The Sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM): A Systematic Literature Review

Yuxiaosi Wu[1]

ABSTRACT

This article aims to provide a systematic review of the literature in order to examine the current state and future prospects of sustainable human resource management. Our review follows a structured approach to analyse the existing research on SHRM practices, their implementation challenges, and their impact on organizational and sustainability outcomes. In total, we identified 107 relevant documents from the past five years using the Web of Science database and analysed their abstracts using Nvivo12. Our preliminary assessment of the abstracts led to the following key findings: (1) The study's primary focus is on green human resource management, particularly green recruitment. (2) Our analysis emphasizes the concept and classification of sustainable human resource management. (3) The main research questions centre on performance, including environmental performance, sustainable performance, innovation performance, and circular economy performance. (4) The majority of the research employs the PLS-SEM model. The article's main goal is to contribute to the current discussions on this topic by assessing the present state of human resource management and suggesting potential areas for future research. Based on the findings from the examination of current literature, several promising directions for future research and practice in SHRM have emerged.

Keywords: Sustainable HRM; Sustainability; Green HRM; Human Resource Management

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[1] Yuxiaosi Wu, Doctoral School of Entrepreneurship and Business, Budapest Business University, e-mail: wu.yuxiaosi.73@unibge.hu

1. Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a pivotal role in the contemporary business environment, influencing the workforce and ultimately shaping the trajectory of organizations (Opatha, H. & Uresha, K., 2020). Historically, HRM has primarily focused on immediate organizational requirements and operational efficiency, often to the detriment of long-term sustainability and strategic foresight. It is through this short-term orientation that a gap exists in the design and practice of HRM, particularly in dealing with ever-persistent challenges and opportunities for sustainability (Guest, D., 1987). While world discourse has come to appreciate that the resources of nature are limited and that environmental conservation is paramount, the need for sustainability in business operations has come out strongly.

Sustainability is all about doing a business by considering the long-term effect of the present action. It upholds not only environmental conservation but also social accountability and economic viability, as echoed by Politis and Grigoroudis (2022). The importance of sustainability in the contemporary business environment cannot be overemphasized it is a driver of innovation, a source of competitiveness, and increasingly becoming a fundamental consumer expectation, which, to some extent, is what Sheehy and Farneti (2021) reiterated. Businesses are now required to do more than reduce their carbon footprints; they need to take the lead as stewards of the well-being and health of the greater society and economy. The move towards sustainability has rather far-reaching implications for human resource management. It demands many changes in conventional practices, with the adoption of a more sustainable approach to managing human capital, as argued by Duvnjak and Kohont (2021).

Sustainable HRM emerges as a response to this call for action, representing an evolution of traditional HRM practices to align with the principles of sustainability (Stankevičiūtė, Ž. & Savanevičienė, A., 2018). It aims to integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations into HR policies and practices, thereby contributing to the sustainable development goals of the organization and society at large. Sustainable HRM practices include green recruitment, where emphasis is placed on hiring individuals who not only possess the required job skills but also share the organization's commitment to sustainability (Paulet et al., 2021).

The purpose of this article is to conduct a systematic review of the literature in order to evaluate the current state and potential future developments of sustainable human resource management. We have adopted a systematic approach to analyze the existing research on SHRM practices, their implementation challenges, and their impact on organizational and sustainability

outcomes. In section 2, we elaborate on the methodology utilized in this study. Section 3 presents the results of our analysis and interpretations. In section 4, we discuss the implications of our findings, highlighting their significance and proposing future research directions.

2. Method

In the end, we settled for the Web of Science due to several reasons its advantages; first is its thorough analysis and methodology – it has an excellent system for categorization of publications, which enhances the standardization and consistency in records of publication (Lu et al., 2023). Also, WoS offers quality data, not with a minimum error rate, which is always current, furnishing researchers with current and updated information all the time (Wei et al., 2020). Besides, it has been performing exceptionally well in getting citations from older studies conducted before 1996 and, thereby is the best source for doing an exhaustive literature review (Kulkarni et al., 2009).

Therefore, compared to Scopus, which has an even greater range of source types, including international and interdisciplinary literature coverage and much more recent information, Web of Science is considered more accurate, dependable, and consistent for citation indexing (Giuli, 2023). The classification of journals in the Web of Science and the visualization effects are some of the things that make it popular with researchers (Lu et al., 2023).

The study covered three significant terms: sustainable human resource management, SHRM, and sustainable development, within a specified period of 2019-2023, with a total of 7686 articles. Following extensive analysis, we pinpointed the 215 most influential and highly cited pieces of writing, all of which were composed in English and published in esteemed periodicals. Our screening methodology was refined to restrict the scope of the journal subject classification to areas such as business, economics, and sustainable development.

