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CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY IN SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY ORGANIZATIONS

FATORES CRÍTICOS DE SUCESSO PROMOTORES DE SUSTENTABILIDADE EM ORGANIZAÇÕES DE ECONOMIA SOCIAL E SOLIDÁRIA

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Abstract
The study aimed to identify Critical Success Factors (CSFs) that guide the actions of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) organizations, providing support for the formulation of public policies aimed at promoting sustainable development. The research adopts a qualitative approach, with an exploratory objective and a descriptive design. Data collection was carried out through a Systematic Literature Review, seeking to identify which CSFs can contribute to

Resumo
O estudo objetivou identificar Fatores Críticos de Sucesso (FCS) que norteiam as ações das organizações de Economia Social e Solidária (ESS) servindo de suporte para formular políticas públicas voltadas para a promoção do desenvolvimento sustentável. A pesquisa apresenta abordagem qualitativa, objetivo exploratório e delineamento descritivo. A coleta de dados foi realizada a partir de Revisão Sistemática da Literatura buscando identificar

the promotion of organizational sustainability in SSE enterprises. The study demonstrates that the SSE can be recognized as an effective tool for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), operating within a field of economic disputes while promoting socio-environmental inclusion and the reduction of inequalities. SSE can foster a balanced relationship between individuals and nature, avoiding environmental exploitation and degradation and encouraging the responsible use of natural resources. The CSFs identified in the research are essential for guiding SSE organizations toward sustainable practices, providing a clear framework for public policy formulation. However, their implementation depends both on governmental support and on the capacity of SSE organizations themselves to innovate and adapt to technological and environmental changes.

Keywords: Sustainability in Organizations. Social and Solidarity Economy. Critical Success Factors. Sustainable Development Goals.

quais são os FCS que podem contribuir para a promoção da sustentabilidade organizacional em empreendimentos de ESS. O estudo mostra que a ESS pode ser reconhecida como uma ferramenta eficaz para alcançar os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS), operando em um campo de disputas econômicas e promovendo inclusão socioambiental e a redução de desigualdades. A ESS pode promover uma relação equilibrada entre indivíduos e natureza, evitando a exploração e degradação do meio ambiente e promovendo o uso consciente de seus recursos. Os FCS identificados na pesquisa são fundamentais para orientar as organizações de ESS em direção a práticas sustentáveis, fornecendo um quadro claro para a formulação de políticas públicas. Entretanto, a sua implementação depende tanto do apoio governamental quanto da capacidade das próprias organizações de ESS de inovar e se adaptar às mudanças tecnológicas e ambientais.

***Palavras-chave**: Sustentabilidade nas Organizações. Economia Social e Solidária. Fatores Críticos de Sucesso. Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável.*

1 INTRODUCTION

The search for economic models that balance economic and socio-environmental development has become essential in the Brazilian context and in the current scenario marked by the uncertainties of the Anthropocene. In light of environmental degradation and social insecurity generated by the prevailing development model, the concept of sustainable development has emerged as a strategic alternative. This new paradigm aims to promote harmony with natural cycles and productive inclusion without compromising natural resources.

In this context, Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) organizations, such as cooperatives, associations, and other local collective forms, have consolidated themselves as actors with significant potential for promoting sustainability. However, it has been observed that many of these organizations have not yet fully engaged in sustainable practices. A gap has therefore been identified in both the literature and public

management regarding how to effectively align the economic activities of these organizations with sustainable development goals.

The scientific literature has indicated that organizational success depends on the identification of Critical Success Factors (CSFs), which enable the determination of priority areas for the allocation of efforts and resources. Nevertheless, the absence of specific instruments to identify such factors within the scope of SSE has been noted.

In view of this scenario, this study was conducted to address the following question: which CSFs should guide the actions of SSE organizations in order to support the formulation of public policies aimed at promoting sustainable development? The central objective of this research was to identify CSFs that guide the actions of SSE organizations, thereby supporting the formulation of public policies focused on promoting sustainable development.

This investigation was justified by the need to equip managers and policymakers with accurate data to inform decision-making and foster sustainable territorial development. By identifying indicators and structuring CSFs into key dimensions—namely social, cultural, environmental, economic, political, and technological—this study sought to provide a conceptual framework capable of strengthening innovation and cooperation within the SSE sector. Its effective implementation, however, depends on governmental support and on the capacity of SSE organizations themselves to innovate and adapt to technological and environmental changes, which is becoming increasingly necessary.

