MEASURING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
In the context of today's global challenges, sustainable development is becoming a primary objective for governments around the world. This article analyses the synergies and divergences between social, economic and environmental policies and their impact on sustainable development. The study was conducted on a sample of 220 respondents, selected through stratified sampling methods to ensure representativeness and a comprehensive picture of the perceptions and experiences of different population segments. The research method used was the modelling of partial structural equations (PLS-SEM), implemented with the help of the SmartPLS 4.06 software, which allowed the examination of the direct and indirect relationships between the studied variables: social policies (SP), economic policies (EP), environmental policies (PM), quality of life (CV), social equity (ES) and sustainable development (DD). This study contributes to the understanding of synergies and divergences in the management of social, economic and environmental challenges, highlighting the importance of an integrated approach in public policy formulation to promote sustainable development. The limitations of the study include the subjectivity of the data collected and the specific geographic context, suggesting the need for further research to explore intermediate variables and expand the study context.

Keywords
sustainable development, social policies, economic policies, environmental policies, equity, quality of life

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Introduction

In today's context of globalisation and rapid social change, managing social, economic and environmental challenges is crucial for a sustainable future. These challenges are interconnected and complex, requiring an integrated approach. Sustainable development must incorporate social justice and economic stability (Babaeva, 2024). Balancing economic growth with environmental preservation and social equity is essential to avoid the negative impact of unsustainable practices (Chaturvedi, 2024).

Interdisciplinary collaboration and inclusive governance are needed to effectively address environmental degradation, social inequality and economic challenges (Ruhana et al., 2024). Sustainable practices in various sectors and the role of policy frameworks and international agreements are essential (Singh, 2024). Adverse social phenomena, such as crime and corruption, negatively affect sustainable development (Kipāne and Vilks, 2023).

Social-ecological well-being should be integrated to provide a comprehensive measure of quality of life (Nayak and Pradhan, 2023). Environmental degradation disproportionately affects marginalized populations, highlighting the need for social and cultural solutions (Kockrow, 2022). Socio-economic problems in developing countries require robust environmental management to address extreme weather and resource scarcity (Ivanov, 2022).

Modern corporate social responsibility should promote transformative development that improves the quality of life and working conditions (Brondoni and Ricotti, 2022). A framework for eco-social policies must integrate environmental and social objectives, emphasizing the role of the welfare state (Mandelli, 2022). Adopting a holistic and integrated approach to policies is key to prioritising long-term sustainability, social equity and environmental management in the context of globalisation and social change.

Social policies improve living conditions through education, health and social protection, ensuring equitable access to essential services. Quality education stimulates economic and social development, fostering intellectual growth and human capital (Bezpalenko, 2023). Public health directly influences well-being and productivity, and effective policies reduce costs in the long run (Boardman et al., 2022). Social protection, including unemployment benefits and pensions, alleviates inequalities and provides security for vulnerable populations (George and Wilding, 2023; Holubenko et al., 2024; Ilyash et al., 2023). The principles of the Social and Solidarity Economy (ESS) increase the effectiveness of policies by promoting voluntary initiatives (Mottaghi, 2023). Demographic changes, such as an ageing population, require adaptive social security policies (Kacprowska, 2023). In Ukraine, conflicts underscore the need for strong social policies and international cooperation (Boiko and Kucherenko, 2022). European studies show the importance of adapting policies to global trends to maintain the effectiveness of social protection. Social policies contribute to economic stability and growth by ensuring social justice(Litvin, 2023). In summary, comprehensive social policies in education, health and social protection are essential for a fair and prosperous society.

Economic policies are essential for economic growth, financial stability and job creation, thus supporting social and environmental policies. These include fiscal stimulus, monetary policies, and trade regulations. For example, the interaction between

environmental policies, sustainable development and economic growth highlights the importance of technological innovation and international cooperation in achieving sustainability goals (Adanma and Ogunbiyi, 2024). Fiscal and monetary policies, such as those in Russia, aim to ensure financial stability in the face of volatile hydrocarbon prices and geopolitical tensions (Altunyan et al., 2020). The role of banks and monetary policy in the wake of the global financial crisis underlines the importance of economic regulation (Ehnts, 2024). In the US, economic policies are shaped by microeconomic and macroeconomic theories to balance economic objectives (Zhong, 2022). European experience in monetary policy illustrates the complexity of public debt management and fiscal policies (Tombazos, 2019). In Korea, macroeconomic policies are aimed at stabilizing prices and output (Moon, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical role of integrated fiscal and monetary policies in mitigating the socio-economic impact, as seen in Ghana's response to the crisis (Boakye et al., 2022). In Vietnam, the impact of fiscal and monetary policies on economic growth suggests the need for more effective solutions (Rathi, 2022). Policies for a stable and prosperous future economy must take into account environmental sustainability, such as encouraging the recirculation of materials and changing taxes (Smith, 2020). The concept of "silent depression" and the rise of money-manager capitalism underscores the need for economic reforms to address economic challenges (Whalen, 2022). A robust and well-managed economy, underpinned by effective economic policies, is vital for financing and supporting social and environmental initiatives, ensuring balanced and sustainable development.

Environmental policies are crucial for protecting natural resources and ensuring long-term sustainability. These include regulations and initiatives to preserve biodiversity, reduce pollution and manage natural resources, impacting public health and the economy. The European Union, through the European Green Deal, integrates environmental actions into its political agenda, aiming for systemic change and global leadership in environmental protection (Paiva, 2023). India's environmental policies have evolved significantly, reflecting a paradigm shift from post-independence obligations to decentralized governance and international commitments (Varadarajan and Chitra, 2023). India's legislative framework for the management of hazardous waste and GMOs underlines the importance of environmental protection and public health (Mark, 2023).

In rural areas, balanced environmental and economic sustainability requires an integrated approach, involving local authorities, communities and civil society organisations (Mishenin et al., 2023). The decline of firefly populations in the Damodar River region of India highlights the need for eco-tourism initiatives for biodiversity conservation and socio-economic benefits (Datta, 2023). For example, The UK's environmental policy has evolved to address local and global issues, such as the impact of acid rain, demonstrating the interaction between local actions and international law (Asher, 2022). Water reservoirs play a crucial role in balancing climate variability and securing water supply (Humphrey et al., 2024).