Consequently, after we delete non accessible paper, we were able to evaluate a total of 107 documents. The figure 1 shows the flow of this study.

Figure 1
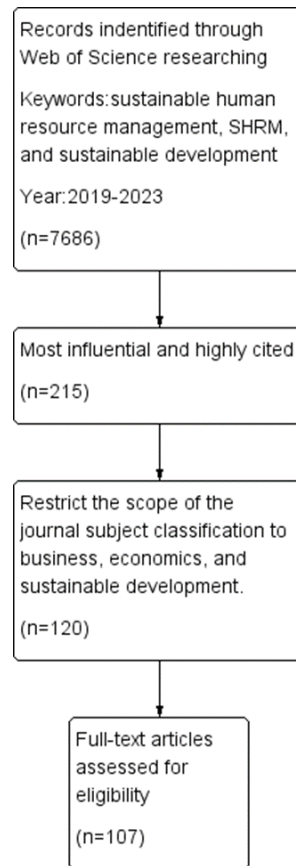
3. Result and Discussion

According to the data published in journals, the top five are: Resources Policy, with a total of 18 articles, accounting for 16.8% of the total; Journal of Cleaner Production, with a total of 15 articles, accounting for 14.0%; and Science Of The Total Environment, with a total of 6 articles, accounting for 14.0% of the total. Journal Of Environmental Management has 4 articles, accounting for 3.7%, and Business Strategy And The Environment has 3 articles, accounting for 2.8%.

Based on the information of the year of publication, in 2019, the number of publications amounted to 25 articles, which accounted for 23.36% of the total. In 2020, there were 13 articles, representing 12.15% of the total. In 2021, there were 21 articles, making up 19.63% of the total. In 2022, there were 18 articles, accounting for 16.82% of the total. And in 2023, there were 30 articles, representing 28.04% of the total.

Regarding methodology, among these 107 research topics, we can roughly divide the methodologies used into the following categories:

1) Quantitative research methods: Utilizing econometric and statistical methods, such as Bayer and Hack cointegration tests, bootstrap causality techniques, Zivot-Andrews unit root tests, autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) models, second generation Measurement technology, panel autoregressive distributed lag (CS-ARDL) technology, dynamic capabilities theory, resource-based view (RBV), and conceptual model development, artificial intelligence (AI) technology, land use simulation (PLUS) model, life cycle assessment (LCA), and so forth, researchers typically employ these techniques to investigate the relationships and impacts of data. It is presumed that this category of methods constitutes approximately 55% (59 articles) of the total number of topics.

2) Qualitative research methods: The majority of the articles reviewed utilise qualitative research methods, such as semi-structured interviews, case study analysis, systematic review, and narrative synthesis, among others. These methods are typically employed to attain a comprehensive comprehension of the intricate nature of the researched phenomenon. It is estimated that this category of research method constitutes roughly 30% (32 articles) of the overall study population.

3) Mixed Research Methods: Employs the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methodology; comprises research techniques such as mixed methods research, surveys, questionnaire design, etc. in giving a more comprehensive view of the research. It is expected to account for around 15% of the total topics (16 articles).

The document with the highest number of citations among 107 analyzed is "Moving Towards a Sustainable Environment: The Dynamic Linkage between Natural Resources, Human Capital, Urbanization, Economic Growth, and Ecological Footprint in China" by Ahmed et al. in 2020, with 646 citations. On the other hand, the article that has received the least number of citations is "Impact of Capital Investment and Industrial Structure Optimization from the Perspective of Resource Curse: Evidence from Developing Countries" by Wang et al., published in 2023, with only eight citations. The first step was that we converted the collected articles with their associated data to Excel files, and then thematic analysis was conducted on the data by using Nvivo12.

Thematic analysis is a manual procedure that involves identifying patterns and themes in a dataset and reporting them within an analysis of qualitative data (Buckley & Nurse, 2019). The process concerns analyzing qualitative research data to identify common patterns and themes (Hemming et al., 2021). The thematic analysis enables the researcher with a technique that interprets and presents the textual data analysis structure, from which one flexibly identifies,

analyzes, and reports patterns in the data (Bowen, 2009). This is the method used for the recognition of any pattern within the data, where new themes are now categories for analysis (Rasmussen et al., 2012).

Thematic analysis is quite flexible as a qualitative approach to research. It can be conducted with or without any particular theoretical or epistemological consideration, thus making it a pretty valuable tool for different research purposes (Scott et al., 2019). The process encompasses a series of steps, ranging from data familiarization and coding to the development of a coding framework, identification of themes, review and revision of themes, and finally, the selection of representative quotes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thematic analysis is a sensitive and powerful approach to handling qualitative analyses, organizing, and presenting findings.