2 SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY ORGANIZATIONS

In this study, the field of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) is understood to encompass all collective community-based enterprises and organizations, including ventures, cooperatives, and associations of workers from both the formal and informal economy, as demonstrated by Mariosa *et al*. (2022).

Sustainable and solidarity-based development has been conceived as an alternative to the current dominant development pattern, which promotes environmental degradation and social insecurity (KOVALSKI, 2016). This model essentially seeks to foster coexistence in harmony and alignment with natural cycles, deriving from them not

only subsistence, but also the construction of alternative paradigms for income generation and productive inclusion without the traditional, whether intentional or not, harm to the environment (MARIOSA *et al*., 2022).

Aiming to achieve a better balance between economic and socio-environmental development, SSE presents itself as an alternative to the prevailing development model (RICE; BURKE, 2018). In this sense, SSE seeks to establish itself as both a paradigm and a development model grounded in an economic framework that prioritizes cooperativism, participation, inclusion, and self-management for community development, while articulating environmental preservation through sustainable resource management (GAIGER; FERRARINI; VERONESE, 2018).

SSE enterprises constitute important mechanisms for achieving sustainability, as their objective is to promote the organization and consolidation of territorial systems of sustainable economic development, positioning themselves as a significant opportunity for socio-environmental and economic inclusion, especially for local populations (MARIOSA, 2018).

In the Brazilian context, it has become essential to explore alternatives to the dominant economic model in order to achieve a more effective balance between economic and socio-environmental development (FAVARETO, 2019). In this regard, the concept of sustainable and solidarity-based development has emerged as a strategic alternative to the prevailing development model, which has often resulted in environmental degradation and social insecurity (KOVALSKI, 2016). This paradigm has been consolidated as a mode of production based on self-management and collective ownership, aiming to promote harmony with natural cycles and the creation of models for income generation and productive inclusion without causing environmental harm (MARIOSA *et al*., 2022).

Mariosa *et al*. (2022) also demonstrated that SSE organizations, such as cooperatives and associations, have become relatively well established in Brazil. By mobilizing resources based on reciprocity and democratic solidarity (Bucos, 2024), these organizations reveal an inherent potential to contribute significantly to sustainability.

However, it has been observed that these enterprises have not yet been sufficiently engaged in the systematic promotion of sustainable practices. In light of this gap, the need was identified to investigate which elements could guide the actions of these

organizations, thereby supporting the formulation of public policies aimed at sustainable territorial development.

3 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS IN SUSTAINABILITY

There is a growing need for sustainability indicators within organizations. Although they do not ensure perfect measurement, the adoption of such indicators remains the most effective tool available to organizations for implementing or assessing sustainable practices (MARIOSA; DE BENEDICTO; SUGAHARA, 2019). Indicators play a crucial role in forming judgments about the conditions of a system, whether past, present, or future (SILVEIRA *et al*., 2022). One approach considered particularly effective - especially in the implementation of sustainable practices in organizations - is the use of Critical Success Factors (CSFs), as they function as indicators across different organizational levels and provide a more reliable and structured pathway (SCHAEFER *et al*., 2022).

The scientific literature suggests that organizational success largely depends on the identification of CSFs. According to Brodeur, Pellerin and Deschamps (2022), CSFs refer to the limited number of areas that have the capacity to significantly influence an organization's positive performance. When these areas achieve favorable outcomes, they enhance competitiveness and contribute directly to organizational success.

However, no available instruments were identified for determining these CSFs within SSE enterprises, which could otherwise support the formulation of public policies aimed at sustainable territorial development. Silveira *et al*. (2022) confirm this gap, highlighting, for instance, the absence of tools to identify CSFs in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), proposed by the United Nations as part of the 2030 Agenda, which established 17 goals and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030 in pursuit of global sustainability across multiple dimensions.

Understanding CSFs is essential for organizational management (ZAMAN *et al*., 2022). Identifying these factors makes it possible to determine which areas or activities should receive greater attention and resources, thereby facilitating planning and contributing to effective management. By recognizing CSFs, organizations can address a fundamental strategic question: where should efforts be concentrated? These factors also

help to "refine mental models and support the identification of the skills, technologies, and knowledge required to achieve improved performance" (LIMA *et al*., 2012, p. 250).

