriented strategies. Furthermore, this research seeks to identify key theoretical foundations, emerging trends, and future research directions that can advance both academic inquiry and managerial practice in the field of sustainable strategic management.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to synthesize and critically analyze existing scholarly works on strategic management and sustainable business practices, with a specific focus on the roles of entrepreneurship, leadership, and human resource management (HRM). The SLR method is selected due to its rigor, transparency, and replicability in identifying, evaluating, and integrating findings from prior studies. This approach is particularly relevant for examining complex and interdisciplinary topics such as sustainability, which span multiple theoretical domains and organizational functions.

The study follows a structured review process that is commonly adopted in sustainability and management research. The primary objective of this methodological approach is to ensure that the selection and analysis of literature are conducted systematically, minimizing bias while maximizing comprehensiveness. In line with previous systematic review studies in sustainability and strategic management, this research focuses on peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2025 to capture the most recent developments in the field (Abbas & Bulut, 2024; Ribeiro & Leitão, 2024).

Data collection was conducted by identifying relevant studies from reputable academic databases, including Scopus-indexed journals, Web of Science, SpringerLink, ScienceDirect, and other high-impact sources. The selection of these databases is based on their credibility and extensive coverage of high-quality research in the fields of strategic management, entrepreneurship, leadership, and human resource management. The inclusion criteria were defined to ensure consistency and relevance, including: (1) articles published in English, (2) peer-reviewed journal publications, (3) studies addressing sustainability in relation to strategic management, entrepreneurship, leadership, or HRM, and (4) publication years between 2021 and 2025. Exclusion criteria included conference papers, book chapters, non-peer-reviewed sources, and articles not directly related to sustainability-oriented organizational practices.

The literature search process utilized predefined keywords and Boolean search strings such as “strategic management AND sustainable business practices,” “sustainable entrepreneurship,” “sustainability leadership,” and “green human resource management.” This structured search strategy ensures that the collected literature adequately represents the interdisciplinary nature of sustainability research. Following the search process, all identified studies were screened based on title, abstract, and full-text relevance.

After the screening stage, selected articles were further analyzed using thematic analysis. This method allows for the identification, categorization, and interpretation of recurring patterns and themes across the literature. The thematic analysis was conducted by grouping findings into four main dimensions: (1) strategic management and ESG integration, (2) sustainable entrepreneurship and innovation, (3) sustainability-oriented leadership, and (4) green and sustainable human resource management practices. This categorization enables a comprehensive understanding of how each domain contributes to sustainable business practices while also revealing interconnections among them.

The analytical process is supported by prior studies that emphasize the importance of integrating multiple organizational dimensions in sustainability research. For instance, Zahra et al. (2025) highlight that sustainable business performance is significantly influenced by the alignment between strategic management and organizational capabilities. Similarly, Eustachio et al. (2023) emphasize the need for leadership frameworks that incorporate environmental and strategic dimensions, while Dumont et al. (2021) demonstrate the behavioral impact of HRM practices on sustainability outcomes at the employee level. Furthermore, Renwick et al. (2022) and Griep and Vantilborgh (2024) reinforce the importance of HRM systems in enabling sustainable organizational transformation through structured policy and cultural alignment.

In addition to thematic synthesis, the study also adopts an integrative approach to identify conceptual linkages between entrepreneurship, leadership, and HRM within the broader strategic management framework. This integrative perspective allows for the development of a more holistic understanding of sustainability as an organizational capability rather than isolated functional practices. The methodological rigor of this SLR ensures that the findings provide a reliable foundation for theoretical development and practical implications in the field of sustainable strategic management.

Results and Discussions

The results of this systematic literature review reveal that sustainable business practices are increasingly conceptualized as an integrative outcome of strategic management processes supported by entrepreneurship, leadership, and human resource management (HRM). The synthesis of literature published between 2021 and 2025 indicates a clear shift from fragmented, function-specific approaches toward more holistic and system-

oriented perspectives on organizational sustainability. This shift reflects the growing recognition that sustainability cannot be achieved through isolated initiatives, but rather through the alignment of multiple organizational capabilities within strategic management frameworks.

