

Sustainable Institutional Management and Educational Service in Higher Education Institutions: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This systematic review aimed to synthesize the available scientific evidence on sustainable institutional management and educational service in higher education institutions, with an emphasis on technical and vocational education. Structured searches were conducted across academic search engines and databases (Scopus and its derivatives, SciELO, Redalyc, Dialnet, MDPI, ScienceDirect, Springer Link, and Google Scholar), combining the terms sustainable management, institutional sustainability, educational service, and educational quality in Spanish and English for the 2018-2026 period. After screening titles, abstracts, and full texts, 26 empirical, review, and conceptual studies were included. The findings show that institutional sustainability in higher education has mainly been examined through environmental, governance, and institutional reporting dimensions, with limited research from developing countries, while university sustainability management - the area directly related to sustainable institutional management - remains underexplored. In parallel, available Peruvian and Latin American studies confirm an association between educational management, leadership, and educational quality or service in technical institutions. However, none of the identified studies explicitly examines the relationship between institutional sustainability and educational service in technological higher education institutes, particularly in the Piura region. This specific empirical gap provides a methodological basis for conducting a correlational study of both variables in that context.

Keywords: sustainable institutional management, educational service, sustainability, technological higher education, systematic review.

1. Introduction

Educational services provided by technological higher education institutes face growing demands for quality, curriculum renewal, and institutional sustainability. UNESCO (2025) warns that many higher education systems lack robust mechanisms for assuring the quality and recognition of qualifications. In the region, technical institutes also face low social standing associated with the limited international accreditation of their programs (Fundación Esquel, 2023). Against this background, sustainable institutional management - understood as an organizational approach that combines resource sustainability with improved performance and competitiveness (Muriel, 2018) - has been proposed as a means of strengthening both quality and the social legitimacy of these institutions.

Nevertheless, institutional sustainability and educational quality or service are usually studied as separate research streams. One addresses environmental management, governance, and institutional reporting in universities; the other focuses on quality assessment, administrative leadership, and student satisfaction. The available literature does not clearly show the extent to which these streams have been integrated empirically or whether such integration has been examined in technological higher education institutes in countries such as Peru. Therefore, this systematic review addressed the following question: What scientific evidence exists on the relationship between sustainable institutional management and educational service in higher education institutions, particularly at the technical and technological level? Its general objective was to synthesize the available evidence on both variables and their dimensions and to identify the research gap that supports a subsequent correlational study in a technological higher education institute in Piura, Peru.

2. Method

2.1. Design

A systematic literature review was conducted following the general principles of the PRISMA protocol (identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion; Page et al., 2021). These principles were adapted to a search carried out through

academic search engines and open-access repositories rather than a formal export from subscription databases such as Scopus or Web of Science. Consequently, the figures in Table 1 should be interpreted as an approximation of the selection process, not as an exhaustive count from licensed databases.

2.2. Search strategy

Combinations of the terms sustainable management, institutional sustainability, sustainable institutional management, educational service, educational quality, and technological higher education were used in Spanish and English (sustainable management, institutional sustainability, educational service, educational quality, and higher/technical/vocational education). Searches covered Google Scholar, SciELO, Redalyc, Dialnet, MDPI, ScienceDirect, Springer Link, and ResearchGate, as well as Peruvian institutional repositories (UCV, USIL, UNE, and UNJFSC) for national studies. The search period was limited to 2018-2026.

2.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Peer-reviewed articles, postgraduate theses, and systematic reviews published in Spanish or English were included when they addressed sustainability or institutional management in higher education and/or educational quality or service. Preference was given to studies on technical or technological education and Latin American contexts. Non-academic sources, studies without full-text access, duplicates, and works whose object of study did not involve higher education institutions were excluded. In addition, references whose bibliographic data could not be independently verified were excluded from the final synthesis rather than completed with assumed information.

2.4. Study selection process

Table 1. Study selection process

Phase	n	Main reason for exclusion
Records identified through academic search engines and publisher platforms (Google Scholar, Redalyc, SciELO, Dialnet, MDPI, ScienceDirect, Springer Link, and Scopus-derived sources) using 10 search-term combinations	≈ 120	-
Unique records after removing duplicates and repeated results across searches	≈ 95	Duplicates
Records screened by title and abstract	≈ 95	-
Records excluded because they did not address sustainable institutional management or educational service/quality in higher education	≈ 55	Outside the thematic scope
Full texts assessed for eligibility	40	-
Studies excluded because of restricted access, exact thematic duplication, or a lack of verifiable bibliographic data	14	Access/duplication/verification
Studies included in the final synthesis	26	-

Note. Approximate figures from the search and screening process documented in this review; they do not constitute a formal export from licensed databases.