In most organizations, there are typically between three and six factors that are critical to success. Core activities must therefore be managed in a way that promotes organizational effectiveness (MATHIYAZHAGAN *et al*., 2022). Within the organizational context, CSFs stand out as a powerful framework - that is, a conceptual structure that provides solutions to complex problems (MARTUCCHELLI; GOLDMAN, 2019). Accordingly, in order to ensure analytical clarity, this research sought to address the identified gap by determining CSFs based on the six principal dimensions of sustainability outlined by Veiga (2015), namely: social, cultural, environmental, economic, political, and technological. The analysis is grounded in a Systematic Literature Review of sustainable practices in organizations, with the objective of identifying the factors that determine organizational sustainability within the SSE context.

From an organizational perspective, this advancement contributes by emphasizing the growing importance of sustainability, driven by increasing concern over the consequences of irresponsible management practices and the recognition that sustainability is a critical factor in consumer decision-making (VIEIRA DA SILVA *et al.*, 2022). For managers to make informed decisions, they require accurate data and robust analytical tools, such as CSFs, to align their actions with organizational realities (SILVA; SIENA, 2020).

Caralli *et al*. (2004) emphasize the importance of identifying CSFs within the literature as a means of advancing organizational performance. Among the available methodological approaches, Caralli *et al*. (2004) propose the use of Systematic Literature Review, as it provides a foundational data source from which CSFs can be identified not only for individual organizations but also for entire sectors.

4 METHOD AND RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Given that this study aims to identify Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for organizational sustainability and to demonstrate the connection between CSFs, sustainability management practices, and their articulation with organizational strategy,

its approach was defined as qualitative, with an exploratory objective and a descriptive research design.

According to Gil (2019), qualitative research seeks to provide a systematic explanation of events occurring within a social context, generally involving a variety of variables. This approach is appropriate when the objective is to examine beliefs, values, attitudes, relationships, and social practices, as well as strategies, management models, and changes within organizational, social, political, and economic contexts. Chizzotti (2018, p. 89) adds that the primary purpose of qualitative research is to "intervene in an unsatisfactory situation, changing conditions perceived as transformable," which aligns with the purpose of this study.

On the other hand, exploratory research aims to "provide greater familiarity with the problem, with a view to making it more explicit or to constructing hypotheses" (GIL, 2019, p. 41). According to Triviños (2015), this approach seeks to expand understanding of a problem that is still insufficiently studied or known, thereby increasing knowledge on the subject.

Regarding the research design, Severino (2016, p. 123) states that descriptive research not only "records and analyzes the phenomena under study, but also seeks to identify their causes." Complementarily, Perovano (2016) affirms that the descriptive process aims to identify, record, and analyze the characteristics, factors, or variables associated with the phenomenon or process under investigation, enabling the establishment of relationships among these variables in order to determine their resulting effects within an organization, production system, or product.

Following the guidelines of Caralli *et al*. (2004), a Systematic Literature Review was conducted on sustainability indicators in SSE organizations. A set of key expressions was defined to ensure the relevance of the study. The expressions searched, in both Portuguese and English, were: "sustainable practices," "sustainability practices in organizations," "sustainability in organizations," "Critical Success Factors and sustainability," "sustainability in social and solidarity economy enterprises," "sustainability in social and solidarity economy organizations," "sustainability in cooperatives," and "sustainability in associations."

The Systematic Literature Review encompassed articles published over the past ten years in qualified academic journals and was conducted to extract indicators related

to sustainability in SSE organizations. The key expressions were searched in the following databases: Scielo, Scopus, and Web of Science. To complement the data, the databases of the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) were also consulted.

In accordance with Caralli *et al*. (2004), and based on the Systematic Literature Review, sustainability indicators were selected. All indicators recurrently identified in sustainability practices within SSE organizations were included.

Following the guidelines of Silveira *et al*. (2022), three levels of recurrence were considered in the selection of indicators: (i) High, for practices repeated more than 10 times; (ii) Medium, for practices repeated between 5 and 10 times; and (iii) Low, for practices repeated up to 5 times. Indicators that did not exhibit recurrence in at least 10% of the analyzed articles, dissertations, and theses were excluded. The selected indicators were grouped into the six main dimensions of sustainability identified by Veiga (2015): social, cultural, environmental, economic, political, and technological.

5 RESULTS

This stage encompasses the presentation of the results obtained and their analysis in connection with the sustainability dimensions previously identified, as well as with the Sustainable Development Goals.