The responsibility of the industrial sector towards the environment is essential, as legislative regulations can significantly reduce environmental pressure from industrial, commercial and agricultural activities (Zyder et al., 2022). The EU's resilience in

environmental policy, despite economic pressures, demonstrates its commitment to sustainable development (Gravey et al., 2022). The integration of environmental policies in different regions and sectors underlines the need for a multilateral approach to protect natural resources, public health and long-term economic well-being.
This study is relevant because it provides an integrated perspective on how public policies can be coordinated to address current challenges holistically and sustainably. The article is structured as follows: in section 1 the policies with direct action on sustainable development are described, Understanding the synergies and divergences between social, economic and environmental policies is essential for formulating effective strategies that ensure the long-term well-being of society. In section 3 the research hypotheses and conceptual model are presented, in section 4 the results, in section 5 the conclusions, proposals for improvement, implications and future directions of research. Through this analysis, we aim to contribute to a better understanding of how public policies can be used to promote sustainable development. This will provide a solid foundation for informed decisions and integrated strategies aimed at creating a sustainable and equitable future for all segments of society.

1. Review of the scientific literature

1.1 Social politicians

Social policies include a wide range of government measures to enhance the well-being of citizens and ensure social equity, covering areas such as education, health and social protection. These policies address the needs of vulnerable groups, promoting social justice and reflecting universal values (Holubenko et al., 2024). They are essential for the development of human potential and social progress, influencing the quality of healthcare, education, housing and income (Bezpalenko, 2023). Theorists such as David Gill and Antoni Rajkiewicz emphasize the role of social policy in shaping the living conditions and interpersonal relationships necessary to adapt to demographic changes (Kacprowska, 2023). The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) highlights the importance of incorporating economic activities into social relations to correct the dysfunctions of the capitalist economy (Mottaghi, 2023). Historical analyses show that social services contribute to economic growth and well-being, but do not significantly reduce socio-economic inequalities, although they support political stability (George and Wilding, 2023). Social policy addresses global challenges such as deprivation, migration and economic integration, adapting to the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution by promoting digital inclusion and gender-responsive policies (Mlanka & Undlov, 2023). Educational resources emphasize the importance of engaging in social policy to effectively navigate the evolving political landscape. Implementation varies across political systems, with unique examples such as Liechtenstein, where the monarchy supports social programs to enhance political stability (Kabatsky, 2023).
The development of modern welfare states, as in the UK, illustrates the critical role of income transfers and public services in supporting economic growth and promoting a healthy workforce, which is essential for reducing social risks such as unemployment and poverty (Boardman et al., 2022). Overall, effective social policies reduce inequalities, promote social cohesion and stimulate economic development, contributing to a fairer and more balanced society.

Human Capital Theory, proposed by Gary Becker, argues that investing in education and health increases a country's individual productivity and economic competitiveness, similar to investing in physical capital (Buscha and Dickson, 2023). Education develops skills that stimulate technological progress and increase the income of those who invest in education (Matche, 2023).

Empirical evidence, such as that from the Russian Arctic regions, shows that access to higher education increases human capital and per capita production (Agarkov, 2024). Investments in education and health are essential at individual and national levels to increase productivity.

In developing countries, good health and education are associated with economic benefits, although returns may vary (Ali and Khan, 2023). The theory also includes broader dimensions, such as poverty reduction, outlined by John Kenneth Galbraith and Amartya Sen (Leoni, 2023). The post-industrial economy underlines the importance of knowledge, innovation and new technologies for development (Mayilian & Arrow; Yedigarian, 2022). Although driven by neoliberal ideals, a holistic approach to education is essential for comprehensive development (Edeji, 2024). Human capital theory highlights the crucial role of investment in education and health in improving economic performance, supported by extensive research (Grugulis, 2024).

The social justice theory of John Rawls, in "A Theory of Justice", argues that social policies must ensure a fair distribution of resources and equal opportunities for the disadvantaged. Rawls introduces the concept of "justice as fairness," where individuals establish the principles of justice from a position of equality, hidden behind a "veil of ignorance" that hides their social status and personal abilities (Tashkin, 2023).

Rawls emphasizes the importance of just institutions and fair cooperation, stating that the principles of justice must be universal and applicable to all institutions. This theory is relevant for reducing inequalities and promoting social and economic stability (Zhu and Wang, 2024). Rawls promotes a social ethos of mutual respect between individuals connected by institutions (Brudney, 2023). Its principles also apply to the treatment of prisoners, advocating for equality and the protection of fundamental rights (Soge, 2022). His theory has been expanded and criticized in various cultural and political contexts (Kiryukhin, 2022; Taskin, 2023). In essence, Rawls advocates policies that ensure fairness and equal opportunity for all, emphasizing the importance of fairness and ethical norms in creating a just society (Jamnik, 2022; Solovyeva, 2022).

1.2 Economic policies

Economic policies encompass a wide range of government strategies and actions aimed at stimulating economic growth, ensuring financial stability and creating jobs, and can indeed be classified into fiscal, monetary and trade policies. Tax policies involve government spending and tax decisions designed to influence economic activity. For example, in Indonesia, fiscal policy, especially government spending on infrastructure projects and social programs, has proven to have a significant positive impact on economic growth(Hanipah et al., 2023). Similarly, in Vietnam, fiscal policies were found to have a mixed but generally positive impact on economic growth, although monetary policies were considered more significant in supporting economic growth during the period studied (From 2000 to 2022). Monetary policies, on the other hand,

involve managing the money supply and interest rates to control inflation and stabilize the currency. For example, the U.S. Federal Reserve's monetary policies, such as credit tightening, can critically affect businesses by influencing financial stability and operational decisions(Zhong, 2022). In Europe, monetary policies, including negative real interest rates, have been crucial to preventing the collapse of the financial system and saving the euro, although they have also had side effects that have necessitated a change in central bank strategies (Tombazos, 2019). Trade policies, which include tariffs, trade agreements, and import/export regulations, also play a vital role in economic growth. An econometric analysis showed that trade policies significantly affect economic growth, highlighting the importance of strategic trade decisions in national economic planning. In addition, economic development strategies often involve a mix of fiscal stimulus and public spending policies, requiring budget-constrained governments to make trade-offs to achieve the best outcomes for economic development and growth(Patrick, 2023). Historical perspectives on economic policies, such as those of ancient and medieval times, reveal that state intervention, tax reforms, and redistributive initiatives have long been integral in managing economic activities and ensuring equitable growth (Einolf, 2023). In the US context, macroeconomic policies, including fiscal and monetary measures, have been instrumental in addressing major financial crises such as the Great Depression and the subprime mortgage crisis, demonstrating the critical role of government intervention in stabilising the economy and encouraging recovery(Wang, 2023). The Korean government's approach to macroeconomic policy, especially monetary policy, has also focused on stabilizing prices and output to achieve long-term economic growth and fair income distribution(Moon, 2022). In general, economic policies are multifaceted and require a balanced approach, incorporating fiscal, monetary and trade strategies to effectively stimulate economic growth, ensure financial stability and create jobs(Ehnts, 2024).