Strategic Management and ESG Integration

The findings indicate that strategic management serves as the central coordinating mechanism for embedding sustainability into organizational decision-making processes. A dominant trend in the reviewed literature is the increasing integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into corporate strategy. ESG integration is no longer perceived as a compliance mechanism but as a strategic tool for enhancing organizational legitimacy, competitiveness, and long-term performance. Hasanah et al. (2025) emphasize that ESG-oriented strategic management enables organizations to systematically align sustainability goals with core business objectives, thereby improving coherence between operational activities and long-term value creation.

Similarly, Zahra et al. (2025) confirm that firms adopting sustainable business practices embedded within strategic planning frameworks tend to achieve superior organizational performance outcomes. This finding reinforces the argument that sustainability-oriented strategic management contributes not only to ethical responsibility but also to enhanced economic efficiency and resilience. Furthermore, Häußler and Ulrich (2024) highlight that strategic corporate sustainability management is particularly relevant in contexts requiring long-term orientation and adaptive capabilities, such as family businesses and dynamic market environments.

Sustainable Entrepreneurship as an Innovation Driver

The analysis demonstrates that sustainable entrepreneurship plays a critical role in driving innovation and facilitating sustainability transitions. Entrepreneurship is identified as a mechanism through which organizations identify and exploit opportunities arising from environmental and social challenges. Abbas and Bulut (2024) emphasize that sustainable entrepreneurship research has expanded significantly, particularly in relation to innovation, ecological value creation, and systemic transformation.

Shepherd and Patzelt (2022) further argue that sustainable entrepreneurial action bridges the gap between existing unsustainable systems and desired future states of development. This perspective positions entrepreneurs as change agents who actively contribute to redefining value creation beyond financial metrics. In addition, Muñoz and Cohen (2023) highlight that sustainable entrepreneurship is closely linked to innovation ecosystems and plays a vital role in accelerating the transition toward green and circular economy models. Overall, the findings suggest that entrepreneurship enhances organizational adaptability and responsiveness to sustainability challenges, particularly when embedded within strategic management systems that support innovation and experimentation.

Leadership and Sustainability Transformation

Leadership emerges as a central determinant in shaping organizational sustainability outcomes. The reviewed literature consistently emphasizes that leadership is not only a managerial function but also a transformative force that influences organizational culture, employee behavior, and strategic direction. Avery and Bergsteiner (2021) argue that sustainable leadership practices enhance organizational resilience by fostering long-term thinking, ethical governance, and stakeholder inclusivity.

Eustachio et al. (2023) conceptualize sustainability leadership as a multidimensional construct that integrates environmental awareness, strategic vision, and organizational learning capabilities. This conceptualization highlights the importance of leadership in aligning sustainability objectives with organizational systems and processes. Moreover, empirical findings by Iqbal et al. (2022) and Khan et al. (2023) indicate that transformational and sustainability-oriented leadership styles positively influence environmental innovation, employee engagement, and overall organizational performance.

The synthesis of these studies suggests that leadership acts as a catalyst for sustainability transformation by shaping organizational values and ensuring the alignment of sustainability goals across all levels of the organization.

Human Resource Management and Behavioral Sustainability

Human resource management (HRM) is identified as a critical enabler of sustainability implementation at the organizational level. The literature highlights that HRM systems, particularly green HRM practices, play a significant role in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors toward environmental sustainability. Dumont et al. (2021) demonstrate that green HRM practices significantly influence employee workplace green behavior through psychological green climate and value alignment mechanisms.

Renwick et al. (2022) further emphasize that HRM systems are essential in embedding sustainability into organizational routines and practices, thereby enabling long-term behavioral change. Additionally, Griep and

Vantilborgh (2024) highlight the paradoxical nature of sustainable HRM, where organizations must balance productivity demands with sustainability objectives. This tension reflects the complexity of implementing HRM strategies that are both economically efficient and environmentally responsible.

Wiguna et al. (2025) reinforce that green HRM is a key driver of organizational sustainability transformation, particularly through recruitment, training, performance management, and employee engagement systems that prioritize environmental responsibility.