5.1 Presentation of results

The research began with a search conducted across the previously indicated platforms, with the aim of identifying the relevant keywords, the number of works available on each platform, and the quantity of materials that specifically address the research topic. The results of this search are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Keywords found on the platforms surveyed

Keywords	Platform	Material	Texts found	Selected texts on the research topic
Sustainable practices	Scielo	Article	148	50
Sustainable practices	Scopus	Article	17	11
	Web of Science	Article	1	1

Sustainability practices in organizations	Scopus	Article	1	1
Sustainability in organizations	Scielo	Article	177	15
Critical Success Factors and sustainability	BDTD	Dissertation/ Thesis	109	8
Sustainability in social and solidarity economy enterprises	BDTD	Dissertation/ Thesis	124	20
Sustainability in social and solidarity economy organizations	BDTD	Dissertation/ Thesis	65	32

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data (2024).

After reviewing the selected texts, an analysis was conducted to identify the most frequently occurring factors, followed by the categorization of these terms according to the sustainability dimensions previously outlined. The factors identified in relation to the social dimension of sustainability are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Social factors identified on the platforms surveyed

Social dimension	**Repetitions**	**Social dimension**	**Repetitions**
Community	10	Diversity	2
Family tradition	6	Employee appreciation	1
Conflict resolution	4	Social management	1
Women's participation	4	Concern	1
Integration	2	Shared vision	1
Awareness	2	Pedagogical process	1
Worker satisfaction	2	Association meetings	1

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data (2024).

As shown in Table 2, the most frequently mentioned term is *Community*, appearing ten times, indicating its central importance in the social context. This is followed by *Family tradition*, with six occurrences, reflecting the value attributed to traditions and cultural continuity. *Conflict resolution* and *women's participation* each appear four times, highlighting the emphasis on the ability to manage and resolve disputes, as well as the importance of inclusion and female engagement across different spheres. *Integration*, *awareness*, *worker satisfaction*, and *diversity* each appear twice, underscoring the relevance of integrative processes and the promotion of awareness in various contexts. The remaining terms appear only once. The factors identified in this study that relate to the cultural dimension of sustainability are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Cultural factors identified on the platforms surveyed

Cultural dimension	Repetitions	Cultural dimension	Repetitions
Trust	6	Identity	1
Solidarity	6	Collective action	1
Cooperation	5	Religiosity	1
Common interests	4	Individual freedom	1
Adaptability	4	Inclusion	1
Living ecologically	2	Quality of life	1
Resilience	1	Independence	1

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data (2024).

In Table 3, the terms *Trust* and *Solidarity* each appear six times. These concepts are fundamental within the cultural context, reflecting the importance of supportive relationships and belief in mutual trust. Next, *Cooperation* is mentioned five times, highlighting the relevance of collaboration and collective work in cultural settings. The terms *Common interests* and *Adaptability* each appear four times, indicating the importance of adapting to shared needs and maintaining flexibility in the face of change. *Living ecologically* appears twice, underscoring the value of sustainability and harmony with the environment. The remaining terms are mentioned only once, highlighting diverse aspects of culture.

The factors identified in this study that relate to the environmental dimension of sustainability are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Environmental factors identified on the platforms surveyed

Environmental dimension	Repetitions	Environmental dimension	Repetitions
Sustainable site selection	7	Organic production	1
Environmental awareness	6	Bioconstruction	1
Environmental sustainability	5	Agrobiodiversity	1
Waste reduction	5	Use of environmental indicators	1
Environmental receptiveness	3	Sustainable water consumption	1
Preservation of fauna and flora	2	Sustainable energy consumption	1
Crop rotation	2	Sustainable distribution	1
Recycling	4	Environmental legislation	1
Presence of green areas	1	Use of sustainable raw materials	1

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data (2024).

In Table 4, it is observed that the most recurrent term is *Sustainable site selection*, with seven occurrences, highlighting the importance of location choice in ensuring the success of sustainable enterprises. Next, *Environmental awareness* is mentioned six times, reflecting the importance of a conscious approach toward the environment. *Environmental sustainability* and *Waste reduction* each appear five times, demonstrating

the significance that SSE organizations attribute to environmental issues. The fourth most frequently mentioned term is *Receptiveness to environmental issues*, appearing three times, emphasizing the importance of acceptance and understanding of environmental concerns.