The theory of economic growth, proposed by Robert Solow, is essential for understanding the factors that determine long-term economic expansion. Its neoclassical model of growth, introduced in 1956, emphasizes the roles of capital accumulation, technological innovation, and productivity growth in economic development (Dykas et al., 2022). This model moved away from Keynesian theories, focusing on combining labour and capital to improve living standards (Double, 2023). The Solow model was the basis for endogenous growth theories, developed by Paul Romer and Robert Lucas, which explored the effects of technological advances and human capital on growth (Dykas et al., 2022). Considered the first modern model of growth, the Solow-Swan model emphasizes the importance of capital investment and the expansion of production structures for economic progress (Cheng, 2020). The Solow model is also relevant for the analysis of contemporary issues, such as fiscal and monetary policies, population dynamics, and exogenous shocks such as epidemics (Dykas et al., 2022). It also addresses the effects of pollution and capital accumulation, providing a complete picture of long-term dynamics and economic stability (Segura et al., 2022). However, the model has been criticized for the assumption that technology can replace natural resources indefinitely, an important issue in the context of environmental sustainability and climate change (Guenther, 2024). Other theories, such as the Harrod-Domar model and the models of Arthur Lewis and Walt Rostow, emphasize the role of investment and

capital accumulation, the expansion of the industrial sector, and the stages of evolutionary growth (Cheng, 2020). These perspectives, together with post-Keynesian and heterodox approaches, enrich the discourse on economic policies and sustainable development (Vishwanath, 2023). Modern theories of economic growth incorporate concepts such as equal development, digital transformations, and the green economy, reflecting a holistic view of economic progress that includes quality of life and environmental considerations (Yanovska and Parfentieva, 2022). This approach aligns with the distinction between economic growth and economic development, which involves improving living standards and the quality of the environment (Pelsa and Balina, 2022). Thus, the theory of economic growth, as proposed by Solow and others, remains a vital framework for understanding long-term economic prosperity, and adapting to respond to contemporary challenges and sustainability goals.

John Maynard Keynes' theory, often referred to as Keynesian economics, emphasizes the critical role of active fiscal and monetary policies in stabilizing the economy and stimulating aggregate demand, especially during recessions. Keynes argued that free markets are inherently incapable of fully organizing economic activity, requiring state intervention to ensure the proper functioning of capitalism(Earth, 2023). His theory has evolved over three decades, consistently emphasizing the importance of cyclical shifts in expectations about future returns and the critical role of the banking system in financing and influencing these expectations (Bortz, 2023). Keynes's work, especially in "The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money" (1936), laid the foundations for understanding the role of money in the economy and the need for state intervention to manage economic fluctuations (Earth, 2023). His microeconomic observations, which moved away from neoclassical axioms, were supported by modern behavioural economics, reinforcing the validity of his macroeconomic conclusions (Efer-Uhe, 2022). Keynesian theory argues that during economic downturns, the government should use fiscal policies, such as increasing government spending and tax cuts, along with monetary policies such as adjusting interest rates, to stimulate aggregate demand and mitigate the adverse effects of recessions (Chyrak, 2022). While modern monetary theory (MMT) expands on some of Keynes' ideas, it diverges by suggesting that economic policy can ensure full employment without budgetary constraints, a notion that traditional Keynesian economists criticize for neglecting the limits imposed by market forces and the scarcity of money (Dullien and Tober, 2022). Despite the evolution of economic thinking, Keynesian principles remain integral to contemporary economic policy, with governments around the world adopting its recommendations to address economic instability and crises (Chyrak, 2022).

1.3 Environmental policies

Environmental policies are regulations and initiatives aimed at protecting natural resources and ensuring long-term sustainability. These policies address issues such as pollution, climate change, biodiversity conservation and natural resource management.

The theory of sustainability, presented in the Brundtland Report, emphasizes the need to use natural resources so that future generations can meet their needs, promoting a balance between economic development, environmental protection and social equity (Caverly, 2023). It has been adopted and reinterpreted by various entities, including

governments and corporations, leading to multiple applications of sustainability (Caverly, 2023). The Sustainability Window Method (SUWi) defines GDP boundaries that align with environmental and social sustainability, indicating that only certain paths of economic growth or degradation are sustainable (Luukkanen et al., 2024). However, the concept of sustainability is fraught with contradictions, between the "business as usual" approach to the Sustainable Development Goals and more radical ideas such as degrowth, which challenge anthropocentric assumptions (Hobson, 2024). Sustainability theory is also applied in business development, where sustainable practices are explored (Devyatkin, 2023). In the field of energy, it is used for the development and analysis of renewable technologies, such as hydropower, biomass, geothermal, solar and wind, to ensure long-term sustainability. This integrated approach to sustainability, which combines theoretical frameworks with practical applications, is essential for addressing the challenges of sustainable development in the twenty-first century, supporting global efforts, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and providing a solid basis for future policy-making (Luukkanen et al., 2024).

The green economy, proposed by Herman Daly and others, emphasizes the need for the economy to operate within the planet's ecological limits, advocating for low consumption and sustainable innovations. It differs from traditional environmental economics by focusing on the interdependence of human and natural systems, with the environment serving as the material basis for economic activities (Hang, 2023). Daly's work, especially advocating a steady-state economy, influenced the science of sustainability, challenging the idea of continued economic growth (O'Neill, 2022). The Emergence-Based Assessment Method for Sustainable Regional Economic Development, exemplified in Henan Province, integrates natural, economic, social and sustainable subsystems, providing a comprehensive assessment of environmental pressures and economic growth, stressing the importance of balancing these factors for sustainability (Si et al., 2023). The green economy also aligns with the principles of the social and solidarity economy (SSE), promoting sustainable resource management and human well-being (Hang, 2023). The field is well documented in comprehensive dictionaries that compile essential terms and concepts, providing an intellectual map of practical and philosophical dimensions (Haddad and Solomon, 2023; Jany and R, 2023). These perspectives underline the need for an economic paradigm that respects ecological boundaries, reduces consumption and encourages sustainable innovations, ensuring the long-term viability of societies and natural ecosystems.

1.4 Quality of life and social equity

Quality of life and social equity are essential concepts in assessing the success of social, economic and environmental policies. Quality of life refers to the level of well-being and satisfaction of citizens, including factors such as health, education, income and living environment. Social equity refers to justice and equality in the distribution of resources and opportunities.

Quality of life (QoL) indicators are essential tools for assessing the well-being of individuals and societies, encompassing various dimensions such as health, education, income and environmental conditions. One recognized model is the Human Development Index (HDI) developed by the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP), which combines health, education, and income values to measure a nation's level of human development (Prakash, 2023). HDI is crucial in identifying socio-economic disparities and guiding policy decisions to improve living standards. In rural areas, HDI highlights the need for socio-economic stability and the integration of human, agroecological, social and market factors to support sustainable development (Yerezhepova et al., 2023). Quality of life assessments also include physical, mental, and social health measures, exemplified in studies that focus on specific populations, such as pregnant women, where indicators capture functional, physical, mental, and social health aspects (Geng, 2023). The theoretical frameworks for QoL consider internal and external factors, with internal factors including individual characteristics and situational conditions, and external factors including socioeconomic variables, such as social, cultural, religious, political, and economic influences (Szkultecka-Dębek, 2023). Environmental quality, including natural and climatic conditions and standard of living, plays a crucial role in regional quality-of-life assessments, assisting authorities in strategic decision-making (Gagulina, 2022).