After conducting open coding on the keywords of the articles, we obtained 10 nodes, 104 codes, and 132 reference points. For titles, we got 13 nodes, 133 codes and 190 reference points. Table 1 and 2 summarized the result of nodes.

Table 1

Keywords Coding Results

Nodes	Reference Points
Resource	31
Human Resource	19
Sustainability	18
Green	12
Ecological	10
Development	10
Performance	9
Practices	8
Behaviour	8
Technologies	7
Total	132

Table 2

Title Coding Results

Nodes	Reference Points
Resource	34
Sustainable	29
Management	17
Development	16
Human Resource	15
Green	14
Natural Resources	13
Performance	11
Ecological	9
Innovation	9
Energy	8
Human Capital	8
Economy	7
Total	190

Based on our initial evaluation of the abstract, we have identified the following key findings: (1) The primary theme of the study is green human resources management, especially on green recruitment. (2) Emphasis on the concepts and classification of sustainable human resource management. (3) The research questions primarily concentrate on performance, including environmental performance, sustainable performance, innovation performance, and circular economy performance. (4) The research methods primarily employ the PLS-SEM model.

Green Human Resource Management

The initial finding highlights the significance of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) within the context of SHRM, which emphasizes eco-friendly practices within organizations (Bombiak & Marciniuk-Kluska, 2018). GHRM is viewed as a strategic approach that incorporates consideration of the environment in HRM practices to enhance sustainability within an organization. By promoting environmental behavior among employees, GHRM enriches the organization's performance towards the environment (Chaudhary, 2019).

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is the development, implementation, and support of activities to attune employees to goals based on sustainability (Agarwal & Jain, 2022). Studies have established the link between HRM and commitment, employees' environmental behavior, and the environmental impact of an organization (Ali et al., 2021).

Employability is being seen as organisational priorities that apply to everyone, and thus there is more concentration on organisational practices that will guarantee the sustainability of the workforce longer than ever before (Ybema et al., 2017). Earlier research works have established that GHRM has a positive influence on the task-related performance of employees with regard to the environment (Chaudhary, 2019). The GHRM practices are also crucial for the businesses to assume and develop sustainable and profitable models and execute the HR operations effectively and harmonizing to the contemporary pattern of environment behavior (Mtembu, 2018).

The current study revealed that green recruitment is a component of practices that organizations apply to ensure sustainability, and which is considered one of them. This is the method by which the organization recruits and eliminates applicants with correct qualifications of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes towards EMS. The concepts of green recruitment practices are important in influencing employees to embrace environmental friendly practices in an organization. Literature review shows that green recruitment leads to higher levels of environmental performance; therefore, industries, especially hotels as a case, making their positioning and recruiting environmentally concern employees more prominent (Wulandari & Nawangsari, 2021; Saeed et al., 2018; Yusoff et al., 2018).

Thus, green recruitment is one of the significant subcategories of GHRM. It also includes green training, pay & rewards structure as well as employee's engagement as postulated by Jamal et al. (2021). The literature review has demonstrated a positive and significant relationship between green recruitment and selection practices and the enhancement of sustainability and

Organizational Environmental Performance Metrics (OEPM) (Yong et al., 2019; Ullah et al., 2022). In an organization that has adopted green recruitment, the green strategies used by the HRM strategy include improvements of the organization's environmental performance, greening of the organization's image and the achievement of sustainability. These green recruitment approaches are for example in the application of green IT and automated applications, green interviewing processes, and advertising of the jobs through pro-environmental methods that will call for change in pro-environmental actions from the employees (Kiplangat et al., 2022; Ajadi et al., 2022).

Green recruitment is one of the elements within a broader array of practices in GHRM focusing on raising employees' preparedness to manage enviromental impact (Moktadir et al., 2019). Green training pay and rewards offered and employee involvement is therefore a systems perspective towards enhancing the environmental profile of the firm and the corporate sustainability agenda. Through filing the gap on green recruiting methods organisations can achieve organisational sustainability, enhancing key competencies and enhancing the organisations green reputation (Kiplangat et al. , 2022). Green hiring increases the employee efficiency and companies' sustainability, as well as green development, training, performance evaluation, and rewarding (Samola, 2022).

Sustainable Human Resource Management

Several definitions of sustainable human resource development have been uncovered. Each perspective contributes to the wide range of concepts currently employed in sustainable human resource management. Despite the various terminology, they all recognize the significance of the human and social resources of the organization on the success of the business (Kramar, 2014).

