

Intellectual capital through decarbonization for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8: a systematic literature review and future research directions

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this study is to review the literature on how intellectual capital (IC) contributes to the decarbonization efforts of firms. It explores how carbon accounting can measure the components of IC in decarbonization efforts to balance profitability with environmental and social goals, particularly in promoting decent work and economic growth (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] 8 and its targets [2, 5, 6, 8]). Moreover, it emphasises the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships for sharing knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources (SDG17-Target 17.G) to meet SDG8.

Design/methodology/approach – As a consolidated methodological approach, a systematic literature review (SLR) was used in this study to fill the existing research gaps in sustainability accounting. To consolidate and clarify scholarly research on IC towards decarbonization, 149 English articles published in the Scopus database and Google Scholar between 1990 and 2024 were reviewed.

Findings – The results highlight that the current research does not sufficiently cover the intersection of carbon accounting and IC in the analysis of decarbonization practices. Stakeholders and regulatory bodies are increasingly pressuring firms to implement development-focused policies in line with SDG8 and its targets, requiring the integration of IC and its measures in decarbonization processes, supported by SDG17-Target 17.G. This integration is useful for creating business models that balance profitability and social and environmental responsibilities.

Originality/value – The integration of social dimension to design sustainable business models for emission reduction and provide a decent work environment by focusing on SDG17-Target 17.G has rarely been investigated in terms of theory and practice. Through carbon accounting, IC can be a key source of SDG8-Targets 8.[2, 5, 6, 8] and SDG17-Target 17.G. Historically, these major issues are not easily aligned with accounting research or decarbonization processes.

Keywords Intellectual capital (IC), Decarbonization processes, Decent work and economic growth (SDG8-Targets 8.[2, 5, 6, 8]), Carbon accounting, Partnerships (SDG17-Target 17.G)

Paper type Research paper

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