These models and frameworks provide a comprehensive approach to understanding and improving the quality of life, ensuring that policies and interventions are well-informed and geared towards human development and well-being in different contexts and populations.

1.5. Sustainable development

Sustainable development is an integrative concept that emphasizes the importance of a balanced approach to achieving economic, social and environmental goals. The concept of sustainable development was popularized by the Brundtland Report, which defined it as development that responds to the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, introduced by John Elkington, emphasizes the need to evaluate organizational and political success through three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. This holistic approach is increasingly recognized for its role in promoting sustainable development, integrating not only financial results but also social responsibility and environmental stewardship (Purnama, 2024). Research shows that TBL positively influences regional development by encouraging investment in research and development, reducing poverty and lowering emissions, thus validating its importance in sustainable development (Vukovic et al., 2023). Integrating TBL into business strategies ensures that corporations align sustainability goals with environmental and social goals, fostering synergistic relationships with stakeholders and global communities (Rahim, 2023). The TBL framework is essential for assessing economic development beyond traditional measures, including competitiveness, decision-making, planning and performance for sustainable economic development (Nogueira et al., 2023). Empirical studies show that organizations that adopt TBL practices have improved sustainability outcomes, including better financial performance, cost savings through resource efficiency, and a strengthened reputation. These organizations also reap environmental benefits such as reduced carbon emissions and better waste management, and social benefits such as increased employee engagement, community development, and stakeholder trust (NC & Nirmala, 2023).

Thus, the TBL framework serves as an essential tool for organizations that want to achieve long-term sustainability by balancing economic growth with social equity and environmental protection (Toader et al., 2023).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, are a global framework for achieving sustainable development by 2030. These 17 interconnected goals address economic, social and environmental challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice (Bąk, 2024). Building on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs emphasize a holistic approach, ensuring that progress in one area supports progress in others (Mahanayak, 2024). For example, promoting sustainable agriculture (Goal 2) can improve food security, reduce poverty (Goal 1) and mitigate climate change (Goal 13) (Bąk, 2024). Financial institutions, especially banks, play a crucial role in this framework, implementing and supporting SDG-aligned initiatives guided by the UN Principles for Responsible Banking (PRB) (Kulińska-Sadłocha, 2024). Companies contribute significantly by integrating sustainable practices into their strategies, highlighted by the sustainability reports of large Romanian companies such as OMV Petrom and Alro, which highlight their contributions in the areas of environmental, social and governance (Bratu, 2024). Social entrepreneurship is vital in promoting the SDGs, providing innovative solutions to societal challenges and promoting a more inclusive and sustainable world. India's approach to sustainable development, combining traditional conservation practices with modern policies, exemplifies how national strategies can contribute to the progress of the global SDGs, addressing issues such as poverty reduction, improved health and environmental protection (Mahanayak, 2024). Overall, the SDGs provide an integrated roadmap for global development, highlighting the interconnectedness of the goals and the need for collaboration across sectors and regions to achieve a sustainable future for all.

By exploring these theories and concepts, we gain a deeper understanding of how public policies can interact to promote sustainable development. This theoretical framework will guide our analysis of the synergies and divergences between social, economic and environmental policies in the following sections.

2. Research methodology

Analyzing the literature in the field, as noted above, some research hypotheses and a conceptual model could be developed, as follows:

a. If *social policies* (PS) indeed have a significant positive impact on sustainable development (SD), as validated by theories such as Becker's human capital theory (1993) and Sen's (1999) theory of human development argues that investment in education and health increases economic productivity, which is crucial for sustainable growth. This is supported by the notion that education, as a form of intangible public capital, promotes economic development, better employment opportunities, higher wages and health, thus contributing to the social dimension of sustainable development(Erjavec, 2020). Sen (1999) emphasizes that development should be measured by the expansion of individual capacities and freedoms, emphasizing the importance of social policies in achieving this. Social policies that ensure equitable access to health, education and other essential services are fundamental to maintaining

social well-being for both current and future generations(Mensah, 2021). Moreover, public policy plays a critical role in supporting innovation and human capital, providing resources and expertise that organizations may not develop independently(Azarova et al., 2022). The relationship between economic growth and sustainability is also crucial, as traditional growth models often deplete environmental resources. A sustainable social policy should involve the public provision of the services needed to reduce per capita costs and ensure equitable access, aligning with a growth strategy that meets current needs while ensuring intergenerational justice(Messkoub, 2022). In addition, fiscal policies, such as government spending, positively affect the Human Development Index, encompassing health, education, and living standards, which are essential for sustainable development(Vicil and Konukman, 2022). Therefore, integrating social policies into the sustainable development agenda is vital, requiring collaboration between governments, NGOs, academic institutions and civil society to make strategic interventions and investments in social issues(Mensah, 2021). This comprehensive approach ensures that social policies effectively contribute to sustainable development, validating the models proposed by Becker and Sen.
H1: Social Policies (SP) have a positive impact on Sustainable Development (SD)

b. The interaction between well-managed economic policies and sustainable development is crucial for stimulating long-term economic growth, as validated by the Solow model of economic growth (1956), which emphasizes the importance of capital and technology investments. Effective management of these investments can indeed stimulate sustained economic growth, aligned with the principles of sustainable development. For example, Takhumova et al. stress that no single factor can simultaneously accelerate economic growth and reduce its variation, suggesting that managing economic growth for sustainability often involves trade-offs, such as limiting growth rates to protect environmental and societal interests(Takhumova et al., 2021). Deng emphasizes the synergy between innovation and sustainability, advocating for the integration of advanced technologies and eco-responsible policies to create resource-efficient, sustainable solutions that increase productivity and profitability while encouraging new business opportunities(Deng, 2024). Adanma and Ogunbiyi further emphasize the role of technological innovation and international cooperation in achieving sustainability goals, noting that both regulatory and market-based environmental policies have a significant impact on sustainable development and economic growth(Devotion & Ogunbiyi, 2024). Mugano adds that integrating investment policy into development strategies and capitalizing on investments to strengthen productive capacities are essential to improve international competitiveness and ensure responsible investment(Mugano, 2021). Collingridge discusses the adoption of liberal policies and national strategies that integrate sustainability to reduce social inequalities and regional disparities, promoting a new development model based on the rational and responsible use of resources, such as the circular economy(Collingridge, 2023). Collectively, these perspectives affirm that well-managed economic policies, when aligned with the principles of sustainability and underpinned by technological innovation and international cooperation, can effectively lead to long-term sustainable development and economic growth.

