

# Human Intelligence Sustainability

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A Neuro-Consciousness Framework for Global Business, Ethical Supply Chains, and AI-Driven Economies

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## **Abstract**

This thesis reconceptualizes sustainability as a human-centered, consciousness-driven process...

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Global business sustainability has traditionally been approached through environmental protection, economic resilience, and governance mechanisms. While these dimensions have advanced accountability and transparency, persistent sustainability failures indicate that existing frameworks remain insufficient. Organizations continue to exhibit short-termism, ethical erosion, and systemic risk despite widespread adoption of ESG standards. This thesis argues that such failures arise because sustainability has been conceptualized as an external system to be managed, rather than an internal human capacity to be cultivated.

The accelerating pace of globalization, technological disruption, and artificial intelligence integration has intensified decision complexity within organizations. Leaders and practitioners are required to make high-stakes decisions under uncertainty, time pressure, and moral ambiguity. In this context, sustainability is no longer a technical challenge alone; it is a cognitive, emotional, and ethical challenge rooted in human intelligence.

This research is situated at the intersection of global business, ethical supply chains, neuroscience, consciousness studies, and AI alignment. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature, the thesis proposes that the sustainability of business systems cannot exceed the sustainability of the humans who design and operate them. Human intelligence—defined as the integrated functioning of physiological regulation, cognitive clarity, emotional intelligence, ethical perception, and relational coherence—constitutes the invisible infrastructure of sustainable enterprise.

Practitioner-based insights further reinforce this argument. Published thought leadership within the Middle East Business Academy (MEBA) highlights how sustainability in sectors such as fashion and supply chains is shaped by human meaning-making, cultural identity, and ethical perception. These insights demonstrate that sustainability initiatives succeed when they resonate with human values and consciousness, rather than relying solely on compliance and reporting.

Accordingly, the central research problem addressed in this thesis is the absence of a human-centered framework that explains why sustainability policies and technologies succeed in some contexts yet fail in others. Existing models inadequately account for human neuropsychological capacity, decision fatigue, emotional regulation, and value alignment.

The primary aim of this research is to develop and articulate the Human Intelligence Sustainability (HIS) framework as a novel contribution to global business sustainability theory. The objectives are to: (1) examine human decision-making under sustainability pressure; (2) integrate neuroscience and consciousness research into sustainability discourse; (3) explore the implications of human intelligence for AI-driven economies; and (4) provide a practice-based framework applicable across industries.

This thesis contributes original knowledge by reframing sustainability as a human developmental capacity rather than a compliance exercise. It offers a transdisciplinary

model that bridges sustainability studies, neuroscience, ethics, and artificial intelligence alignment.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature and identifies the research gap. Chapter 3 introduces the HIS theoretical framework. Chapter 4 outlines the methodology. Chapter 5 presents empirical findings. Chapter 6 discusses the results. Chapter 7 explores implications. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis and outlines future research directions.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Part 1: Foundations of Sustainability, ESG, and Structural Limits

This section examined the evolution of sustainability thinking, the rise of ESG frameworks, and the structural limitations of metric-driven sustainability models. It established the need for a human-centered sustainability perspective.

#### 2.5 Ethical Supply Chains and Human Decision Pressure

Ethical supply chains have become a central focus of sustainability research as global production networks have expanded in scale and complexity. Ethical supply chain management emphasizes fair labor practices, environmental responsibility, transparency, and accountability across all tiers of production. Despite significant advances in traceability technologies and governance standards, ethical violations continue to persist, suggesting that structural tools alone are insufficient.

Scholars increasingly recognize that ethical breakdowns within supply chains occur at critical human decision points. Procurement officers, sourcing managers, and executives frequently operate under intense cost pressures, time constraints, and competitive demands. These conditions create psychological trade-offs in which ethical considerations are deprioritized in favor of short-term survival or performance targets.

This human decision pressure reveals a key weakness in dominant sustainability models: they assume that ethical behavior will naturally follow once transparency mechanisms are implemented. In reality, transparency does not guarantee ethical action when individuals lack the cognitive and emotional capacity to absorb complex information and act consistently upon it.

