SUSTAINABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT: AN ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT IN BRAZILIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Luís Phillipe da Silva Inglat 1
Vitor Neves Cabral 2
Biancca Scarpeline de Castro 3
Daduí Cordeiro Guerrieri 4

ABSTRACT

Objective: To analyze the commitment to sustainability and sustainable public procurement by individuals, organizations, and the political class, based on the perceptions of agents working in the procurement area.

Theoretical Framework: The main concepts and theories on sustainability and sustainable public procurement (SPP) were presented, as well as the importance of commitment from individuals, public organizations, and the political class for the implementation of these agendas.

Method: A quantitative approach was adopted, using a survey via an electronic questionnaire composed of closed questions with alternatives based on a five-point Likert scale. The sample consisted of 201 public agents working in the procurement area, and statistical analysis of the data was conducted to identify patterns and relationships between the variables regarding the perceptions of public agents.

Results and Discussion: Commitment to sustainability and SPP ranged from moderate to low, with the level of political commitment being lower than organizational commitment, and the latter being lower than individual commitment. At all levels (individual, organizational, and political), the commitment to CPS was lower than the commitment to sustainability. In line with the literature, the individual, organizational, and political commitments perceived in this research may explain the modest progress of these themes in recent years, despite their inclusion in the Brazilian legal framework and the existence of successful practices.

Research Implications: This study points to the need to promote initiatives that can enhance commitment to sustainability and SPP by the agents responsible for implementation, as well as by public organizations and the political class.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to the literature by addressing commitment to sustainability and SPP in the Brazilian context at different levels - individual, organizational, and political. By identifying patterns and relationships between variables, the research provides important directions for understanding opportunities and challenges associated with promoting sustainability and SPP.

Keywords: Commitment, Sustainable Public Procurement, Sustainability, Brazil.

---

1 Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica Celso Suckow da Fonseca, Itaguaí, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. E-mail: phillipeinglat@gmail.com Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5787-1160
2 Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica Celso Suckow da Fonseca, Itaguaí, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. E-mail: vitornevescabral@hotmail.com Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-3001-5486
3 Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Seropédica, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. E-mail: bianccastro2@gmail.com Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4878-1419
4 Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica Celso Suckow da Fonseca, Itaguaí, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. E-mail: dadui.guerrieri@cefet-rj.br Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5088-5252
RESUMO

Objetivo: Realizar una análisis del compromiso con la sostenibilidad y las compras públicas sostenibles por parte de los individuos, las organizaciones y la clase política, a partir de la percepción de los agentes que actúan en el área de compras.

Marco Teórico: Se presentaron los principales conceptos y teorías sobre sostenibilidad y compras públicas sostenibles (CPS), así como la importancia del compromiso por parte de individuos, organizaciones públicas y la clase política para la implementación de estas agendas.

Método: Se adoptó un enfoque cuantitativo, utilizando una encuesta a través de un cuestionario electrónico compuesto por preguntas cerradas y con alternativas basadas en una escala de Likert de cinco puntos. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 201 agentes públicos que actúan en el área de compras y se realizó un análisis estadístico de los datos para identificar patrones y relaciones entre las variables con respecto a las percepciones de los agentes públicos.

Resultados y Discusión: El compromiso con la sostenibilidad y las CPS varió de razonable a bajo, siendo el nivel de compromiso político menor que el organizacional, y este, a su vez, menor que el individual. A todos los niveles
Sustainability and Sustainable Public Procurement: An Assessment of Individual, Organizational, and Political Commitment in Brazilian Public Administration

(individual, organizacional y político), el compromiso con las CPS fue inferior al compromiso con la sostenibilidad. En la misma dirección que apunta la literatura, los compromisos individual, organizacional y político percibidos en esta investigación pueden explicar el tímido avance de los temas en los últimos años, a pesar de estar ya insertados en el marco jurídico brasileño y de existir prácticas exitosas.

Implicaciones de la Investigación: Este estudio señala la necesidad de promover iniciativas que puedan elevar el compromiso con la sostenibilidad y las CPS, tanto por parte de los agentes responsables de la implementación como por las organizaciones públicas y la clase política.