H2: Well-managed Economic Policies (EP) foster Sustainable Development (SD).

c. Environmental policies (PM) play a crucial role in making a positive contribution to sustainable development (SD), as validated by seminal reports such as the Brundtland Report (1987) and the Stern Review (2006). The Brundtland report stresses the importance of meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, stressing the need to integrate environmental considerations into all policy sectors in order to achieve sustainable governance(Russell, 2022). This integration is essential, as environmental damage often comes from non-political environmental sectors, requiring administrative strategies that place environmental considerations at the heart of policy-making processes (Russell, 2022). The Stern Review highlights the economic imperative to invest in environmental policies to mitigate the severe economic costs associated with climate change, reinforcing the idea that sustainable development is not only an environmental necessity, but also an economic one (Hassan and Al-Basri, 2021). Research has shown that effective environmental policies can lead to significant sustainability outcomes, such as rationing resource consumption, reducing pollution, minimizing health impacts, and promoting the use of renewable energy (Hassan and Al-Basri, 2021). In addition, the positive influence of environmental policies on attracting direct investment has been observed in the European Union, where joint measures on sustainable development have led to improved environmental quality and economic growth (Onofrei et al., 2023). In Russia, the development of environmental investment projects has been identified as a key factor for sustainable economic growth, underlining the need for a robust legislative framework and safeguards to reduce investment risks (Sheina et al., 2021). In addition, investments in sustainable energy have been found to significantly improve environmental indicators, such as reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality, further supporting the role of environmental policies in achieving global sustainability goals (Moussa, 2023). Collectively, these findings affirm that environmental policies are an integral part of sustainable development, aligned with the principles outlined in both the Brundtland Report and the Stern Review.

H3: Environmental Policies (PM) contribute positively to Sustainable Development (SD).

d. The relationship between quality of life (QV), social policies (PS) and sustainable development (SD) is complex and multifaceted, as evidenced by various research studies. Quality of life, a broad concept encompassing material security, health status and living conditions, is significantly influenced by social policies aimed at improving these areas (Kolin, 2022). The Human Development Index (HDI), which measures a country's progress through health, education, and living standards, directly correlates with sustainable development, highlighting the importance of these factors in achieving long-term goals(Cusack, 2019). The paradox of happiness, as discussed by Easterlin (1974), emphasizes that subjective well-being depends not only on economic growth but also on social factors, thus demonstrating the critical role of social policies in improving the quality of life (Cusack, 2019). Strategic planning and systematic consideration of interdependent factors are essential to improve the quality of life and

ensure the effective implementation of regional development plans(Roslyakova et al., 2022). Moreover, the shift in international relations towards prioritizing quality of life indicators over purely economic values such as GDP reflects a growing recognition of the socio-political realities affecting global populations (Argvliani, 2023). An integrated approach that balances human well-being with environmental sustainability is crucial, as successful initiatives often involve public transport policies, urban green spaces, the adoption of renewable energy and environmental education (Paraguassu and Cárdenas, 2024). Public awareness and cross-sectoral collaboration are also vital to achieving positive outcomes, ensuring that the needs of present and future generations are met (Paraguassu and Cárdenas, 2024). Thus, the interaction between quality of life, social policies and sustainable development is evident, with each element reinforcing the others to create a holistic framework for social progress and environmental management.

H4: Quality of Life (CV) mediated by Social Policies (PS) improves Sustainable Development (SD).

The relationship between social equity (SE) and sustainable development (SD) is profoundly influenced by economic policies (EP), as validated by Rawls' (1971) theory of social justice, which argues that the equitable distribution of resources is crucial for sustainable development. This theory emphasizes the importance of promoting equality of outcome and treatment, recognizing the dignity of all individuals, and encouraging participation, especially among the disadvantaged (Supriads, 2023). Lower inequalities lead to better social and economic outcomes, supporting sustainable development Wilkinson and Pickett said (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Integrating social equity into sustainability efforts is essential as it addresses socioeconomic disparities, education, public transport, healthcare, and environmental threats, which are essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Michael and Sallef, 2022). Moreover, the study by Kumar et al. highlights the need to balance economic growth, ecological stewardship and social justice in order to create a resilient and equitable future, highlighting the role of holistic thinking and cooperation between governments, corporations and individuals(Kumar et al., 2024). The focus on income inequality, especially in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, reveals that improved labour market structures, globalisation, economic development and governance mechanisms can significantly mitigate income inequality, thus fostering sustainable development (Nae et al., 2024). In addition, Schrand argues that prioritizing social equity can indirectly promote sustainability by improving economic and political democracy, which correlates with better environmental performance(Schrand, 2020). Therefore, economic policies that prioritise social equity are essential in driving sustainable development, as they ensure that the benefits of development are shared fairly, addressing both poverty and inequality, and ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable future.

H5: Social Equity (SE) has a positive effect on Sustainable Development (SD), influenced by Economic Policies (EP).

Thus, the model we will propose allows us to gain an in-depth understanding of the interactions between social, economic and environmental policies and to assess how they contribute to sustainable development.

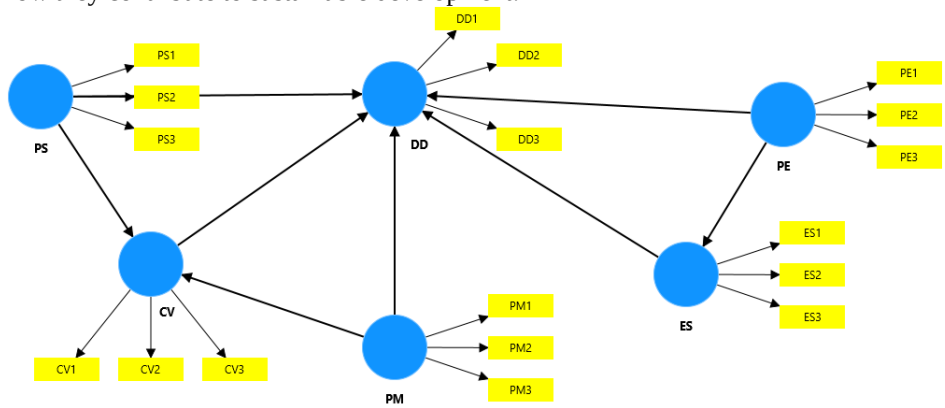

Figure no. 1: The proposed model

Source: author processing using SmartPLS 4.1.0.9

Our study takes a quantitative approach based on a questionnaire developed to collect relevant data from respondents. The questionnaire was designed to assess perceptions and opinions on social, economic and environmental policies and to identify synergies and divergences between these policies. Data for this study were collected exclusively through a questionnaire distributed to a sample of 220 respondents. The questionnaire was structured to include questions related to each of the independent and dependent variables of the study. The distribution of the questionnaire was carried out, combining modern and traditional methods to reach as varied an audience as possible. First, the questionnaire was emailed to pre-existing contacts in relevant databases, ensuring effective coverage. In parallel, it has also been shared on social media, using popular platforms to attract a diverse audience. This approach allowed for the collection of a representative dataset from various segments of the population. The data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using statistical methods to identify synergies and divergences between the policies studied with the help of SPSS ver.27 and SmartPLS. This methodology allowed to gain an in-depth understanding of the interactions between social, economic and environmental policies and to assess how they contribute to sustainable development. The results of the analysis will be presented in the next section.