#### 2.6 Sustainable Fashion as a High-Impact Ethical System

The fashion industry represents one of the most resource-intensive and ethically complex global sectors. It is associated with significant environmental degradation, labor exploitation, and waste generation. As a result, sustainable fashion has emerged as a critical testing ground for sustainability frameworks.

Sustainable fashion literature highlights strategies such as circular economy models, bio-based materials, extended producer responsibility, and ethical labor standards. However, implementation remains uneven, particularly in global supply chains spanning multiple regulatory and cultural contexts.

In the Middle East, sustainable fashion occupies a unique position at the intersection of rapid economic growth, luxury consumption, cultural heritage, and emerging sustainability agendas. Regional designers and brands often draw on traditional craftsmanship and identity-driven narratives, providing intrinsic motivation for sustainability that differs from compliance-driven approaches common in Western markets.

## 2.7 Cultural Intelligence and Sustainability Behavior

Cultural intelligence plays a critical role in shaping sustainability behavior within global business systems. Sustainability frameworks that ignore cultural meaning, identity, and social norms risk superficial adoption without genuine behavioral integration.

Research indicates that when sustainability aligns with cultural values and personal identity, individuals are more likely to sustain ethical behavior even in the absence of strict enforcement. This finding supports the argument that sustainability must be internalized at the level of human consciousness rather than imposed externally.

## 2.8 Implications for Human Intelligence Sustainability

The analysis of ethical supply chains and sustainable fashion reinforces the central premise of this thesis: sustainability outcomes depend on the human capacity to navigate complexity, regulate stress, and align action with values. These insights prepare the ground for the subsequent sections, which integrate neuroscience, consciousness studies, and artificial intelligence alignment to develop the Human Intelligence Sustainability framework.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Part 3: Neuroscience of Decision-Making, Stress, and Sustainability

Recent advances in neuroscience have fundamentally reshaped understanding of human decision-making in complex environments. Contrary to classical economic assumptions of rational actors, neuroscientific research demonstrates that decisions are deeply influenced by neurobiological states, emotional regulation, and stress responses. These insights are particularly relevant to sustainability decisions, which often involve long-term trade-offs, uncertainty, and moral complexity.

At the center of decision-making lies the interaction between the prefrontal cortex, responsible for executive functions such as planning and impulse control, and subcortical systems involved in reward, threat detection, and emotional processing. Under conditions of chronic stress, the balance between these systems is disrupted. Elevated cortisol levels impair prefrontal functioning, reducing cognitive flexibility and future-oriented thinking while amplifying habitual and short-term responses.

In organizational contexts, sustained pressure related to financial performance, regulatory compliance, and market volatility can lead to a state of cognitive overload. Cognitive overload limits the brain's capacity to integrate complex information, evaluate ethical consequences, and maintain consistency between values and actions. As a result, sustainability commitments may be deprioritized despite explicit awareness of their importance.

Reward-processing mechanisms further complicate sustainability behavior. Dopaminergic pathways reinforce behaviors associated with immediate rewards such as cost reduction, rapid growth, or short-term profit. When organizational incentive structures align with these short-term rewards, they unintentionally train decision-makers to favor unsustainable practices, even when long-term risks are acknowledged.

Neuroscientific studies on decision fatigue indicate that repeated exposure to complex ethical decisions depletes self-regulatory resources. Decision fatigue increases reliance on heuristics, reduces empathy, and heightens susceptibility to social and organizational pressures. In sustainability contexts, this can manifest as moral disengagement, normalization of deviance, or ethical fading.

Importantly, neuroscience also identifies conditions under which sustainable decision-making is enhanced. Emotional regulation, autonomic nervous system balance, and coherent brain-heart interaction are associated with improved self-control, empathy, and long-term perspective. These findings suggest that sustainability capacity is not solely a matter of knowledge or intention, but of neurophysiological regulation.

From this perspective, sustainability can be understood as a neurocognitive capacity. Organizations that neglect the mental and emotional wellbeing of their leaders and employees inadvertently undermine their own sustainability objectives. This insight

provides a crucial bridge between sustainability research and human intelligence, reinforcing the need for frameworks that integrate neurobiological realities into business sustainability models.