Originalidad/Valor: Este estudio ofrece una contribución a la literatura al abordar el compromiso con la sostenibilidad y las CPS en el contexto brasileño en diferentes niveles - individual, organizacional y político. Al identificar patrones y relaciones entre variables, la investigación ofrece además direcciones importantes para comprender oportunidades y desafíos asociados con la promoción de la sostenibilidad y las CPS.

Palabras clave: Compromiso, Compras Públicas Sostenibles, Sostenibilidad, Brasil.

RGSA adota a Licença de Atribuição CC BY do Creative Commons (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1 INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian federal government has regulated the adoption of sustainability practices in its public bodies and entities for more than a decade. Topics such as conscious use of consumer materials; electricity; water and sewage; selective collect; quality of life in the work environment; and sustainable purchasing and contracting became mandatory in the central government's sustainability reports (Brasil, 2012a). However, the existence of such regulations has not proven to be sufficient for their effective implementation in Public Administration (Cavalcanti et al., 2017; TCU, 2018; Moura-Leite et al., 2023).

With regard to sustainable public procurement (CPS), it is possible to state that they emerge as a strategic tool for promoting sustainability, given their ability to mobilize large amounts of finance and develop production chains at a global level (Cavalcanti et al., 2017). It is worth highlighting, however, that only recognizing this instrument as relevant is not enough for its success.

The literature on sustainability practices has highlighted effective commitment at individual (Gurgel & Pinheiro, 2011), organizational (Carroll, 1979; Ward, 2004) and political (Padilha, 2011; Clar et al., 2013; UN, 2015) as essential for its success. Furthermore, commitment is a relevant variable for the implementation of public policies (Warwick, 1982; Najam, 1995), making it important to understand the extent to which commitment manifests itself at the individual, organizational and political levels.
Gurgel and Pinheiro (2011) define commitment as engagement, involvement or willingness to act or behave in a certain way. Thus, commitment is characterized as a state of feelings capable of positively mobilizing people in favor of specific actions.

Given this context, the objective of this study is to carry out an analysis of the commitment to sustainability and sustainable public purchasing on the part of individuals, organizations and the political class, based on the perception of agents working in the purchasing area. The in-depth examination of the engagement of different social actors with topics related to sustainability, including sustainable public purchasing, enables the development of strategies that seek to implement such policies.

In addition to this introduction, this study is structured into five other sections. In the second and third, an overview of sustainability and sustainable public procurement in the Brazilian context is presented, highlighting commitment as an essential variable for its implementation. In the fourth and fifth sections, the methodological approach and the analysis and discussion of the results obtained are presented, respectively. Finally, the last section presents the final considerations of the study.

2 SUSTAINABILITY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PURCHASES

Sustainability has gained prominence on Brazil's public agenda over the last few decades, driven by global recognition of the need to preserve and recover natural resources (Bouzguenda et al., 2019; Fergus & Rowney, 2005). Initially, this environmental concern led to the creation of bodies such as the National Environmental System (SISNAMA) and the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) in the 1980s.

In the late 1990s, Brazil launched the Environmental Agenda in Public Administration (A3P), a program whose objective is to promote responsible socio-environmental management in the public sector (Vieira et al., 2020). A3P was structured around six thematic axes, emphasizing the sustainable use of resources, waste management, awareness raising and training of public servants, quality of life in the workplace, sustainable public purchases and sustainable constructions.

In addition, in 2012, Federal Decree No. 7,746 was enacted determining that the direct federal public administration, autonomous, foundational and dependent state companies
develop and implement Sustainable Logistics Management Plans (PLS) (Brasil, 2012a). These plans must include, among other actions, sustainability practices and rationalization of the use of materials and services.