The terms that appear twice include *Sharing*, *Waste minimization*, *Low consumption*, *Self-sufficiency*, *Preservation of fauna and flora*, *Crop rotation*, *Recycling*, and *Sustainability*. These indicate, respectively, an interest in achieving independence from external inputs, maintaining biodiversity and sustainable management of agricultural resources, and emphasizing practices that promote reuse and system durability. The remaining terms, although appearing only once, are relevant for a more comprehensive understanding of the environmental context.

The factors identified in this study that relate to the economic dimension of sustainability are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Economics factors identified on the platforms surveyed

Economic dimension	**Repetitions**	**Economic dimension**	**Repetitions**
Local labor	6	Resource management	1
Alternative local economic networks	5	Stakeholder engagement	1
Self-sufficiency	5	Product differentiation	1
Cost reduction	4	Direct sales to consumers	1
Full process analysis	4	Agroforestry production	1
Innovation	4	Entrepreneurship	1
Sustainability in processes	4	Operational excellence	1
Sustainability as a competitive advantage	1	Product commercialization	1
Availability of financial resources	1	Strong organizational commitment	1
Product diversification	1	Equitable income distribution	1
Materials management	1		

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data (2024).

In Table 5, the term *Local labor* was the most recurrent, being mentioned six times, indicating that most of the workforce in these organizations is composed of family members, individuals from the local community, or residents of nearby municipalities. Next, *Local and Alternative Economic Networks* and *Self-sufficiency* each appear five times, highlighting a focus on sustainable and collaborative economic models. *Cost reduction*, *Full process analysis*, *Innovation*, and *Sustainability in processes* each appear four times, reflecting a concern with operational efficiency and the need for innovation.

The remaining terms appear once; however, they remain relevant within the economic context.

The factors identified in this study related to the political dimension of sustainability are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Politics factors identified on the platforms surveyed

Politics dimension	Repetitions	Politics dimension	Repetitions
Governmental/NGO support	17	Active community participation	1
Educational opportunities	8	Social and political organization	1
Self-management	6	Equal distribution of gains	1
Democratic organization	5	Assemblies	1
Capacity-building policies	4	Frequent meetings	1
Consensus	2	Ethics	1
Community rules	1	Stakeholder relationships	1
Hierarchies	1	Communalism	1
Flexibility of rules and processes	1	Cooperative ties	1

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data (2024).

In Table 6, the most frequent term, with 17 occurrences, is *Government/Institutional/NGO support*, indicating the existing need for financial assistance for the survival of SSE organizations. Next, *Educational opportunities* is mentioned eight times, emphasizing the priority given to education and training, whether through workforce development, lectures, courses, or basic education for children. *Self-management* is another highly frequent term, appearing six times, highlighting the importance of self-organization practices and participatory management.

Democratic organization also stands out, with five occurrences, reflecting the value attributed to organizational structures that promote participation and equality. *Workforce training* appears four times, demonstrating the need for skill development and capacity building. *Consensus* appears twice, indicating the importance of collective decision-making, reaching agreements, and effectively resolving disputes. Several other terms are mentioned only once, but they remain relevant for the analysis.

The factors identified in this study related to the technological dimension of sustainability are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Technological factors identified on the platforms surveyed

Technological dimension	Repetitions	Technological dimension	Repetitions
Renewable energy	10	Technological infrastructure	1
Clean technologies	8	Bioconstruction	1
Alternative technologies	6	Sustainable production technology	1
Technology sharing	4	Soil preparation technology	1
Biotechnology	3	Agroecological technology	1
Information technology	3	Reuse technology	1
Social technologies	2	Research	1
Technology incubators	2	Management technology	1

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data (2024).