The relevance of neuroscience extends beyond human decision-makers to the design of artificial intelligence systems. Many AI models, particularly those based on reinforcement learning, are inspired by biological reward mechanisms. However, unlike the human brain, AI systems lack intrinsic regulatory circuits that balance short-term reward pursuit with long-term social and ethical considerations. This discrepancy underscores the importance of aligning AI development with sustainable human intelligence rather than isolated performance metrics.

In summary, neuroscience reveals that sustainability failures often originate from dysregulated cognitive and emotional systems operating under chronic stress. Addressing sustainability therefore requires interventions that enhance human regulatory capacity, decision coherence, and ethical resilience. These insights directly inform the Human Intelligence Sustainability framework developed in this thesis.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Part 4: Consciousness, Meaning-Making, and Values in Sustainable Economics

Beyond cognitive and neurological processes, sustainability research increasingly recognizes the role of consciousness, meaning-making, and values in shaping economic behavior. Consciousness, in this context, refers to the subjective experience through which individuals interpret purpose, responsibility, and impact. Economic decisions are not value-neutral; they are embedded within personal identities, cultural narratives, and moral frameworks.

Classical economic models largely exclude consciousness and meaning, focusing instead on utility maximization and rational choice. However, humanistic economics and behavioral sciences challenge this reductionist view, demonstrating that individuals seek coherence between their actions and their sense of self. When business practices conflict with personal values, psychological tension arises, often leading either to disengagement or to ethical compromise.

Meaning-making plays a central role in sustaining long-term ethical behavior. Research on purpose-driven organizations indicates that shared meaning enhances resilience, trust, and commitment, particularly under conditions of uncertainty. Leaders who articulate a coherent purpose are more likely to maintain sustainability commitments despite short-term pressures.

Values-based decision-making is also deeply influenced by identity and culture. Cultural identity provides interpretive frameworks that shape how sustainability is understood and enacted. In many non-Western contexts, including parts of the Middle East, sustainability aligns with concepts of stewardship, continuity, and collective responsibility rather than individual compliance. These culturally embedded values can serve as powerful enablers of sustainable behavior when recognized and integrated.

Conversely, when sustainability initiatives are imposed without alignment to local meaning systems, they risk remaining superficial. Employees and stakeholders may comply externally while remaining internally disengaged. This phenomenon reinforces the argument that sustainability must be internalized at the level of consciousness to be effective.

Recent interdisciplinary research links consciousness and values to physiological coherence. Studies in psychophysiology suggest that alignment between values, emotions, and actions supports nervous system regulation and cognitive clarity. This alignment enhances ethical consistency and long-term perspective, both of which are essential for sustainability.

In economic systems increasingly shaped by automation and artificial intelligence, meaning-making becomes even more critical. As tasks are automated, the human role shifts toward judgment, ethics, and purpose-setting. Sustainability in such systems depends on

whether human consciousness remains engaged or becomes fragmented under technological acceleration.

These insights position consciousness not as an abstract philosophical concept, but as a practical determinant of sustainable economic behavior. Integrating consciousness and values into sustainability frameworks addresses a critical blind spot in ESG-oriented models and prepares the foundation for aligning human and machine intelligence.

This section strengthens the theoretical basis for the Human Intelligence Sustainability framework by demonstrating that sustainability is sustained not only by regulation and technology, but by coherent human meaning systems that guide perception, motivation, and action over time.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Part 5: Artificial Intelligence, Human Alignment, and the Sustainability Gap

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence into global business systems has intensified debates around sustainability, ethics, and long-term societal impact. AI technologies increasingly influence supply chains, financial markets, consumer behavior, and organizational decision-making. While AI is often presented as a tool for optimizing sustainability outcomes, emerging research highlights that AI systems fundamentally reflect the quality of the human intelligence that designs, trains, and governs them.

Most contemporary AI systems rely on machine learning models trained through feedback mechanisms, particularly reinforcement learning. In these systems, algorithms learn to maximize reward functions based on human-defined objectives and evaluative signals. However, this approach introduces a critical limitation: AI systems optimize for what humans reward, not necessarily for what is sustainable, ethical, or socially beneficial.