The demographic analysis of the survey respondents provides an understanding of the profile of the participants. Demographic data were analysed using SPSS 27 to ensure a representative distribution of the sample.

Table no. 1. Analysis of the age distribution of respondents by category

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	< 18	28	12.7	12.7	12.7
	> 64	39	17.7	17.7	30.5
	18-24	28	12.7	12.7	43.2
	25-34	27	12.3	12.3	55.5
	35-44	40	18.2	18.2	73.6
	45-54	30	13.6	13.6	87.3
	55-64	28	12.7	12.7	100.0
	Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: author processing using IBM SPSS Statistics 27

This distribution indicates a predominance of respondents in the working age groups, between 35 and 44 years old, which may influence the way they perceive and relate to public policies.

Table no. 2. Gender distribution of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Another	7	3.2	3.2	3.2
	Feminine	87	39.5	39.5	42.7
	Masculine	126	57.3	57.3	100.0
	Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: author processing using IBM SPSS Statistics 27

The balanced gender distribution ensures that the views of both men and women are representative in our analysis.

Table no. 3. Distribution of respondents by level of education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No education	32	14.5	14.5	14.5
	Secondary education	23	10.5	10.5	25.0
	High school education	35	15.9	15.9	40.9
	Post-secondary education	39	17.7	17.7	58.6
	Postgraduate studies (master's, doctorate)	27	12.3	12.3	70.9
	Primary education	37	16.8	16.8	87.7
	University studies (bachelor's degree)	27	12.3	12.3	100.0
	Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: author processing using IBM SPSS Statistics 27

Most respondents have at least a post-secondary level of education, which suggests a high degree of knowledge and information about the policies analyzed.

Table no. 4. Distribution of respondents by occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Another	29	13.2	13.2	13.2
	Employee	40	18.2	18.2	31.4
	Freelancer	35	15.9	15.9	47.3
	Pensioner	50	22.7	22.7	70.0
	Unemployed	30	13.6	13.6	83.6
	Student	36	16.4	16.4	100.0
	Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: author processing using IBM SPSS Statistics 27

The distribution shows that respondents come from a variety of occupations, thus ensuring the representativeness of diverse socio-economic perspectives.
Detailed demographic analysis allows us to better understand the context in which respondents perceive and evaluate social, economic and environmental policies. Demographic diversity ensures that the results are representative and relevant to different segments of the population. This information is essential to evaluate working hypotheses and to understand how demographic variables can influence perceptions of public policies.

3. Results and discussions

In terms of descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, the model was based on the modeling of partial structural equations with the smallest squares in SmartPLS 4.06 to ensure the reliability of the scales used in the questionnaire, evaluating the composite reliability index (CR), the extracted mean variance (AVE) and Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α). The results are presented in Table no 5.

Table no. 5. Scale reliability

Construct	Item	VIF	Stand. Loadings	CR[a]	AVE[b]	Cronbach's Alpha
				0.852	0.772	0.852
1. Social Politicians (PS)						
PS1	Education is accessible to all citizens	2.449	0.892			
PS2	Health services are adequate and accessible	2.431	0.893			
PS3	Social protection programmes are effective	1.771	0.850			

				0.734	0.651	0.726
2. Economic Policies (EP)						
PE1	Tax incentives encourage investment	1.230	0.699			
PE2	Monetary policies are effective in controlling inflation	1.817	0.831			
PE3	Trade policies support economic growth	2.026	0.880			
				0.762	0.685	0.766
3. Environmental Policies (PM)						
PM1	Environmental regulations are effective in reducing pollution	2.697	0.871			
PM2	There are sufficient initiatives to conserve natural resources	2.698	0.872			
PM3	Waste management programs are effective	1.202	0.732			
				0.854	0.764	0.845
4. Quality of Life (CV)						
CV1	You are satisfied with the standard of living	1.787	0.831			
CV2	Have access to adequate health services	2.160	0.874			
CV3	You are satisfied with the educational opportunities available	2.560	0.916			
				0.905	0.840	0.905
5. Social Equity (ES)						
ES1	Resources are distributed equitably in our society	2.508	0.898			
ES2	All citizens have equal access to education and health	3.576	0.935			
ES3	There are effective policies for social inclusion	3.127	0.916			
				0.747	0.667	0.746
6. Sustainable Development (DD)						
DD1	Our country is making	1.216	0.725			

	progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).		
DD2	Effective measures are being implemented to reduce carbon emissions	2.106	0.838
DD3	Economic growth is sustainable and fair	2.250	0.879

Notes: composite reliability ([a]CR); average variance extracted ([b]AVE); *** $p < 0.000$
Items removed: indicator items are below 0.5:
a. All items Loading >5 indicates Indicator Reliability (Hulland, 1999)
b. All Average Variance Extracted (AVE) >0.5 as indicates Convergent Reliability (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981)
c. All Composite Reliability (CR) >0.7 indicates internal Consistency (Gefen et al., 2000)
d. All Cronbach's Alpha >0.7 indicates indicator Reliability (Nunnally, 1978; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994)

Source: Authors' own work

The analyses indicated that the validity and reliability of the model are achieved because, according to the internal consistency (Table 5), all item loads are above 0.7, only PE1 is 0.699 and is accepted (Hair et al., 2022); Cronbach alpha is also around and above 0.7 (Henseler and Sarstedt, 2013); all AVE values (extracted mean variance) are above 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014); and the CR (composite reliability) values are greater than 0.7, ranging from 0.835 to 0.941 (Jang and Lee, 2019; Nemțeanu et al., 2022). The VIF values for all variables analyzed (as calculated in Table 5) were greater than 0.5, which indicates for the study that multicollinearity is not a problem (Becker et al., 2015; Sobaih and Elshaer, 2022); The correlation coefficients of the 6 constructs in this study are indicated below (Table 6).
According to the Fornell-Larcker procedure (1981), the lowest value obtained for the AVE was obtained for the latent variable PE (0.651), being higher than the minimum allowed limit of 0.5 (Chin, 2009; Höck and Ringle, 2010). The values obtained for AVEs are higher than the correlation coefficient between the competent variables and all the distich variables and it can be added that the reflective model meets the criteria of discriminant validity (Table 6).
The reliability of the "Social Policies" construct is very good, indicated by a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.852, suggesting a high internal consistency. The standardized item loads are all above 0.85, indicating that each item contributes significantly to the overall construct. The VIFs are all below 3, suggesting that there is no problematic multicollinearity between items. The CR of 0.852 and the AVE of 0.772 demonstrate that this construct has high composite reliability and an adequate extracted mean variance, confirming convergent validity.