In the same year, Normative Instruction No. 10/2012 was published, determining that the practices provided for in Decree No. 7,746/2012 must cover, at least, the following topics: (i) consumables; (ii) electrical energy; (iii) water and sewage; (iv) selective collection; (v) quality of life in the work environment; (vi) sustainable purchases and contracting, comprising at least works, equipment, surveillance, cleaning, telephony, data processing, administrative support and building maintenance services; and (vii) personnel displacement, considering all means of transport, with a focus on reducing expenses and emissions of polluting substances (Brazil, 2012b).

In 2015, Brazil also made international commitments to the topic by adopting the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 goals that aim to eradicate poverty, promote social equality and preserve the environment. The country stood out as a pioneer among signatory nations of the 2030 Agenda by adapting global goals and indicators to its local reality (Menezes, 2019). In this context, SDG 12 deserves to be highlighted, which deals with sustainable consumption and production, with target 12.7 focused on sustainable public procurement aligned with national policies and priorities.

Sustainable public procurement (CPS) is closely related to sustainable national development, which can be understood as “economic, political, cultural, institutional, social and environmental growth and progress in a sustainable and perennial manner, resulting in improved quality of life of the population in the long term” (Brazil, 2021a). Law No. 12,349/2010 sought to put this definition into practice by establishing the promotion of sustainable national development as a guiding principle for all national public purchases and contracting (Brasil, 2010b). More recently, the New Bidding Law (Law No. 14,133/2021) reaffirmed the importance of sustainability criteria in public purchasing and contracting, maintaining sustainable national development as an explicit principle and one of the objectives of the bidding process (Brazil, 2021b).

In Brazil, public purchases represent between 10% and 15% of GDP (Ribeiro & Inácio Júnior, 2014; Brasil, 2022). Therefore, by prioritizing products and services that contain sustainable criteria, governments can boost innovation, production chains and markets with a view to consuming materials and services aligned with a greener economy. Therefore, in
addition to explicit environmental policies, sustainable public purchases make up an important set of financial measures capable of promoting sustainable national development (Young & Castro, 2021).

Given the importance of sustainable public procurement, several studies seek to understand the barriers and facilitators for its effective implementation, such as senior management actions, national and international laws and standards, supply of sustainable materials and services by the market, training of public agents and commitment with sustainability and sustainable public procurement from stakeholders (Walker & Brammer, 2009; Brammer & Walker, 2011; Betiol et al., 2012; Grandia, 2016; Silva et al., 2018; Silva, 2022).

The recognition of sustainable practices and sustainable public procurement as solutions that respect the limits of the environment and promote the well-being of society is evidenced by specific government regulations. These initiatives, therefore, should not be isolated actions, but fundamental components of public policies that seek a balance between the needs of the present and care for the future and require individual, organizational and political commitment.

3 COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PURCHASES

There is a set of studies that seek to analyze commitment as one of the variables capable of interfering in the implementation of various public policies (Warwick, 1982; Lipsky, 1980; Najam, 1995; Brynard, 2005; Cloete et al., 2018). In this sense, the literature already points to the need for commitment at all levels through which politics permeates, making it necessary to understand commitment in different dimensions (Najam, 1995), that is, to analyze it from individual levels, passing through intermediate levels (organizational) to strategic levels (political).

With regard to sustainability, Gurgel and Pinheiro (2011, p. 164) coined the concept of pro-ecological commitment, which “presupposes that the person is aware of the damage that a careless environmental action can cause to the environment, thus assuming environmentally friendly practices. care for the environment as a whole or any of its particular aspects”. In other words, according to the authors, pro-ecological commitment refers to individual engagement with the theme of sustainability. Such commitment can manifest itself even in a context of
appeal to consumption and development based on material progress, factors that contribute to an increase in environmental degradation.

According to Stritch and Christensen (2014), many public organizations have disseminated environmental policies as a means of reducing the impact of their activities. However, even in the absence of formal policies on the issues, public agents are capable of individually engaging in a series of discretionary pro-environmental behaviors known as eco-initiatives.

Formal policies, when adopted, represent an organizations' commitment to sustainability, which have been the subject of studies over the years, with emphasis on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). According to Carroll (1979, p. 500), CSR “involves society's expectations in relation to organizations, in economic, legal, ethical and discretionary aspects, at a given moment in time”.