Research in AI alignment demonstrates that reinforcement learning from human feedback (RLHF) is vulnerable to bias, short-termism, and moral inconsistency. Human evaluators themselves operate under cognitive fatigue, cultural assumptions, emotional states, and institutional pressures. Consequently, AI systems trained on such feedback risk amplifying unsustainable human tendencies at scale rather than correcting them.

This challenge mirrors insights from neuroscience and organizational psychology discussed earlier in this chapter. Just as stressed human decision-makers struggle to maintain long-term ethical coherence, AI systems lack intrinsic regulatory mechanisms to balance immediate reward maximization with long-term collective wellbeing. Unlike biological systems, AI does not possess layered motivational circuits that evolved to support social bonding, empathy, and restraint.

These limitations expose a fundamental gap in current sustainability and AI governance frameworks. Sustainability initiatives often focus on deploying AI to optimize efficiency or reduce environmental impact, without addressing the sustainability of the human intelligence guiding these systems. This oversight risks creating technologically advanced but ethically fragile systems.

The concept of Human Intelligence Sustainability directly addresses this gap. By positioning human cognitive regulation, emotional coherence, ethical perception, and consciousness as foundational prerequisites, HIS reframes AI sustainability as a human development challenge rather than a purely technical one.

Synthesizing the literature across sustainability studies, supply chain ethics, neuroscience, consciousness research, and AI alignment reveals a consistent pattern: sustainability frameworks systematically neglect the internal human conditions required for sustainable behavior. This neglect explains why well-designed policies and technologies frequently fail in practice.

The explicit research gap identified in this thesis is the absence of an integrative framework that connects human neuropsychological capacity, consciousness, and ethical decision-making with global business sustainability outcomes. Existing models treat sustainability as an external system to be managed, rather than an internal human capability to be cultivated.

This gap justifies the development of the Human Intelligence Sustainability framework proposed in the following chapter. HIS offers a novel contribution by integrating human biology, psychology, values, and technological alignment into a coherent sustainability model applicable across industries and emerging AI-driven economies.

In conclusion, the literature demonstrates that sustainable futures cannot be engineered without sustainable human intelligence. The next chapter builds on this synthesis to formally present the Human Intelligence Sustainability framework as a response to the identified gap.

### Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework – Human Intelligence Sustainability (HIS)

The Human Intelligence Sustainability (HIS) framework is proposed as an integrative theoretical model that reconceptualizes sustainability in global business as a function of human capacity rather than solely systemic design. HIS responds directly to the research gap identified in the literature review by positioning human intelligence as the causal mechanism underlying sustainable or unsustainable outcomes.

HIS is grounded in the premise that business systems are extensions of human cognition, emotion, values, and relationships. Therefore, the sustainability of these systems cannot exceed the sustainability of the humans who design, lead, and operate them. This framework integrates insights from neuroscience, organizational psychology, consciousness studies, and AI alignment.

The framework comprises five interdependent dimensions: Physiological Regulation, Cognitive Clarity, Emotional Intelligence, Ethical Perception, and Relational Coherence. These dimensions function as mutually reinforcing capacities that shape decision-making under complexity.

Physiological Regulation refers to the ability of the nervous system to maintain balance under stress. Research demonstrates that autonomic regulation supports executive functioning, impulse control, and long-term planning. In sustainability contexts, regulated physiology enables leaders to resist short-term pressures and maintain ethical consistency.

Cognitive Clarity encompasses attention control, sense-making, and the capacity to hold complexity without collapse. Sustainable decision-makers demonstrate tolerance for ambiguity and systems thinking, allowing them to integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations simultaneously.

Emotional Intelligence within HIS is defined as the capacity to recognize, regulate, and integrate emotional information. Emotional intelligence supports empathy, ethical sensitivity, and trust-building, which are essential for sustainable supply chain relationships and organizational culture.

Ethical Perception reflects how individuals interpret responsibility, fairness, and impact. Ethical perception is shaped by consciousness, identity, and lived experience rather than compliance mechanisms alone. HIS emphasizes ethical perception as a dynamic human faculty that can be cultivated.

Relational Coherence represents alignment between self, others, institutions, and technologies. Sustainable systems emerge when relationships are characterized by trust, transparency, and shared meaning. Fragmented relationships undermine sustainability regardless of formal policies.