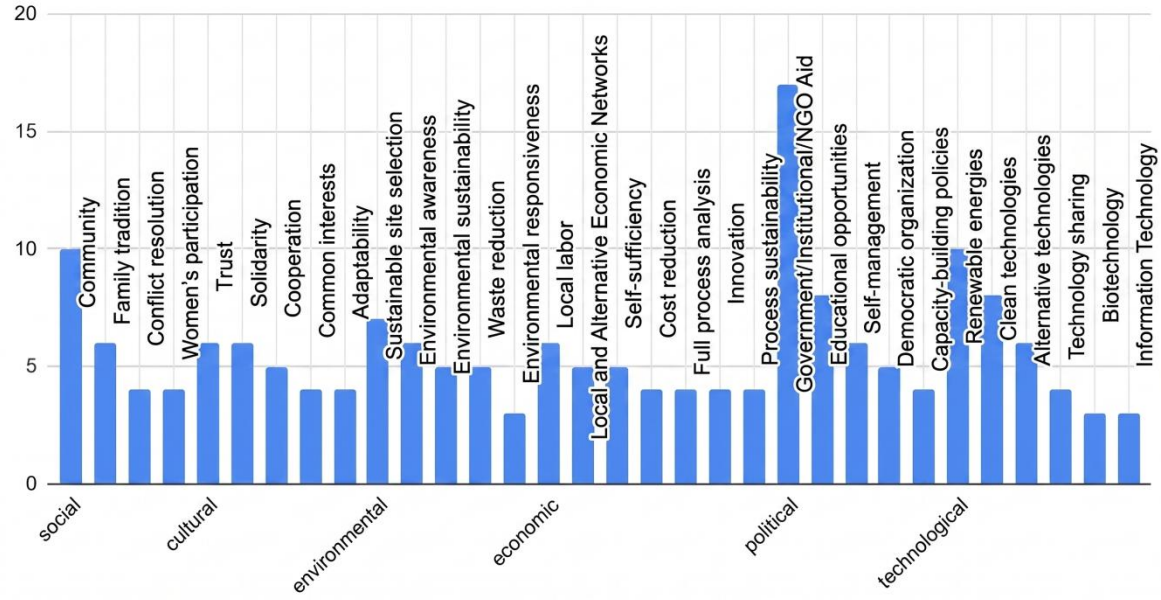
In Table 7, the term *Renewable energy* is the most recurrent, appearing ten times. This term stands out as one of the main focal points in the technological domain due to its importance for sustainability and energy innovation. *Alternative technologies* appear eight times, indicating the relevance of technologies that provide solutions distinct from conventional approaches. The term *Alternative technologies* also appears six times, suggesting that SSE organizations are seeking to adapt to the context of climate change. *Biotechnology* and *Information technology* are each mentioned three times, underscoring their significant role in scientific advancements and data management.

Social technologies and *Technology incubators* each occur twice, reflecting the growing importance of technological solutions that combine efficiency and sustainability with collaborative and social aspects of innovation. The remaining terms appear once, yet each retains its relevance within the context of SSE organizations.

Excluding the terms that appear only twice or once, it is possible to observe that the most recurrent terms across the analyzed texts are: *Government/NGO support*, with seventeen mentions, followed by *Community* and *Renewable energy*, each with ten mentions.

Figure 1 presents, in a summarized manner, the selection of indicators based on the three levels of recurrence, according to the criteria established by Silveira *et al*. (2022): (i) High, for practices repeated more than 10 times; (ii) Medium, for practices repeated between 5 and 10 times; and (iii) Low, for practices repeated up to 5 times. Indicators with low occurrence were excluded from the figure.

Figure 1: Selection of indicators with three repetition indices: high, medium, and low



Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data (2024).

It is important to note that, in several cases, the terms may be assigned to more than one category. For example, the use of renewable energy, such as solar panels, can be classified within the environmental, economic, and technological dimensions, as this type of energy resource is sustainable, has the capacity to reduce costs, and, at the same time, constitutes a technological application. However, for the purposes of this study, it was allocated exclusively to the technological dimension.

Based on Tables 2 through 7, Table 8 presents the so-called Critical Success Factors (CSFs) that can be applied to SSE organizations (cooperatives, associations, and other collective forms), serving to guide their actions and support the formulation of public policies aimed at promoting sustainable development within this sector.

Table 8: Critical Success Factors that can be applied in social economy organizations

Dimensions	**Critical Success Factors**
Social	Community. Family tradition. Conflict resolution. Women's participation.
Cultural	Trust. Solidarity. Cooperation. Common interests. Adaptability.
Environmental	Sustainable site selection. Environmental awareness. Environmental sustainability. Waste reduction.
Economic	Local labor. Alternative local economic networks. Self-sufficiency. Cost reduction. Full process analysis.
Politics	Governmental/Institutional/NGO support. Educational opportunities. Self-management. Democratic organization. Capacity-building policies.
Technological	Renewable energy. Clean technologies. Alternative technologies. Technology sharing.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data (2024).