However, social responsibility presupposes obligations to society that go beyond economic and legal issues (McGuire, 1963). CSR recommends that organizations make decisions that allocate resources to solving public problems, such as those related to poverty, racial discrimination, pollution, etc. (Hay et al., 1976). Thus, Corporate Social Responsibility is not restricted to the social dimension of sustainability, but also encompasses environmental responsibilities.

The public sector, as seen, has already adopted an active role in the development of responsible environmental practices, being a driver of Social Responsibility (SR) (Moon, 2004; Moura et al., 2017). Outside of Brazil, the European Union has advised its member countries to integrate Social Responsibility principles into their management systems, with emphasis on sustainable public purchasing policies (Espigares & Torres, 2005). According to McCrudden (2007), sustainable purchasing and contracting are mechanisms capable of guaranteeing compliance with Social Responsibility both by suppliers and service providers, and by the public sector itself.

In the political sphere, Thorstensen and Mota (2020, p.13) understand commitment to sustainability as “the improvement of the governmental approach to the application of policies aimed at achieving sustainable development, through the definition of priority areas, action plans with a deadline and with the establishment of key indicators”. This commitment can be linked to different political agents, which are those invested in high-ranking positions in the Republic, by appointment, election, designation or delegation to exercise constitutional powers.
Political commitment enables the development and strengthening of state capacity to consistently formulate, implement and evaluate sustainable national development in all areas and spheres (Thorstensen & Mota, 2020). According to the authors, this is directly related to the need to establish solid government structures, which can guarantee the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), even during changes of government.

For Kjöllerström (2009), high-level political commitment proves to be fundamental for the implementation of CPS. In the same direction, ICLEI (2016), the main global association of cities and local governments dedicated to sustainable development, argues that elected authorities must be responsible for maintaining the political commitment to sustainable purchasing in public organizations. Without political efforts and clear formal policies, the process tends to be fragmented and dependent on individual efforts, in addition to being difficult to encourage those responsible for purchasing to include sustainability criteria in the acquisition process (ICLEI, 2016).

In this way, political agents (such as legislators and executive authorities) have the power to make financial and human resources available, and to formulate and approve public policies through laws and regulations (Najam, 1995), with this support being fundamental for the success of the implementation of sustainable public procurement (ICLEI, 2016).

Thus, the joint action of agents, public organizations and the political class is a key element capable of boosting the implementation of sustainable practices in Public Administration (Erdmenger, 2003; Biderman et al., 2008; ICLEI, 2016).

4 METHODOLOGY

In this research, a quantitative approach was adopted, in order to measure and compare individuals' perceptions and attitudes (Creswell, 2010). As for the means, it is a survey, which sought to capture participants' opinions and behaviors in a structured way (Freitas et al., 2000; Babbie, 2003), about the commitment to sustainability and purchasing sustainable public institutions in Brazilian public institutions.

The sample was made up of public agents who work, directly or indirectly, in processes related to public purchasing and contracting. We opted for the non-probability sampling type (Marconi & Lakatos, 2018) for accessibility, complemented by the snowball technique (Vergara, 2019). In order to obtain a broad and varied representation, the sample covered all regions of Brazil, which allowed for a greater diversity of participants.
To collect the data, an electronic questionnaire was applied, hosted on the Google Forms platform, consisting of sample characterization questions and 15 closed questions on the topic. Participant responses were captured using the 5-point Likert scale, which includes the neutral category, as it is understood that its exclusion would force participants to give arbitrary responses regarding high or low commitment (Stockemer, 2019). The survey was carried out between May 3 and June 14, 2023 and 201 responses were obtained.

Statistical analysis of the data, both descriptive and inferential, was performed using the tools Excel 365 (version 2306), Jamovi (version 2.3.26) and RStudio (version 1.4.1717). Additionally, the association between the variables was verified using Fisher's Exact Test and Spearman’s Correlation. These analyzes examine whether as one variable increases the other consistently tends to increase or decrease (Baba et al., 2014). The importance of these analyzes lies in their ability to capture complex relationships between variables, even if they are not strictly linear.