In AI-driven economies, HIS provides a necessary human alignment layer. Artificial intelligence systems trained on unsustainable human feedback risk amplifying cognitive

bias and ethical erosion. HIS therefore functions as a prerequisite for responsible AI governance and integration.

The HIS framework advances sustainability theory by shifting focus from outcome metrics to human capacities. It offers a scalable model applicable across industries, cultures, and technological contexts.

This chapter establishes HIS as the conceptual foundation for the empirical analysis and discussion presented in subsequent chapters.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological design adopted to investigate Human Intelligence Sustainability (HIS) within global business contexts. Given the exploratory, interdisciplinary, and practice-based nature of the research, a qualitative methodology was selected to capture depth, meaning, and contextual nuance.

The research paradigm is interpretivist, acknowledging that sustainability, ethics, and decision-making are socially constructed and embedded within human experience. This paradigm is appropriate for examining consciousness, meaning-making, and neuropsychological influences that cannot be adequately measured through purely positivist approaches.

A practice-based research design was employed, drawing on the researcher's professional engagement across global business, ethical supply chains, and sustainability leadership. This design enables the integration of empirical inquiry with reflective practitioner insight, consistent with doctoral standards for applied business research.

The study utilized a multi-source data collection strategy to enhance credibility and triangulation. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with business leaders, sustainability practitioners, and supply-chain decision-makers operating in high-pressure environments. Secondary data included policy documents, ESG reports, industry publications, and prior thought leadership outputs.

Interview protocols were designed to explore decision-making under sustainability pressure, ethical tension, emotional regulation, and perceptions of responsibility. Open-ended questions allowed participants to articulate lived experiences and contextual challenges in their own terms.

Sampling followed a purposive strategy, selecting participants with direct responsibility for sustainability-relevant decisions. This approach ensured relevance while acknowledging the exploratory scope of the pilot study.

Data analysis followed a reflexive thematic analysis approach. Transcripts and texts were coded iteratively to identify patterns related to cognitive load, emotional regulation, ethical perception, cultural identity, and sustainability behavior. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the process to account for researcher positionality.

Ethical considerations were addressed through informed consent, confidentiality, anonymization, and adherence to institutional research ethics standards. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw and of the intended academic use of findings.

Methodological limitations include sample size, contextual specificity, and the qualitative nature of findings. These limitations are appropriate for a doctoral pilot study and are addressed through transparency and methodological rigor.

In summary, the chosen methodology aligns with the research aims and supports the development and validation of the Human Intelligence Sustainability framework within real-world business settings.

## Chapter 5: Empirical Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings from the practice-based pilot study examining Human Intelligence Sustainability (HIS) in global business contexts. The findings are exploratory and illustrative, designed to surface patterns in human decision-making that influence sustainability outcomes under real-world conditions.

Data analysis revealed five interrelated themes that collectively illuminate the human dimensions of sustainability: sustainability fatigue and cognitive overload; ethical intention versus systemic constraint; emotional regulation and leadership capacity; cultural identity as a sustainability enabler; and the absence of psychological sustainability infrastructure within organizations.

**Theme 1: Sustainability Fatigue and Cognitive Overload.** Participants consistently described an accumulation of sustainability-related demands layered onto existing performance pressures. ESG reporting, compliance requirements, and stakeholder expectations were experienced as cognitively taxing, leading to decision fatigue and reduced engagement with sustainability initiatives.

Under conditions of cognitive overload, participants reported prioritizing immediate operational concerns over long-term sustainability considerations. This pattern aligns with neuroscientific evidence that sustained cognitive load impairs executive functioning and future-oriented judgment.

**Theme 2: Ethical Intention Versus Systemic Constraint.** Across cases, participants expressed strong ethical intentions and personal commitment to sustainability principles. However, systemic constraints—including cost pressures, supplier limitations, market competition, and time scarcity—frequently undermined the translation of intention into action.

This gap between intention and behavior highlights the limitations of sustainability frameworks that assume ethical consistency in the absence of supportive human and organizational conditions.