Integrated Strategic Sustainability Framework

The synthesis of findings across the four domains indicates the emergence of an integrated strategic sustainability framework. Strategic management functions as the overarching structure that aligns entrepreneurship, leadership, and HRM into a coherent system of sustainability-oriented practices. Entrepreneurship contributes innovation capacity, leadership provides strategic direction and cultural alignment, while HRM ensures behavioral implementation at the employee level.

This integrated perspective supports the argument that sustainable business practices are the result of dynamic interactions among multiple organizational subsystems rather than isolated functional initiatives. The convergence of these domains reflects a shift toward capability-based sustainability models in which organizations develop adaptive, innovative, and socially responsible systems capable of sustaining long-term performance.

Overall, the findings confirm that sustainable business practices are best understood as an outcome of strategic alignment across entrepreneurship, leadership, and human resource management within a unified strategic management framework.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic literature review provide important insights into the evolving nature of sustainable business practices within the broader domain of strategic management. The synthesis of recent studies indicates that sustainability is no longer treated as an auxiliary organizational objective, but rather as a core strategic orientation that requires the integration of multiple organizational dimensions. In this context, entrepreneurship, leadership, and human resource management (HRM) emerge as interdependent mechanisms that collectively shape the effectiveness of sustainability implementation.

From a theoretical perspective, the results reinforce the relevance of strategic management as an integrating framework that aligns diverse organizational capabilities toward sustainability goals. The increasing incorporation of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into corporate strategy demonstrates a paradigm shift from short-term profit maximization to long-term value creation (Hasanah et al., 2025). This shift aligns with the argument that sustainable business practices contribute not only to organizational legitimacy but also to sustained competitive advantage and resilience in uncertain environments (Zahra et al., 2025). Accordingly, strategic management functions as the central coordinating mechanism that ensures coherence between sustainability objectives and operational execution.

The role of entrepreneurship in this framework can be understood as a dynamic capability that enables organizations to identify and exploit opportunities arising from sustainability challenges. The findings confirm that sustainable entrepreneurship is not merely an extension of traditional entrepreneurship but represents a distinct orientation focused on systemic transformation and value creation beyond economic returns (Abbas & Bulut, 2024). This perspective is further strengthened by Shepherd and Patzelt (2022), who emphasize that entrepreneurial action serves as a bridge between unsustainable systems and desired sustainable futures. In addition, Muñoz and Cohen (2023) highlight that sustainable entrepreneurship contributes to the development of innovation ecosystems that accelerate the transition toward green and circular economies. These insights suggest that entrepreneurship plays a critical role in enhancing organizational adaptability within sustainability-oriented strategic frameworks.

Leadership, on the other hand, is identified as a key enabler of cultural and strategic alignment in sustainability transformation. The literature consistently demonstrates that leadership is not only a managerial function but also a transformational force that shapes organizational values, behaviors, and long-term direction. Avery and Bergsteiner (2021) emphasize that sustainable leadership enhances organizational resilience through long-term orientation, ethical governance, and stakeholder inclusivity. Furthermore, Eustachio et al. (2023) conceptualize sustainability leadership as a multidimensional construct that integrates environmental awareness, strategic vision, and organizational learning capabilities. Empirical findings by Iqbal et al. (2022) and Khan et al. (2023) further confirm that transformational leadership positively influences environmental innovation and organizational sustainability performance. These findings

collectively suggest that leadership acts as a catalyst for embedding sustainability into organizational culture and strategic processes.

In relation to human resource management, the review highlights its critical role in operationalizing sustainability at the behavioral level. Green HRM practices are shown to significantly influence employee attitudes and environmentally responsible behaviors through psychological and cultural mechanisms (Dumont et al., 2021). This finding indicates that sustainability cannot be effectively implemented without aligning human capital systems with environmental objectives. Renwick et al. (2022) further argue that HRM systems are essential in embedding sustainability into organizational routines, thereby ensuring consistency between strategic intent and employee behavior. However, Griep and Vantilborgh (2024) highlight a critical paradox in sustainable HRM, where organizations must balance productivity pressures with sustainability commitments. This paradox reflects the complexity of designing HRM systems that simultaneously support economic efficiency and environmental responsibility. Wiguna et al. (2025) reinforce that green HRM contributes significantly to sustainability transformation through structured processes such as recruitment, training, and performance management.