The reliability of this research was assessed using the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient, which reached a value of 0.909, indicating high reliability of the data collected. This means that the questions showed a significant correlation between each other and maintained consistency for the construct under analysis (Streiner, 2003).

5 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The present study encompasses a diverse sample of professionals involved in the acquisition process in Brazilian public institutions, directly or indirectly, totaling 201 participants (Table 1). The survey covers all regions of the country, with 4.48% of respondents from the North, 24.88% from the Northeast, 15.42% from the Central-West, 47.26% from the Southeast and 7.96% from the South. As for the spheres of activity, 10.95% of the participants belong to the Municipal Public Administration, 8.46% to the State, 1.49% to the District and 79.10% to the Federal Administration. In relation to the Powers, 89.05% of respondents are in the Executive, 3.48% in the Judiciary, 0.50% in the Legislative, while 6.97% work in the Public Ministry, Court of Auditors or Public Defender's Office.

The profile of participants reveals a small predominance of males (58.21%) and a significant concentration in the age group between 28 and 47 years old (68.16%). In terms of education, more than 95% of participants have at least a bachelor's degree. Around 55% of
respondents hold management positions and 31.85% have more than 10 years of direct or indirect experience in the purchasing area. As for the hiring regime, 80.60% are statutory.

Participants are allocated to the stages of the purchasing process as follows: 42.79% in the planning phase, 27.36% in selection and 29.85% in execution. Furthermore, it was observed that 57.71% of respondents are in public organizations focused on the area of education.

**Table 1**

Profile of respondents (N=201).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexo</th>
<th>Regime trabalhista</th>
<th>Esfera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculino</td>
<td>58.21%</td>
<td>Estatutário</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminino</td>
<td>41.79%</td>
<td>CLT (empregado público)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faixa etária</td>
<td></td>
<td>Estagiário</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 a 27 anos</td>
<td>4.98%</td>
<td>Terceirizado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 a 37 anos</td>
<td>30.85%</td>
<td>Outro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 a 47 anos</td>
<td>37.31%</td>
<td><strong>Tempo de atuação</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 a 57 anos</td>
<td>18.91%</td>
<td>Até 1 ano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58 a 67 anos</td>
<td>6.97%</td>
<td>1 e 5 anos incompletos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acima de 68 anos</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>5 e 10 anos incompletos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formação acadêmica</td>
<td></td>
<td>Acima de 15 anos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensino médio</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
<td>Acima de 15 anos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduação</td>
<td>16.42%</td>
<td>Acima de 15 anos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Especialização/MBA</td>
<td>49.75%</td>
<td>Sim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mestrado</td>
<td>24.38%</td>
<td>Não</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doutorado</td>
<td>4.98%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of this research was to analyze the level of individual (IND-SUS), organizational (ORG-SUS) and political (POL-SUS) commitment to sustainability, as well as the commitment to sustainable public procurement on the part of the agents responsible for its implementation (IND-CPS), public organizations (ORG-CPS) and the political class (POL-CPS). For this, an electronic questionnaire was applied containing fifteen closed questions on the topic with five alternative answers, being none (1), low (2), reasonable (3), high (4) and total (5). Among the questions asked, eight were analyzed and discussed in this article.

Initially, we sought to verify, using Fisher's Exact and Spearman ’s Correlation tests , the existence of an association between the respondents' profiles and the level of individual commitment. However, the results of this research did not show a statistically significant association that would indicate at least a moderate correlation between these variables.
In general, it was possible to verify that, in the opinion of the respondents, the commitment to sustainability and CPS varies from reasonable to low (with an average between 3.21 and 2.28 – see Table 2), with the level of political commitment smaller than the organizational one, and this, in turn, smaller than the individual one. It is worth highlighting, however, that at the individual level, 29% of respondents stated that they had a high or total commitment to sustainability and sustainable public procurement, surpassing in these cases those who declared that they had no or low commitment to the topics, as seen in Figure 1.