5.2 Discussion of results

The results reveal a broad range of Critical Success Factors (CSFs) associated with each analyzed dimension, whose levels of relevance and recurrence vary according to the themes of the reviewed articles and dissertations. In this sense, the study contributes to the current landscape by promoting a theoretical convergence on the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE). The identification of the most representative CSFs provides a solid framework for new researchers to more clearly understand the variables that sustain enterprises of this nature.

Accordingly, this study aligns with that of Oviedo-Bayas *et al*. (2025), which highlights that one of the main commitments of SSE is the transformation of current interpersonal relationships with the environment. The solidarity-based economic principle seeks to establish a relationship of respect and consideration for nature, closely linked to sustainability. The authors emphasize that SSE mobilizes social and economic forces to promote changes that improve the living conditions of local populations while maintaining environmental harmony. In this regard, the presence of enterprises adopting agroecological practices exemplifies the connection between SSE and sustainability.

The study's findings indicate that SSE can be recognized as an effective tool for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), operating within a field of economic disputes while promoting socio-environmental inclusion. In this context, the United Nations General Assembly approved, on April 18, 2023, a resolution on the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) aimed at sustainable development. Entitled "Promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development," the resolution acknowledges the role of SSE in contributing to the achievement and adaptation of the SDGs. Thus, SSE is gaining global recognition for its potential to build a sustainable, equitable, and resilient future for all. A strong and diversified social and solidarity economy can play a fundamental role in reducing inequalities and promoting prosperity, opportunities, and sustainability (UNGA, 2023).

For this reason, Mariosa *et al*. (2022) argue that professionals, academics, and activists are increasingly engaged in consolidating experiences and tools that promote a new economic logic, highlighting the relevance of SSE for global sustainable development. It should therefore be studied more comprehensively, rather than focusing

solely on specific communities such as cooperatives, as was the case in this research. To advance sustainable development, continued investment in research on sustainable economic models remains essential.

The study also found that SSE promotes social transformations within communities through the generation of employment and income, the restructuring of societal activities and practices, and social inclusion within contexts of cooperation and solidarity, as previously evidenced by Reis *et al*. (2015). From this perspective, social transformations are developed by communities through the creation of products, methodologies, or techniques - namely, through the appropriation and incorporation of social technologies, as discussed by Silva and Rodrigues (2021).

SSE enterprises also constitute important mechanisms for achieving sustainability, as they aim to foster the organization and consolidation of territorial systems of sustainable economic development, representing a significant opportunity for socio-environmental and economic inclusion, particularly for local populations, as highlighted by Gaiger, Ferrarini and Veronese (2018) and Mariosa (2018). However, in light of the study's findings, sustainable territorial development should be understood as a philosophy of participatory planning and management that takes into account the distinct characteristics and assets of a given territory, corroborating the study by Sperb and Serva (2018).

Nevertheless, the study demonstrates that the dimensions associated with the concept of sustainability extend far beyond a purely environmental issue. Sustainability emerges as a new strategic approach for rethinking organizational, social, and economic relationships, emphasizing the importance of collectivism and cooperation as foundational principles for the implementation of such practices.

An aspect identified in the research that deserves particular attention concerns the practice of environmental education within SSE organizations. This practice involves fostering awareness of transformative actions, such that changes in individuals' daily lives enable the necessary adaptations to achieve sustainability. In this context, Gomes, Horn and Tereza (2025) argue that environmental education has increasingly assumed a transformative role, in which individual co-responsibility becomes a central objective for promoting a new development model guided by sustainability. The authors further contend that environmental education is a necessary condition for addressing the growing

scenario of socio-environmental degradation, although it is not sufficient on its own to generate the required changes.

The development of a sustainability-oriented environmental awareness can contribute to transformations across social, cultural, ecological, economic, political, and technological dimensions. The study by Oviedo-Bayas *et al*. (2025) reinforces this perspective by emphasizing that the dissemination of environmental knowledge enables individuals within society to engage with multiple dimensions of sustainability.

Within the framework of environmental education, SSE plays a significant role in promoting actions that encourage the construction of a new society based on more conscious interpersonal relationships, consumption, and production patterns. Thus, SSE contributes to the development of critical awareness within society, fostering the redefinition of consumption and production habits through sustainable practices. As previously noted, sustainability constitutes one of the core principles of SSE.