The "Economic Policy" construct shows adequate internal consistency, with an alpha Cronbach coefficient of 0.726. Standardized loads range from 0.699 to 0.880, suggesting that although PE1 has a lower load, all items contribute significantly to the construct. VIFs are below 3, indicating a lack of problematic multicollinearity. The CR of 0.734 and the AVE of 0.651 confirm that this construct has reasonable composite reliability and convergent validity.

The reliability of the "Environmental Policies" construct is solid, with an alpha Cronbach coefficient of 0.766. Standardized loads indicate a strong contribution of each item to the construct, especially PM1 and PM2, with values above 0.87. VIFs are acceptable, below 3, indicating a lack of problematic multicolliarity. The CR of 0.762 and the AVE of 0.685 suggest that this construct has adequate composite reliability and solid convergent validity.

The "Quality of Life" construct exhibits excellent reliability, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.845. The standardized loads of the items are very high, indicating significant contributions of each item to the construct. VIFs are acceptable, below 3, indicating a lack of problematic multicolliarity. The CR of 0.854 and the AVE of 0.764 suggest that this construct has high composite reliability and solid convergent validity.

The reliability of the "Social Equity" construct is very high, indicated by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.905. The standardized loads of items are very high, all above 0.89, suggesting significant contributions to the construct. Although the VIFs for ES2 and ES3 are slightly higher, they are still acceptable. The CR of 0.905 and the AVE of 0.840 indicate excellent composite reliability and very good convergent validity.

The reliability of the "Sustainable Development" construct is adequate, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.746. Standardized loads indicate a significant contribution of each item, especially DD2 and DD3. The VIFs are all below 3, indicating a lack of problematic multicollinearity. The CR of 0.747 and the AVE of 0.667 suggest that this construct has a reasonable composite reliability and convergent validity.

The reliability and convergent validity of the scales used in this study are generally high, suggesting that the measurements are consistent and valid. These results provide a solid basis for interpreting correlations and structural models in PLS-SEM analysis, which we will present in the next section.

The data were analyzed in order to establish the reliability and validity of the measures and to validate the relationships among the latent constructs (Figure no. 2).

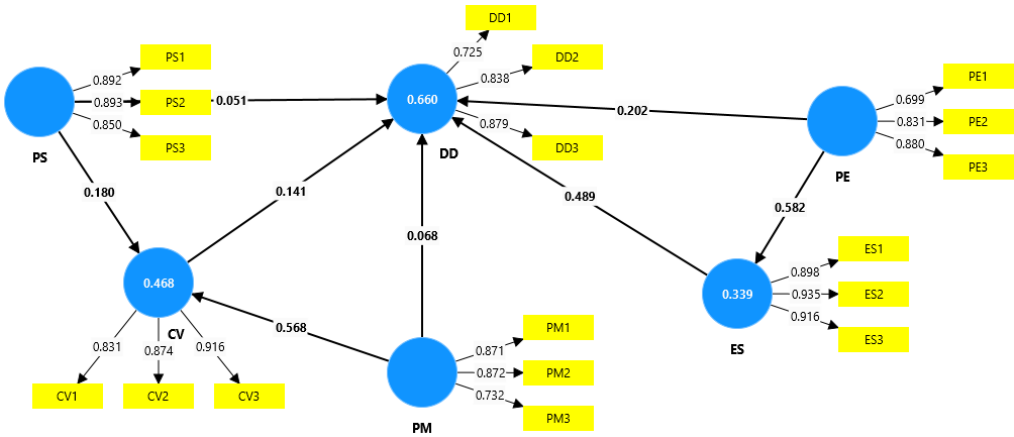

Figure no. 2: Structural model of results.
Source: Authors' contributions using PLS-SEM software

The diagonal elements (in bold) represent the square root of the AVE for each construct. To ensure discriminant validity, these values should be greater than the correlations between constructs (off-diagonal elements). In this table, the square roots of the AVE for all constructs are:

Table no. 6. Discriminant validity analysis – Fornell-Larker criterion

	CV	DD	IS	ON	PM	PS
CV	**0.874**					
DD	0.620	**0.817**				
IS	0.573	0.751	**0.917**			
ON	0.634	0.666	0.582	**0.807**		
PM	0.667	0.618	0.550	0.784	**0.828**	
PS	0.495	0.551	0.509	0.708	0.556	**0.879**

Note: [a] Diagonal elements (in bold) are the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE); [b] Diagonal elements are the correlations among constructs, **p < 0.01; [c]Diagonal elements are the square of correlations.

Source: Authors' own work

The square root of AVE for Quality of Life (CV) is 0.874, which is greater than all correlations between CV and the other constructs (e.g., CV-DD correlation is 0.620, CV-ES is 0.573, etc.). The square root of the AVE for Sustainable Development (DD) is 0.817, which is greater than the correlations between DD and the other constructs (e.g., DD-ES correlation is 0.751, DD-PE is 0.666, etc.). This result suggests that the DD construct is distinct and well-defined. The square root of the PE for Social Equity (ES) is 0.917, which is significantly higher than the correlations between ES and the other constructs (e.g., the ES-DD correlation is 0.751, ES-PE is 0.582, etc.). This shows that ES has excellent discriminant validity. The square root of the EPA for Economic Policy

(EP) is 0.807, which is greater than all correlations between EP and the other constructs (e.g., EP-PM correlation is 0.784, PE-SP is 0.708, etc.). This result indicates an appropriate discriminatory validity for the EP. The square root of the Environmental Policy (PM) AVE is 0.828, which is greater than the correlations between PM and the other constructs (e.g., PM-CV correlation is 0.667, PM-PE is 0.784, etc.). This suggests that PM has a solid discriminatory validity. The square root of the AVE for Social Policies (PS) is 0.879, which is greater than all correlations between PS and the other constructs (e.g., PS-PE correlation is 0.708, PS-PM is 0.556, etc.). This result indicates a good discriminating validity for PS.

Table 7 shows the standardized Path coefficients (β) that indicate the strength of the links between the structural model variables. Their value varies between -1 and 1 (Höck and Ringle, 2006). The correlation of latent variables is significant if the "t-value" levels are greater than 1.96 and the "p-value" less than 0.05 (Höck & Ringle, 2006; Chin, 2010). Interpreting these results is essential to understand the impact of social, economic and environmental policies on sustainable development.