2.5. Synthesis

Given the heterogeneity of the included study designs (systematic reviews, case studies, correlational studies, and conceptual articles), a narrative and thematic synthesis was conducted. It was organized around two axes - sustainability in the management of higher education institutions and educational quality or service in technical and technological education - followed by an analysis of the intersection between them.

3. Results

Table 2. Synthesis of the included studies

Author(s) and year	Country/region	Study type	Main finding
Lim et al. (2022)	Global	Systematic review (148 articles)	Research predominantly addresses course coordination and environmental awareness; university sustainability management is the least studied category (4.05% of the corpus).
Singh et al. (2023)	Global	Systematic review (88 articles)	Multiple tools (SAQ, STARS, and ecological footprint) are used to assess institutional sustainability, but practical implementation and standardization remain challenging.
Basheer et al. (2024)	International	Bibliometric and content review	Environmental sustainability receives the most academic attention. Social and financial dimensions remain comparatively underexplored, and context-adapted assessment tools are required.
Oliveira and Proença (2025)	International	Systematic review (130 articles)	Institutional leadership, governance, stakeholder participation, and technological innovation are critical drivers of sustainable campus operations.
Abello-Romero et al. (2024)	International	Systematic review (102 articles)	University sustainability reporting remains at an early stage, without consolidated standardization frameworks for academic settings.
Hernández-Pajares et al. (2024)	Peru	Bibliometric review (Scopus)	A significant research gap persists in developing countries; European institutions dominate the literature and primarily use methodologies based on GRI standards.
Vergara Arteaga (2025)	Latin America	Systematic conceptual review	Sustainability-related terms are used interchangeably in Latin American literature, without consistent definitions or an explicit connection to social and economic dimensions.
Figueroa García et al. (2023)	Mexico	Case study/self-assessment model	The SIES-Qro model showed strength in social responsibility (0.75) and a marked weakness in environmental sustainability (0.32), with an overall index of 0.54.
Sánchez Roldan (2023)	Mexico	PRISMA systematic review	The literature provides insufficient evidence on collective faculty action in sustainability; each academic unit requires a specific environmental management system.
Muriel (2018)	Cuba	Conceptual/model article	Proposes a university sustainability management model that integrates efficient

Author(s) and year	Country/region	Study type	Main finding
			resource use with improved institutional performance and competitiveness.
González and López (2022)	Chile	Case study	Propose four dimensions for operationalizing institutional sustainability: community engagement, academic processes, sustainability culture, and campus management.
Balta Sevillano and Sagastegui (2025)	Peru	Systematic review (18 articles, 2020-2025)	Efficient institutional management aligned with academic objectives positively influences student well-being programs in higher education.
Mendoza Suárez and Bullón Romero (2022)	Peru	PRISMA systematic review (17 articles)	Knowledge management is a strategic tool for institutional competitive advantage in teaching, research, and community engagement.
Reinoso-Avecillas and Chicaiza-Avcapiña (2022)	Ecuador	Documentary review (2010-2020)	Quality-assessment frameworks in technological institutes prioritize managerial efficiency and overlook meaningful transformation of student capabilities.
Mundaca Constantino (2022)	Peru	Quantitative study (n = 109)	Service quality at a public technological institute shows weaknesses in infrastructure, program promotion, and academic tutoring despite a positive institutional image.
Saravia (2022)	Peru	Correlational study (n = 100)	A very strong positive relationship exists between educational management and the quality of technological training in a public higher institute ($r = .805$).
García Caucha (2021)	Peru	School-management model analysis	The management model in multigrade institutions in San Ignacio requires stronger planning and academic support in resource-constrained settings.
Oropeza Miranda (2023)	Peru	Correlational master's thesis	A relationship between educational management and educational quality was confirmed at an institution in Santa María, Áncash.
Poquioma Woo et al. (2021)	Latin America	Systematic review	Quality management in higher education is strongly associated with accreditation and licensing as quality-assurance mechanisms.
Alegría Bernal (2024)	Peru	Narrative review	Implementing ISO 21001 is a means - not an end - for continuously improving the quality and effectiveness of educational services.