In this regard, the study converges with the research conducted by Barreto (2024), which indicates that this new economic model seeks transformations in consumption and production, consistently emphasizing environmental preservation and sustainable development. The relationship between SSE and sustainable development reflects the pursuit of harmony between individuals and nature, grounded in collective and solidarity-based thinking.

Furthermore, in the pursuit of sustainability through SSE and other agents committed to preserving socio-economic and environmental relationships, Moraes, Marques and Azevedo (2025) emphasize the importance of environmental education practices. Such education is essential for combating the overexploitation of natural resources, promoting improved quality of life, and fostering the development of more aware and participatory citizens in environmental preservation on a global scale.

A study conducted in 2018 by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development identified SSE as an effective instrument for achieving the SDGs at the territorial level. Despite operating within an uneven field shaped by economic and financial liberalization, privatization, austerity measures, and the privileging of specific business and economic sectors, the primary role of SSE organizations remains socio-environmental inclusion and the reduction of inequalities (UNRISD, 2018).

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rethinking the ways of producing, living, and managing the economy - prioritizing sustainability in interpersonal, market, and environmental relationships - is becoming increasingly relevant for society. Awareness of the finiteness of natural resources highlights the need to develop alternatives that balance the relationship between society and the environment, a concern that permeates everyday interactions. In this context, the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) emerges as an approach that seeks to integrate environmental stewardship as one of its fundamental principles. Through SSE, the aim is to promote a balanced relationship between individuals and nature, avoiding environmental exploitation and degradation while encouraging the conscious use of resources. Recognizing the importance of sustainability implies preserving these resources for future generations.

In this sense, SSE represents an alternative for production systems and human relations, promoting the adoption of more collective and egalitarian principles and values within organizations, both in their management and in their production and commercialization processes. It is a collaborative economy grounded in solidarity, democracy, fair and solidarity-based trade, conscious consumption, cooperation, and the valorization of human beings and collectivism. Due to these characteristics, SSE organizations can significantly contribute to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including: SDG 1 (poverty eradication); SDG 9 (inclusive industrialization and innovation); SDG 10 (reduction of inequalities); SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production patterns); SDG 13 (climate action); SDG 15 (protection and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems); SDG 16 (promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies); and SDG 17 (partnerships for sustainable development).

The Critical Success Factors (CSFs) identified in this study are essential for guiding SSE organizations toward sustainable practices, providing insights for the formulation of public policies. However, the implementation of these practices depends both on governmental support and on the capacity of SSE organizations themselves to innovate and adapt to technological and environmental changes.

The balanced integration of these dimensions will be crucial for these organizations not only to survive but also to thrive in an increasingly complex economic

and social environment. Therefore, this study provides a solid foundation for future policies and research, while also highlighting the need for greater autonomy and innovation within SSE organizations.

The research fulfills its purpose by identifying and classifying CSFs based on the six dimensions proposed by Veiga (2015), offering a clear perspective on how different aspects of sustainability interact within SSE organizations. However, the findings point to a significant dependence on governmental and external support, particularly within the political dimension, which may represent a limitation to the autonomy of these organizations.

Furthermore, although environmental factors have received considerable attention, it would be valuable to further develop strategies aimed at expanding sustainable practices at a more pragmatic level, such as the implementation of internal policies that encourage circular economy practices and the reduction of environmental impact.

From an economic perspective, the emphasis on local labor and alternative networks is promising. Future studies are therefore encouraged to explore more deeply the barriers to technological innovation in rural or peripheral contexts, where many SSE organizations are located. The integration between economic and technological dimensions, for instance, deserves greater attention in order to better understand how the adoption of new technologies may affect the economic viability of these organizations.

Finally, the analysis highlights the need for greater community involvement in strategic decision-making, reinforcing the importance of inclusive and democratic governance, as already emphasized in the social and political dimensions. This demonstrates that, in order to achieve sustainability, SSE organizations require not only external support but also a robust internal environment in which collaboration and innovation serve as central pillars.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Contribution	Author 1	Author 2	Author 3	Author 4	Author 5	Author 6
1. Definition of the research problem	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Theoretical foundation	✓	✓	✓		✓	
3. Definition of methodological procedures	✓	✓	✓			
4. Data collection	✓	✓		✓		✓
5. Data analysis and interpretation	✓		✓		✓	
6. Data validation		✓	✓		✓	✓
7. Writing the manuscript	✓			✓		
8. Critical revision of the manuscript	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Project management	✓			✓		✓
10. Supervision	✓	✓				

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