Table no. 7. The path coefficients of the structural equation model

Paths	Path coeff (P) or (β)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|P/STDEV|)	P values (* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$)	Hypothesis
PS -> DD (H1)	0.077	0.078	0.066	1.172	0.241^{***}	H1 - rejected
PE -> DD (H2)	0.487	0.488	0.078	6.262	0.000^{***}	H2 – accepted
PM -> DD (H3)	0.148	0.148	0.07	2.102	0.036^{***}	H3 – accepted

Source: Authors' own work

The relationship between social policies and sustainable development has been tested to verify the hypothesis that social measures contribute significantly to sustainable development. The path coefficient (P) of 0.077 and the t-value of 1.172 indicate a positive but not statistically significant relationship, given the p-value of 0.241 ($p > 0.1$). This suggests that, in the context of the sample studied, social policies do not have a significant impact on sustainable development, leading to *rejection of hypothesis H1*.

The relationship between economic policies and sustainable development was strongly sustained, with a path coefficient (P) of 0.487 and a t-value of 6.262, indicating a significantly positive relationship. The p-value of 0.000 ($p<0.001$) confirms that this relationship is extremely statistically significant. These results *validate the H2 hypothesis*, demonstrating that effective economic policies have a positive and significant impact on sustainable development. This underlines the importance of fiscal stimulus, monetary and trade policies in promoting economic sustainability.

The relationship between environmental policies and sustainable development was also confirmed, with a path coefficient (P) of 0.148 and a t-value of 2.102, indicating a positive and significant relationship. The p-value of 0.036 ($p< 0.05$) suggests that this

relationship is statistically significant. These results *support hypothesis H3*, demonstrating that environmental policies, such as environmental regulations and natural resource conservation initiatives, contribute positively and significantly to sustainable development.

Mediation analysis is essential to understand the mechanisms by which independent variables influence dependent variables, by means of mediation variables Table 8. This test helps to identify indirect relationships that could better explain how social and economic policies influence sustainable development.

Table no. 8. Test of mediation

Paths	Path coeff (P) or (β)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|P/STDEV|)	P values (* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$)	Hypothesis
PS -> CV -> DD (H4)	0.025	0.026	0.017	1.502	0.133	H4 - rejected
PE -> ES -> DD (H5)	0.285	0.285	0.039	7.288	0.000	H5 – accepted

Source: Authors' own work

Hypothesis H4 explores the mediating role of quality of life (CV) in the relationship between social policies (PS) and sustainable development (SD). The path coefficient (P) of 0.025 and the t-value of 1.502 indicate a positive but statistically insignificant relationship given the p-value of 0.133 ($p > 0.1$). These results suggest that, in the context of the sample studied, quality of life does not significantly mediate the relationship between social policies and sustainable development. Thus *hypothesis H4 is rejected*, indicating that improving the quality of life through social policies does not have a significant indirect impact on sustainable development.

Hypothesis H5 examines the mediating role of social equity (ES) in the relationship between economic policies (EP) and sustainable development (SD). The path coefficient (P) of 0.285 and the t-value of 7.288 indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship, given the p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$). These results *validates the H5 hypothesis*, suggesting that social equity significantly mediates the relationship between economic policies and sustainable development. This means that economic policies that promote social equity contribute indirectly and significantly to sustainable development, underlining the importance of inclusion and equitable distribution of resources.

Conclusions

This study had as its main objective the analysis of synergies and divergences in the management of social, economic and environmental challenges, with the aim of highlighting how different public policies contribute to sustainable development. Based on the results obtained, we can draw several significant conclusions.

First, our analysis highlighted that economic policies have a significant and positive impact on sustainable development. This result underlines the importance of a robust economic strategy that includes fiscal stimulus and effective monetary policies. The

study also demonstrated that economic policies that promote social equity play a crucial role in mediating the relationship between these policies and sustainable development. These findings suggest that well-managed and fair economic measures can contribute directly and indirectly to sustainability, thus hypothesis H2 is fulfilled.
Secondly, the results showed that environmental policies also have a positive and significant impact on sustainable development, thus, hypothesis H3 is fulfilled. This confirms the need for strict environmental regulations and natural resource conservation initiatives to protect ecosystems and promote long-term sustainability.
In contrast, social policies did not demonstrate a significant impact on sustainable development in the context of the study sample, demonstrating that the H1 hypothesis is not met. Although quality of life is an important aspect of citizens' well-being, our results suggest that improving quality of life through social policies does not have a significant indirect effect on sustainable development, so hypothesis H4 is rejected. This may indicate the need for a reassessment of how social policies are implemented and integrated with other types of policies in order to maximise sustainability impacts.
Social equity significantly mediates the relationship between economic policies and sustainable development, resulting in economic policies contributing indirectly and significantly to sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of inclusion and equitable distribution of resources, demonstrating that the H5 hypothesis is accepted.

Implications
The implications of these results are multiple and have relevance for both policymakers and researchers in the field of sustainable development.
For policymakers, the study suggests that economic and environmental policies should be prioritised and well integrated to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It is essential that economic policies include social equity measures to ensure a fair distribution of resources and reduce inequalities. In addition, effective environmental regulations must be implemented and supported to protect natural resources and reduce the negative impact of economic activities on the environment.
For the researchers, the results of this study indicate the need for further investigations into the role of social policies in the context of sustainable development. Other intermediate factors or variables may influence the relationship between social policies and sustainable development, and their identification could contribute to the formulation of more effective and integrated social policies.

Limitations
This study also has some limitations that need to be considered. First, the data collected is based on respondents' perceptions, which can introduce a degree of subjectivity. Although an attempt has been made to ensure a representative distribution of the sample, perceptions may vary depending on respondents' personal experiences and specific context. Second, the study is based on data collected in a given geographical and temporal context, which may limit the generalization of the results to other contexts. Different regions may have distinct socio-economic and environmental characteristics that can influence how policies are perceived and their impact on sustainable development. Third, analysing only the direct and indirect relationships

between variables can omit complex and multidimensional interactions that may exist between social, economic and environmental policies. Future research could benefit from the use of more complex models that take these interactions into account.

Future research directions

Based on the limitations identified and the results obtained, we suggest some directions for future research:

1. Exploring other intermediate variables: investigating other factors that could mediate the relationship between social policies and sustainable development could provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms by which these policies can influence sustainability.
2. Extending geographical and temporal context: Comparative studies across different regions and time periods can provide new insights and validate the generalisation of results.
3. Use of complex models: the integration of more advanced econometric models that take into account the complex and multidimensional interactions between social, economic and environmental policies can provide a more detailed picture of these relationships.

This study contributes to understanding synergies and divergences in the management of social, economic and environmental challenges and highlights the importance of an integrated approach in public policy formulation to promote sustainable development.

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