Although SHRM is an organization-wide approach, human resource management is concerned with the methods through which human resources can be optimally mobilized for economic, social, and environmental improvement so that the firm can sustainably compete with its rivals (Delery & Roumpi, 2017). These activities include utilising the HR sources to implant a sustainability plan in the organisation to create an HR system for the improvement of enduring performance of the firm (Lu et al. , 2019).

Sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) pursues the objective of fulfilling the present requirements of the organization and society without impairing the capacity to meet future demands, thereby securing the durability of human resource practices (Lulewicz-Sas et

al., 2022). This would involve the embedding of environmental sustainability in HR policies and practices of business organizations. Sustainable HRM indicates that partnership and external relations in learning and personal development pertain to intellectual capital management as a resource-based strategic approach (Wulandari & Nawangsari, 2021; Stachová et al., 2019).

Sustainable HRM is very crucial to the future development and success of an organization; it is a part of organizational activities. Therefore, the sustainable HRM concept integrates the interests of different stakeholders and the importance of stakeholder analysis in the HRM of attaining organizational success (Mohiuddin et al., 2022; Stankevičiūtė & Savanevičienė, 2018).

Sustainable HRM is based on a sustainable resource management approach that emphasizes the sustainability of economic, ecological, and human resources within firms (Ehnert & Harry, 2012). In the context of organizational sustainability, SHRM is of particular importance since it integrates the objectives of economic, social, and ecological levels to meet emerging challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Kinowska, 2021). Six key defining features characterize sustainable HRM. It has developed over more than 15 years into probably the most crucial conceptual area within managing people for long-term development and renewal. Here, we provide a quick overview and a synopsis of the features (Kramar, 2022):

1) Incorporation of Sustainability: The incorporation of sustainable HRM denotes the integration of economic, ecological, and social sustainability in the practices of HRM to contribute to the overall sustainability of an organization (Ehnert et al., 2015; Kainzbauer et al., 2021; Duvnjak & Kohont, 2021).

2) Green HRM Practices: Incorporating environmental concerns into HR policies, commonly referred to as Green HRM, is essential in improving an organization's ecological sustainability, hence increasing competitiveness (Bombiak & Marciniuk-Kluska, 2018; Mehta & Chugan, 2015).

3) Long-term human resource development: It is a core part of sustainable HRM, which includes regeneration and renewal beyond the traditional practices of HRM to ensure that the working population remains adaptable, resilient, and capable of facing future organizational challenges (Stankevičiūtė & Savanevičienė, 2018; Dvořáková, 2020).

4) The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Approach: This is a type of sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) in which Green HRM and socially responsible HRM are combined, to reach three objectives of financial, social, and ecological sense at the same time, as is

emphasized by Anlesinya & Susomrith (2020).

5) Employee-Centric Approach: Sustainable human resource management practices focus on respect for employee opinions, integrity of relations, equality in terms of justice, and professional growth, which are all crucial organizational life principles (Buren, 2021; Stankevičiūtė & Savanevičienė, 2018).

6) Organizational Performance: HRM practices such as recruitment and motivation that are sustainable will highly influence the performance of employees and, therefore, the organization's success. The practices ascertain that the employees are competent, motivated, and aligned to the organization's future goals to enhance performance and sustain growth (Weerasinghe & Silva, 2021; Bag et al., 2021).

Such considerations enable organizations to develop HRM strategies that improve financial performance while ensuring environmental responsibility, social well-being, and long-term sustainability. Sustainable HRM aligns HR practices with organizational goals and aims and, therefore, promotes a holistic approach toward human resource management in a sustainable manner. This approach ensures that HR practices aid in the realization of organizational goals and objectives while at the same time promoting environmentally responsible and socially conscious practices. Sustainable HRM by organizations will lead to a difference not just in society and the environment but also in ensuring their financial bottom line in the long run.

Performance Management

The third finding established that sustainable human resource management correlates significantly with performance indicators such as environmental, sustainable, innovation, and circular economic performance. Studies have documented that sustainable HRM practices in terms of recruitment, training, motivation, and rewards have a significant favorable influence on employee performance (Weerasinghe & Silva, 2021). The implementation of such sustainable HRM practices can, therefore, lead to better job performance, with the training also further moderating the relationship between HRM practices and job performance (Manzoor et al., 2019). Several positive relationships have been established between sustainable HRM and increased work engagement, perceived employability, and organizational trust (Ferreira-Oliveira et al., 2020).