From an integrative perspective, the findings of this study support the argument that sustainable business practices are the result of synergistic interactions among strategic management, entrepreneurship, leadership, and HRM. Rather than functioning as isolated domains, these elements operate as an interconnected system that collectively determines organizational sustainability outcomes. Strategic management provides the structural foundation, entrepreneurship drives innovation, leadership ensures alignment and direction, and HRM translates strategic intent into employee behavior. This integrated model reflects a shift toward capability-based sustainability frameworks in which organizations are viewed as dynamic systems capable of continuous adaptation and transformation.

Overall, the discussion confirms that achieving sustainable business practices requires a holistic and coordinated approach that transcends functional silos. The integration of entrepreneurship, leadership, and HRM within strategic management frameworks not only enhances theoretical understanding but also provides practical guidance for organizations seeking to strengthen their sustainability performance in increasingly complex and uncertain global environments.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review concludes that sustainable business practices are fundamentally shaped by the integration of strategic management with entrepreneurship, leadership, and human resource management. The synthesis of contemporary literature demonstrates that sustainability cannot be effectively achieved through isolated functional approaches, but rather requires a coordinated and systemic alignment of organizational capabilities. Strategic management serves as the central framework that integrates these key domains into a coherent sustainability-oriented organizational system.

The findings indicate that strategic management plays a pivotal role in embedding sustainability principles into organizational vision, mission, and long-term objectives. Through the incorporation of ESG considerations into strategic decision-making, organizations are able to align economic performance with environmental and social responsibility. This alignment enhances organizational legitimacy, resilience, and competitiveness in an increasingly complex and uncertain global environment.

Entrepreneurship emerges as a critical driver of innovation within sustainable business systems. It enables organizations to identify and exploit opportunities that contribute to environmental preservation and social value creation. Entrepreneurial orientation fosters adaptability and encourages the development of innovative business models that support the transition toward more sustainable and regenerative economic systems. In this context, entrepreneurship acts as a catalyst for transformation, enabling organizations to respond proactively to emerging sustainability challenges.

Leadership is identified as a central enabling factor in shaping organizational culture and ensuring the effective implementation of sustainability strategies. Sustainable leadership promotes long-term thinking, ethical decision-making, and stakeholder inclusivity, all of which are essential for embedding sustainability into organizational practices. Leadership also plays a critical role in aligning individual behaviors with organizational sustainability goals, thereby ensuring coherence between strategic intent and operational execution.

Human resource management contributes significantly to the operationalization of sustainability through the development of employee competencies, values, and behaviors. Green and sustainable HRM practices ensure that sustainability is internalized within organizational culture and reflected in everyday employee actions. However, the implementation of sustainable HRM requires careful balancing between productivity objectives and long-term environmental commitments, highlighting the complexity of managing human capital in sustainability-oriented organizations.

Based on these findings, this study proposes an integrated framework in which strategic management functions as the central coordinating mechanism, supported by entrepreneurship as an innovation engine, leadership as a cultural and strategic driver, and HRM as a behavioral implementation system. This integrated perspective emphasizes that sustainable business performance is the outcome of dynamic interactions among these interconnected organizational dimensions.

From a practical perspective, organizations are encouraged to embed sustainability into their core strategic planning processes, foster entrepreneurial cultures that support innovation, develop leadership capabilities oriented toward sustainability transformation, and implement HRM systems that reinforce environmentally responsible behavior. These actions collectively contribute to the development of sustainable organizational ecosystems that are capable of adapting to evolving global challenges.

Future research is recommended to empirically validate the proposed integrative framework across different industry contexts and geographical regions. Further studies may also explore the role of digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies in enhancing the integration of sustainability within strategic management systems. Additionally, sector-specific investigations, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises and emerging economies, would provide deeper insights into the contextual applicability of sustainable business practices. this study contributes to the advancement of sustainability literature by offering a comprehensive synthesis of how strategic management, entrepreneurship, leadership, and human resource management collectively shape sustainable business practices in contemporary organizations.

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