Author(s) and year	Country/region	Study type	Main finding
Barragán Vázquez et al. (2022)	Mexico	Quantitative study (SERVQUAL model)	Only two SERVQUAL dimensions, tangibility and empathy, were significantly associated with student satisfaction regarding the administrative service assessed.
Surdez-Pérez et al. (2018)	Mexico	Quantitative study	Approximately one quarter of students reported dissatisfaction with educational quality; infrastructure was the most critical dimension.
Caller Luna (2025)	Peru	Correlational study	Administrative service quality and user satisfaction showed a direct, moderately strong correlation at a public technological institute; personnel was the most influential dimension.
Coskun and Nizaeva (2023)	International	Systematic review (267 Scopus documents)	The Balanced Scorecard complements financial measures with user satisfaction, internal process, and innovation measures, translating institutional mission into measurable indicators.
Gell Labañino et al. (2026)	Mexico (Guerrero)	Applied study/pedagogical strategy	Academic leadership coordinated with administrative management is necessary for more inclusive, equitable, and comprehensive management in technological education institutions.
Miguel Flores et al. (2021)	Latin America	Systematic review (15 articles)	Human-capital management, leadership, and communication are key to addressing the challenges of public educational management in Latin America.

Note. Prepared by the authors based on the sources listed in the References section.

3.1. Sustainability in the management of higher education institutions

The broadest international studies show that research on sustainability in higher education focuses on course coordination, environmental awareness, and the achievement of sustainable development goals, whereas university sustainability management - the level directly linked to institutional management - accounts for only 4.05% of the corpus analyzed by Lim et al. (2022). Similarly, Singh et al. (2023) document a variety of assessment instruments (SAQ, STARS, and ecological footprint) without a unified standard. Basheer et al. (2024) confirm that the environmental dimension continues to receive the greatest academic attention, to the detriment of the social and financial dimensions, for which sufficiently developed assessment instruments are still lacking. In their review of 130 studies on sustainable campus operations, Oliveira and Proença (2025) identify institutional leadership and governance as critical drivers of implementation. Abello-Romero et al. (2024) note that university sustainability reporting remains at an early stage and lacks standardization frameworks specific to academic settings. This lack of methodological consolidation is particularly important in developing countries. In a Scopus-based bibliometric review, Hernández-Pajares et al. (2024) find that scientific production on university sustainability is dominated by European institutions, with a significant gap in Latin America. Likewise, Vergara Arteaga (2025) reports that the terms sustainability and sustainability-related variants are used interchangeably and without consistent definitions in Latin American higher education literature, indicating that the field is still developing conceptually in the region. At the Latin American level, Figueroa García et al. (2023) applied a self-assessment model (SIES-Qro) in a Mexican institution and found a moderate overall sustainability index (0.54), with a clear strength in social responsibility and

a critical weakness in environmental sustainability. Sánchez Roldan (2023) concludes that the scientific literature still provides insufficient visibility into collective faculty action on sustainability. These findings suggest that even when sustainable management models exist, implementation remains uneven across dimensions. This is relevant to the four dimensions - community engagement, academic processes, sustainability culture, and campus management - proposed by González and López (2022) to operationalize sustainable institutional management. Their approach is consistent with Muriel's (2018) model, which understands institutional sustainability as the integration of efficient resource use with improved organizational performance and competitiveness. In general institutional management, rather than exclusively environmental management, Balta Sevillano and Sagastegui (2025) find that efficient management aligned with academic objectives has a positive effect on student well-being. This suggests that the benefits of robust institutional management extend beyond environmental performance to well-being and perceived service quality.

3.2. Educational quality and service in technical and technological higher education

Available Peruvian studies provide more direct evidence on educational service in technological institutes. Mundaca Constantino (2022) found that a public technological institute maintained a positive institutional image but showed relevant weaknesses in infrastructure, program promotion, and academic tutoring. Similarly, Surdez-Pérez et al. (2018) report that infrastructure is consistently the most critical dimension of educational quality perceived by university students, with approximately one quarter of students expressing dissatisfaction. In a comparable institute, Saravia (2022) reported a very strong positive relationship between educational management and the quality of technological training ($r = .805$). Oropeza Miranda (2023) confirmed a similar relationship in an educational institution in Áncash, and Caller Luna (2025) found a direct, moderately strong correlation between administrative service quality and user satisfaction in a public technological higher education institute, with the personnel dimension having greater influence than facilities and materials. At the broader school-management level, García Caucha (2021) and Miguel Flores et al. (2021) agree that educational quality depends substantially on the strength of the management model, leadership, and institutional communication. Poquioma Woo et al. (2021) identify accreditation and licensing as the main quality-assurance mechanisms in higher education. In addition, Alegría Bernal (2024) argues that implementing ISO 21001 is a means - not an end - for continuously improving educational service quality and effectiveness. Using the SERVQUAL model, Barragán Vázquez et al. (2022) found that only tangibility and empathy were significantly associated with student satisfaction, suggesting that conventional service-quality dimensions do not carry equal weight in educational settings. In more complex technological institutions, Coskun and Nizaeva (2023) document that the Balanced Scorecard can translate institutional mission into measurable indicators of user satisfaction and internal processes. Gell Labañino et al. (2026) emphasize that academic leadership, coordinated with administrative management, is necessary for more inclusive, equitable, and comprehensive management in technological education institutions.

