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Editorial: Women in sustainability: organizational sustainability 2021

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Women in sustainability: organizational sustainability 2021

No society can develop (economically, politically, and socially) when half of its population is marginalized (United Nations, 2023). Gender equality has been included as one of the Sustainable Development Goals in the United Nations Agenda 2030, since it is paramount in achieving them (United Nations, 2015).

Gender equality is also a prerequisite for organizations and communities, in becoming more sustainable (as discussed by Chesterman and Ross-Smith, 2005; Cingano, 2014; Barreiro-Gen et al., 2021), where equal opportunities for men and women must be provided to ensure success in this process (Bailyn, 2003). Although previous studies have highlighted that women tend to have a higher awareness of sustainability than men (Haynes, 2017; Von Haartman et al., 2017), theoretical and applied research are still needed to delve into the causes that prevent organizations, in particular, and society, in general, from taking full advantage of female potential in sustainability issues.

This Research Topic is comprised by four articles, with authors from Africa and Europe, scoping various continents, that contribute to the discourses of the role of women in sustainability, and in particular, in organizations (e.g., in companies, their role in leadership, in research, in decision-making).

The first article by Baltenweck et al. presents a literature review of 29 articles about business models in the livestock sector that are successful in increasing women's participation and benefits. The paper focussed on low- and middle-income countries, such as South Asia and West Africa. The article categorizes gender inclusive business models (e.g., farmer's collective action and contract farming) with different outcome levels for women. The research shows increasing control over income and decision making is key in boosting female empowerment.

Using a multicase study, Pierli et al. presents five Italian companies that had women in leadership positions. The paper shows that women leaders can contribute to sustainable development in all its dimensions. The research deepens the literature about sustainability and female leadership, defining a sustainability women leader profile, characterized by having system thinking, a holistic perspective, being able to manage of complexity, and having an inclusive approach to leadership.

Barreiro-Gen and Bautista-Puig also explores the role of women in sustainability and leadership in the context of scientific publishing. This article presents a bibliometric analysis of sustainability peer-review publications in Europe between 2015 and 2020. The results show that there are still few female authorship publications, and these, in turn, have received less recognition by the scientific community. The article also shows that female senior researchers are more likely to mentor female junior researchers than men, highlighting the importance of having role models.

Elasu et al.'s research presents a quantitative analysis in Uganda regarding household fuel transition decisions and the effects of gender role differentiation. The article proposes policy implications on female education, highlighting the need of intervening to provide free universal primary and secondary education also to girls, to ensure that they understand the importance of modern fuels for cooking and lighting.

The papers in this Research Topic can serve to show how organizations and communities can capitalize on women's holistic perspective and higher engagement to better contribute to making societies more sustainable, and thus, address an important part of society, that has, thus far, been marginalized, to a certain extent.

We hope that this issue contributes to broadening the discussion on women's participation and the possibilities that gender equality can offer. Likewise, we hope that future publications will offer new approaches that contribute to deepening theoretical and practical discussions at a global level, fostering the

research on how women can contribute to the development of sustainable organizations.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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