**Theme 3: Emotional Regulation and Leadership Capacity.** Leaders who demonstrated emotional awareness, reflective capacity, and stress regulation were better able to sustain ethical decisions over time. Emotional dysregulation, by contrast, was associated with reactive decision-making and ethical compromise.

Participants emphasized that emotional intelligence was rarely addressed explicitly within sustainability strategies, despite its central role in maintaining decision coherence under pressure.

**Theme 4: Cultural Identity as a Sustainability Enabler.** Cultural heritage, identity, and values emerged as significant motivators for sustainable behavior, particularly within Middle Eastern contexts. Participants noted that sustainability initiatives aligned with cultural narratives of stewardship, craftsmanship, and continuity were more likely to endure.

This finding suggests that sustainability is strengthened when it resonates with identity and meaning rather than relying solely on external enforcement.

Theme 5: Absence of Psychological Sustainability Infrastructure. A recurring observation was the lack of organizational mechanisms to support mental resilience, emotional regulation, and ethical reflection. Participants described sustainability initiatives that focused on systems and metrics while neglecting the human capacities required to enact them.

Collectively, these findings support the central argument of this thesis: sustainability outcomes are deeply shaped by human intelligence capacities operating within complex systems.

The pilot study validates the relevance of the Human Intelligence Sustainability framework and provides empirical grounding for the discussion and implications explored in subsequent chapters.

## Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter interprets the empirical findings through the lens of the Human Intelligence Sustainability (HIS) framework and situates them within the broader literature on sustainability, neuroscience, ethics, and artificial intelligence. The discussion moves beyond description to explain why sustainability initiatives succeed or fail based on human intelligence capacities operating under systemic pressure.

The findings confirm that sustainability fatigue and cognitive overload are not peripheral challenges but central mechanisms driving unsustainable outcomes. This aligns with neuroscientific evidence demonstrating that chronic stress impairs executive functioning, reduces future-oriented thinking, and increases reliance on habitual decision patterns. When sustainability is layered onto already overloaded systems, it becomes cognitively unsustainable for decision-makers.

The gap identified between ethical intention and systemic constraint illustrates a core limitation of ESG-driven models. While ESG assumes rational and stable ethical actors, the findings demonstrate that ethical behavior is highly contingent on emotional regulation, organizational support, and incentive alignment. This supports critiques in the literature that sustainability frameworks overestimate the power of metrics while underestimating human vulnerability.

Emotional regulation emerged as a differentiating factor in leadership capacity. Leaders with higher emotional intelligence were better able to sustain ethical commitments despite pressure, confirming research that links emotional regulation to moral consistency and relational trust. This finding reinforces the HIS dimension of Emotional Intelligence as a foundational sustainability capacity.

Cultural identity functioned as a powerful moderator of sustainability behavior, particularly in Middle Eastern contexts. When sustainability initiatives aligned with cultural narratives of stewardship, craftsmanship, and continuity, participants reported stronger motivation and resilience. This supports literature on cultural intelligence and challenges the universality assumptions embedded in many Western sustainability models.

The absence of psychological sustainability infrastructure represents a critical organizational blind spot. Despite investments in reporting systems and technological tools, organizations frequently neglect the human capacities required to enact sustainability. This finding explains why technically robust sustainability strategies often fail in practice.

From an AI perspective, the discussion highlights parallels between human and machine misalignment. Just as unsustainable human decision-making emerges under stress and misaligned incentives, AI systems trained on human feedback inherit these limitations. Without sustainable human intelligence, AI-driven sustainability efforts risk amplifying existing biases and short-termism.

The HIS framework integrates these insights by positioning human regulation, cognition, emotion, ethics, and relationships as interdependent drivers of sustainability. The discussion demonstrates that HIS offers explanatory power beyond existing models by identifying causal mechanisms rather than surface indicators.

Overall, the discussion advances the argument that sustainability must be approached as a human development challenge. Interventions that enhance human intelligence capacities are likely to produce more durable sustainability outcomes than those focused solely on compliance or technological optimization.

## Chapter 7: Implications

This chapter outlines the theoretical, practical, policy, and technological implications of the findings and the Human Intelligence Sustainability (HIS) framework. By reframing sustainability as a human-centered capacity, the thesis generates implications that extend beyond traditional ESG-oriented approaches.