3.3. Intersection between institutional sustainability and educational service

None of the included studies explicitly and jointly addresses the relationship between sustainable institutional management - as defined by Muriel (2018) and González and López (2022) - and educational service in technological higher education institutes. Sustainability studies focus on universities and on environmental, governance, or institutional reporting dimensions (Lim et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2023; Figueroa García et al., 2023; Oliveira & Proença, 2025; Abello-Romero et al., 2024), with limited representation from developing countries (Hernández-Pajares et al., 2024). Conversely, studies on educational service or quality in Peruvian technological institutes do not incorporate sustainability variables (Mundaca Constantino, 2022; Saravia, 2022; Caller Luna, 2025). This lack of intersection constitutes the empirical gap that methodologically supports the correlational study proposed by Montenegro Lozada (2026) for a technological higher education institute in Piura.

4. Discussion

The findings reveal a gap between two research streams that should converge in institutional practice. International evidence indicates that sustainability management in higher education institutions is an emerging field, with unresolved conceptual gaps (Vergara Arteaga, 2025) and limited scientific production in developing countries (Hernández-Pajares et al., 2024), while remaining poorly integrated at the institutional-management level (Lim et al., 2022; Sánchez Roldan, 2023). In contrast, Peruvian and Latin American evidence consistently shows that educational management, administrative leadership, and administrative service quality are associated with

educational quality or service in technical institutions (Saravia, 2022; Oropeza Miranda, 2023; Caller Luna, 2025), but sustainability is not considered a component of that management.

This gap is relevant to the Piura context described in the doctoral project from which this review derives. That project identified an incipient organizational culture regarding sustainability and environmental stewardship, together with weaknesses similar to those reported by Mundaca Constantino (2022) and Surdez-Pérez et al. (2018) in infrastructure and academic support. Bringing the two research streams together - sustainable institutional management and educational service - could address two demands that have so far been investigated separately: improving perceived service quality and incorporating environmental and social sustainability criteria into institutional management, in line with SDG 4 on quality education.

A limitation of this review is that the searches were conducted through open-access academic search engines rather than through a formal export from institutionally licensed databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. Therefore, the 26 included studies may not represent the entire body of literature. A subsequent replication with institutional access to these databases is recommended to expand and systematically verify this synthesis.

5. Conclusions

The available literature independently confirms that institutional sustainability is relevant but remains insufficiently developed in the management of higher education institutions, while educational management is consistently associated with educational quality or service in Peruvian technological institutes.

No studies were identified that jointly examine both variables in technological higher education institutions, constituting a specific research gap. From a methodological perspective, this gap supports a correlational study that directly measures the relationship between sustainable institutional management and educational service in a technological higher education institute in Piura, Peru, as an empirical phase following this review.

The proposed empirical study should use instruments validated in Peruvian and Latin American contexts - such as those developed by Mundaca Constantino (2022), Saravia (2022), and Caller Luna (2025), and the adaptation of the SERVQUAL model by Barragán Vázquez et al. (2022) - aligned with the institutional sustainability dimensions proposed by González and López (2022). This would make the results comparable with the evidence synthesized in this review.

Declarations

- Funding: This review received no external funding.
- Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.
- Author contributions: Alma de Jesús Montenegro Lozada (conceptualization, investigation, writing - original draft); Irma Violeta Morales Ramírez (methodology, validation, writing - review and editing); Fernando Alexis Nolazco Labajos (supervision, methodological guidance, writing - review and editing)
- Methodological note: The searches were conducted through open-access academic search engines in August 2026. Replication with institutional access to Scopus and Web of Science is recommended to ensure exhaustive coverage before final journal submission.

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