When comparing the commitment to sustainability and sustainable public procurement, the commitment to CPS was lower at all levels (individual, organizational and political). Furthermore, it was possible to verify that, as one progresses from the individual to the...
organizational level and from this to the political level, the commitment to sustainability and CPS decreases.

Figure 1
Commitment Levels

To verify statistically significant correlations (p<0.05) between the researched variables (commitment to sustainability and CPS), the Spearman Matrix was created, as shown in Figure 2. In general terms, this matrix evaluates whether when a variable changes, the other tends to change in the same direction (positive correlation); if when one variable changes, the other changes in the opposite direction (negative correlation); or if there is no correlation between them.

Spearman Matrix, according to the gradation proposed by Baba et al. (2014), it was possible to verify the existence of strong positive correlation between commitment to sustainability and sustainable public procurement, both at a political level (0.77) and at an organizational level (0.83 for the organizations where the respondents work and 0.79 for the other organizations). However, at the individual level it was possible to verify a moderate correlation (0.55).

In other words, this indicates that there is a strong association between commitment to sustainability and commitment to sustainable public procurement at the organizational and political levels. However, this link is somewhat weaker at the individual level, suggesting that
respondents' commitment to sustainable public procurement is not as closely linked to their commitment to sustainability when compared to the organizational and political levels.

**Figure 2**
*Spearman Correlation Matrix (p<0.05).*

![Spearman Correlation Matrix](image)

This finding of a moderate correlation between the commitment to sustainability and sustainable public purchasing at the individual level is critical for two aspects: (1) it highlights the disconnect between the commitment to sustainable purchasing and the commitment to sustainability as a general theme, as the correlation at the individual level was expected to be similarly strong as at the organizational and political levels; and (2) it comes precisely from agents who act directly or indirectly in the purchasing process of public organizations, who are responsible for implementing sustainable public purchasing.

Specifically at the individual level, there was a greater commitment to both sustainability as a general theme and to CPS, when compared to the perception of commitment at the organizational and political levels. It is noteworthy, however, that individual commitment was predominantly reasonable (14% of respondents declared they had none or low, 57% reasonable and 29% high or total commitment to sustainability; and 26% declared they had none or low, 44% reasonable, 29% high or total commitment to CPS - Figure 1).

Considering the high degree of discretion of those implementing environmental practices in Public Administration, it would be relevant to obtain greater individual engagement
with the topic of sustainability, since, as pointed out by Stritch and Christensen (2014), these agents have implementation capabilities even in the absence of policies formal.

As previously highlighted, the literature points out that individual commitment plays a crucial role in the implementation of CPS (Drumwright, 1994; Brammer & Walker, 2011; Grandia, 2016). For this reason, the reasonable level of individual commitment revealed in this study is worrying, as it may result in inadequate or insufficient implementation of sustainability policies and sustainable public procurement.

With regard to organizational commitment, public agents believe that the organizations in which they work have a predominantly reasonable commitment to sustainability as a general topic (39%). However, in the case of CPS, 42% of respondents considered that there is no commitment or that its level is low, as shown in Figure 1. Regarding their perceptions about the commitment of other Public Administration organizations to sustainability, 50% indicated no or low commitment, while with CPS this number was 52%.

Walker and Brammer (2009) suggest that organizational, structural and procedural elements related to acquisitions play a significant role in stimulating the development of CPS, with emphasis on the commitment of senior management. Now Betiol et al. (2012) argue that a commitment from the top management of public organizations is a facilitator in the implementation of sustainable purchasing. This commitment can take place through formal policies sponsored by these leaders, policies that aim to promote and internalize a culture of Social Responsibility, as defended by Espigares and Torres (2005). Thus, the finding of this low organizational commitment reveals itself as a barrier to the implementation of sustainability practices in Public Administration organizations, including sustainable public purchasing.

Compared to the individual and organizational levels, the perception of political commitment to sustainability and CPS was significantly lower. This is because 65% of respondents declared that there was no or low political commitment in relation to sustainability and 71% in relation to CPS. It was also possible to observe that the perception of political commitment presented a smaller standard deviation in relation to the average when compared to the individual and organizational levels (Table 2). This suggests greater uniformity and less dispersion in the responses obtained at this level. Therefore, there is a clear convergence of participants’ opinions regarding insufficient political commitment to both sustainability and CPS.