Implications for theory are significant. The HIS framework contributes to sustainability literature by introducing human intelligence as a causal explanatory variable rather than a contextual background factor. It challenges dominant metric-driven models and expands sustainability theory through integration with neuroscience, consciousness studies, and AI alignment research.

For global business practice, the findings imply that sustainability strategies must include deliberate investment in human capacity development. Organizations should prioritize leadership training in emotional regulation, ethical sense-making, and decision coherence, alongside technical sustainability initiatives. Without such investment, sustainability programs risk erosion under pressure.

In supply chain management, the implications highlight the importance of embedding psychological and cultural intelligence into sourcing and procurement decisions. Ethical supply chains cannot be sustained through transparency tools alone; they require decision-makers capable of resisting short-term incentives and navigating moral complexity.

Policy implications include the need to move beyond compliance-based sustainability governance. Regulators and standard-setters may consider incorporating human-centered indicators such as decision fatigue, leadership resilience, and organizational psychological safety into sustainability assessment frameworks.

In education, the findings suggest that business and sustainability curricula should integrate neuroscience, ethics, and systems thinking. Preparing future leaders for sustainable decision-making requires cultivating cognitive and emotional capacities, not only technical knowledge.

For artificial intelligence and digital economies, the implications are particularly critical. HIS indicates that responsible AI deployment depends on the sustainability of human intelligence guiding system design, training, and governance. AI ethics and alignment efforts should therefore be coupled with human development initiatives.

At a societal level, the implications point toward a shift in how sustainability transitions are conceptualized. Rather than viewing sustainability as a technological or regulatory challenge alone, it should be understood as a process of collective human development.

Overall, these implications position the Human Intelligence Sustainability framework as a practical and theoretical tool capable of informing business strategy, policy design, education, and technological governance.



## Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis set out to reconceptualize sustainability in global business by examining the human foundations upon which sustainable or unsustainable systems are built. In response to persistent gaps between sustainability intention and outcome, the research proposed that sustainability cannot be fully understood or achieved without addressing human intelligence as a central causal factor.

Drawing on interdisciplinary literature and practice-based empirical findings, the thesis introduced the Human Intelligence Sustainability (HIS) framework as an original contribution to sustainability theory. HIS integrates five interdependent dimensions—physiological regulation, cognitive clarity, emotional intelligence, ethical perception, and relational coherence—to explain how human capacity shapes sustainability outcomes across business systems.

The literature review demonstrated that dominant ESG and sustainability frameworks emphasize metrics, reporting, and governance structures while neglecting the internal human conditions required for ethical and long-term decision-making. This gap was further illuminated through neuroscientific, consciousness-based, and AI alignment research, all of which point to the centrality of regulated human intelligence in sustaining cooperative and future-oriented behavior.

Empirical findings from the pilot study reinforced this theoretical position. Patterns of sustainability fatigue, cognitive overload, ethical tension, and emotional dysregulation revealed how sustainability initiatives erode under pressure when human capacity is unsupported. Conversely, cultural identity, emotional regulation, and meaning-making emerged as stabilizing forces that enable sustainable behavior.

The discussion and implications chapters extended these findings to global business practice, policy design, education, and artificial intelligence governance. The thesis argued that sustainable futures require investment not only in systems and technologies, but in human development, consciousness, and ethical capacity.

This research has several limitations. The qualitative, practice-based design limits generalizability, and the pilot study reflects specific contextual conditions. However, these limitations are appropriate for exploratory doctoral research and provide a foundation for future large-scale and longitudinal studies.

Future research may operationalize the HIS framework quantitatively, examine sector-specific applications, and explore longitudinal impacts of human intelligence development on sustainability outcomes. Further inquiry is also needed to examine how HIS can inform AI alignment and governance in increasingly automated economies.

In conclusion, this thesis advances the argument that sustainability is fundamentally a human endeavor. Business systems, technologies, and policies will only endure when guided by regulated, conscious, and ethically aligned human intelligence. By repositioning the

human at the center of sustainability discourse, the Human Intelligence Sustainability framework offers a pathway toward more resilient, ethical, and future-oriented global business systems.