In addition, the incorporation of Green Human Resource Management practices in sustainable HRM systems is also seen to increase employees' green performance and thereby contribute to organizational sustainability through increased resource efficiency in improving effectiveness. The inclusion of employees, line managers, and top management makes participation in the

sustainable management of HR exceed the traditional roles and responsibilities associated with HR functions. In turn, more detailed GHRM practices guarantee adopting sustainable HRM initiatives more effectively within organizations.

Moreover, in trying to embed GHRM into the more excellent framework of sustainable HRM, organizations will propagate a culture of environmental responsibility and continuous improvement in performance, allowing them to bring their employee behaviors and organizational goals into synchronization with sustainability objectives. Such an inclusive approach would be more effective for long-term sustainability and competitive advantage in a greening business landscape.

Green performance in an organizational setting is a practice by the business to include environment-friendly practices in the operational systems. Hence, as to collectively contribute towards the betterment of the natural surroundings. In a business context, it is about green human resource management: the integration of environmental considerations into various HR functions to increase organizational sustainability. These areas of GHRM consist of green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance management and appraisal, green reward and compensation, and green empowerment. This is associated with encouraging employees to pro-environmental behavior to assist in a larger objective that a particular organization wants to achieve towards sustainability (Saeed et al., 2018; Nngsari, 2019).

Several studies have shown that Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices greatly enhance environmental behavior and sustainability within organizations (Wulansari et al., 2018). These practices include creating policies that encourage various environmentally sustainable activities, such as proper waste disposal and upholding green health standards in the workplace. Such policies allow organizations to develop and apply indicators based on environmentally sustainable practices carried out at the workplace (Wulansari, Sugiharto, & Idris, 2018).

Wang (2020) highlights that implementing green performance practices brings numerous benefits to organizations. These practices enhance environmental quality and boost overall organizational performance. The resulting performance improvements lead to greater competitiveness in the market. By integrating sustainability into their operations, organizations can achieve dual benefits: contributing to environmental conservation and advancing their business goals simultaneously.

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling

This is something which is factual about the PLS-SEM model being utilized. The elimination technique known as Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is preferred in numerous social science domains because of it great characteristics Hair et al., 2014). This is especially true since PLS-SEM allows the precise estimation of the measurement model needed to assess the relationships between the latent constructs and the index variables.

The PLS-SEM model based approach is more common in most of the social science research as it can handle formative indicators which are very essential to measure the constructs in a multi-dimensional way for a better understanding of phenomena (Attar et al., 2019). This ability helps the researchers to build and estimate the models which would harmonize with the real social science phenomena and the practices such as knowledge sharing and creation, managing the intellectual capital, and measuring the organizational performance.

4. Conclusion

This systematic review aims to critically examine the field of sustainable human resource management, which is gaining momentum in an increasingly climate-conscious world. The article unfolds SHRM practices and implementation challenges with their organizational and sustainability implications based on an analysis of 107 documents through the Web of Science database in the last five years. The findings contribute to green HRM, being the specific focus of green recruitment, and classify some elements of SHRM. The following sections contain most empirical studies related to performance: environmental and sustainable performance, innovation, and contributions toward the circular economy, which are analyzed with the PLS-SEM model.

In this light, the present article adds to the debate on sustainable HRM by giving a comprehensive overview of the latest trends and research methodologies. The paper not only highlights current imperatives that emphasize the need to integrate sustainability within HRM practices but also identifies possible ways forward in the future for research in this critical area. Notably, the systematic review of SHRM practices, challenges, and consequences is a rapidly developing field that bears more significant potential for the future development of HRM, notably in the context of sustainability. Some promising lines for future research and practice that emanate from the findings of the review conducted on current literature are:

1) Expanding the Scope of SHRM Practices:

Green recruitment is a quite predominant concept in the literature. Further research may examine areas of SHRM that are not fully documented. For instance, how sustainable employee retention strategies, development and training programs on sustainability competencies, or the inclusion of sustainability in the employee performance evaluation system can be implemented. It is through the investigation of a broader range of SHRM practices that a more profound understanding can be gained of how human resource management can contribute to organizational sustainability objectives.

2) Quantitative and Qualitative Methodologies:

The use of PLS-SEM models has been prominent, however, future research could benefit from incorporating a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Qualitative studies, in particular, have the potential to offer deeper insights into the processes and mechanisms by which SHRM practices affect organizational culture, employee behavior, and sustainability outcomes.

3) Stakeholder Engagement:

Future research may concentrate on the function of human resource management (HRM) in engaging a range of stakeholders, such as workers, clients, providers, and local communities, in sustainable initiatives. It is vital to comprehend how to effectively enlist and integrate these stakeholders in the pursuit of all-encompassing sustainability results.

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