The literature already points out that political commitment is considered fundamental for the implementation of sustainable policies (Padilha, 2011; Clar et al., 2013; UN, 2015) and
for the implementation of CPS in the Public Administration itself (Biderman et al., 2008; Kjöllerström, 2009; ICLEI, 2016). In this sense, “elected governments must take responsibility for adopting a political commitment to sustainable bidding” (Biderman et al., 2008, p. 98), as these agents are capable of formulating and approving public policies through legislation, in addition to providing resources necessary for their implementation (Najam, 1995).

The perception of the low political commitment revealed by this research highlights a critical aspect of the Brazilian context, since in this case, as pointed out by ICLEI (2016), the implementation of CPS can become a fragmented process, depending excessively on individual efforts.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study sought to analyze the commitment to sustainability and sustainable public purchasing on the part of individuals, public organizations and the political class. In general, respondents believe that the commitment to sustainability and sustainable public procurement is reasonable at an individual level; low, at the organizational level; and very low on a political level. This finding may explain the timid advancement of sustainability and sustainable public procurement in recent years in public administration, despite these themes having already been included in the Brazilian legal framework for some years.

Reports accompanying the implementation of sustainability practices in Brazil already point to a weakening of public policies related to the topic. Lack of budget, monitoring systems for national alignment with the 2030 Agenda and an adequate Federative Pact for the implementation of sustainability practices (Relatório Luz, 2023). These barriers point to the need for greater commitment at all levels so that sustainability practices, including CPS, advance in the country.

In this research, there was no statistically significant association between the respondents' profile and individual commitment that would suggest at least a moderate correlation between these variables. This suggests that individual commitment to the topics analyzed here is independent of the profile of these public agents who work directly or indirectly in the purchasing area.

It is important to note that more than 70% of respondents have a commitment that varies from reasonable to total, both with sustainability and CPS. This scenario makes it possible for successful initiatives to exist in these areas. However, for these individual efforts to translate
into significant and lasting changes, organizational support is crucial, as individual efforts alone generally have a small scope and cannot generate the impact necessary to face major environmental and social challenges.

Without organizational support, individual efforts can weaken or disappear with staff turnover, not being sustainable over time. Additionally, there may be a lack of alignment with the organization's broader goals and strategies, resulting in a lack of prioritization of sustainability in organizational processes. On the other hand, if there is commitment from senior management, a favorable environment is created for successful practices, as already reported in some studies (Silva, 2017; Silva, 2023). There are also awards, such as the A3P Award, which recognize the appreciation of organizational efforts in this direction, encouraging organizational engagement in favor of sustainability.

Regarding political support, this is necessary to guarantee compliance with laws, to define A3P and PLS guidelines, and to strengthen control bodies. Therefore, it is necessary to promote not only individual commitment, but also to foster an organizational culture that values and integrates sustainability in public organizations. This requires leadership, clear policies, training and investment in infrastructure.

In relation to the limitations inherent to the study, it is possible that the respondents were condescending when asked about their own levels of commitment, showing themselves to be less critical of themselves and more critical when evaluating organizations and the political class. Furthermore, it is important to consider that respondents may be subject to availability bias. This means that your responses may be distorted by recall of recent events or exposure to specific information, leading to a potentially biased analysis of the situation.

For future research, studies are suggested that evaluate the commitment to sustainability and sustainable public purchasing from the perspective of leaders of public organizations and politicians. Furthermore, longitudinal investigations can provide insight into the evolution of commitment to sustainability and CPS in Brazilian Public Administration over time.

REFERENCES


Sustainability and Sustainable Public Procurement: An Assessment of Individual, Organizational, and Political Commitment in Brazilian Public Administration


Sustainability and Sustainable Public Procurement: An Assessment of Individual, Organizational, and Political Commitment in Brazilian Public Administration


