



A Comprehensive Exploration of Human Resource Management in Advancing Sustainable Organizational Growth

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ABSTRACT

This study conducted a systematic review of the literature from the Scopus database (2019–2024) to explore the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in advancing organizational sustainability. For the same, data for the present study were gathered from the most relevant data base for social science that is Scopus, from the period 2019-2024 (5 years). The database search was restricted to keywords, title and abstract. The search resulted in 177 articles on “Green Human Resource Management”, “Sustainability”, “Sustainable Development Goals” articles. As businesses increasingly prioritize employee well-being, community impact, and environmental responsibility alongside financial growth, Sustainable HRM has emerged as a vital field. By integrating “Green” practices aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sustainable HRM fosters eco-friendly and socially responsible workforce strategies, balancing economic, social, and ecological goals. With automation transforming industries, the demand for highly skilled workers is rising, particularly in manufacturing and large-scale service sectors, where HRM plays a key role. This requires advanced competency models to prepare employees for Industry 4.0’s technology-driven environment. The study delves into methods for designing these models, addressing challenges and opportunities faced by HRM in adapting to evolving industrial landscapes. It proposes strategic frameworks for HR leaders to enhance adaptability, resilience, and sustainability within organizations. Future research directions include examining cross-cultural influences, technology’s role in Sustainable HRM, employee engagement, industry-specific practices, and robust sustainability metrics to help organizations adopt sustainable practices tailored to diverse contexts.

Keywords: Advance techniques, Green, Human Resource management (HRM), Innovative ideas, Industry 4.0, manufacturing process, Sustainability, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



INTRODUCTION

The sustainability paradigm in human resource management (HRM) has the potential to transform HR's traditional focus on economic outcomes into a more comprehensive, multidimensional approach. This emerging perspective incorporates economic, environmental, and social dimensions, reflecting the growing recognition of sustainability as a critical business priority. Scholars have identified various HRM approaches linked to sustainability, such as socially responsible HRM and green HRM. These approaches aim to embed sustainability into HR practices by emphasizing environmental stewardship, employee well-being, and social responsibility. Additionally, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives are increasingly associated with sustainable HRM, underscoring HR's potential role in promoting ethical and responsible business practices.

Despite this potential, HR departments have been slow to fully embrace social responsibility concerns. They often lack the strategic influence required to develop comprehensive CSR policies. In many organizations, HR's role in sustainability initiatives remains limited to operational tasks, such as executing internal CSR activities, rather than shaping overall corporate strategies. This marginalization suggests that HR is frequently sidelined in decision-making processes related to CSR, with greater influence residing in departments such as legal affairs, public relations, and marketing, as well as with members of the board of directors.

Generational shifts in workforce expectations are further challenging organizations to rethink their priorities. Millennials and Generation Z, in particular, are advocating for companies to adopt missions that prioritize people—employees, consumers, and society at large—over profits. A recent survey revealed that 62% of respondents believe it is worth investigating why HR is not more actively involved in sustainability and CSR activities. This sentiment reflects a broader call for HR to adopt a more strategic role in fostering sustainability within organizations. The growing demand for purpose-driven organizations has heightened the need for HR to lead in aligning corporate practices with societal values.

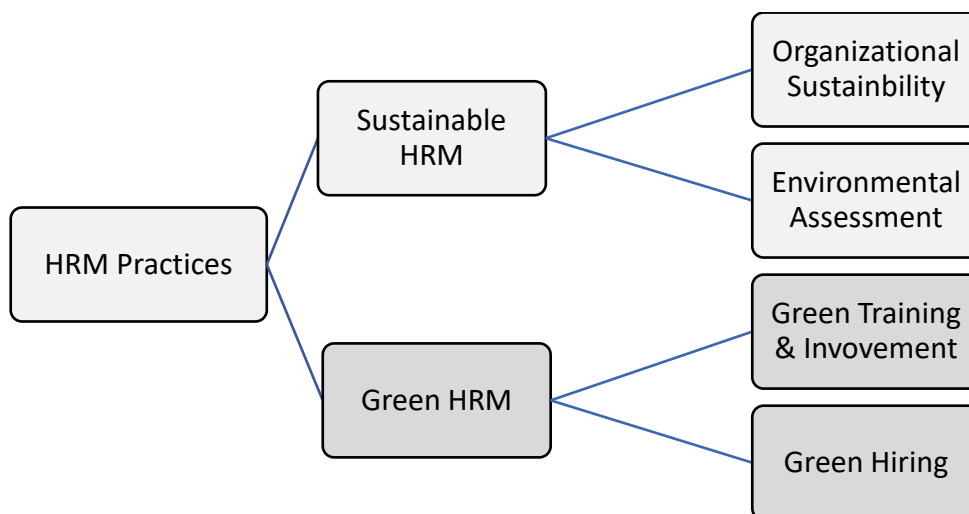
Historically, HR departments have faced significant challenges in asserting strategic influence within organizations. They are often perceived as primarily administrative, which limits their capacity to shape corporate strategies. This limited influence raises questions about the authenticity of corporate sustainability efforts: are these initiatives genuinely aimed at

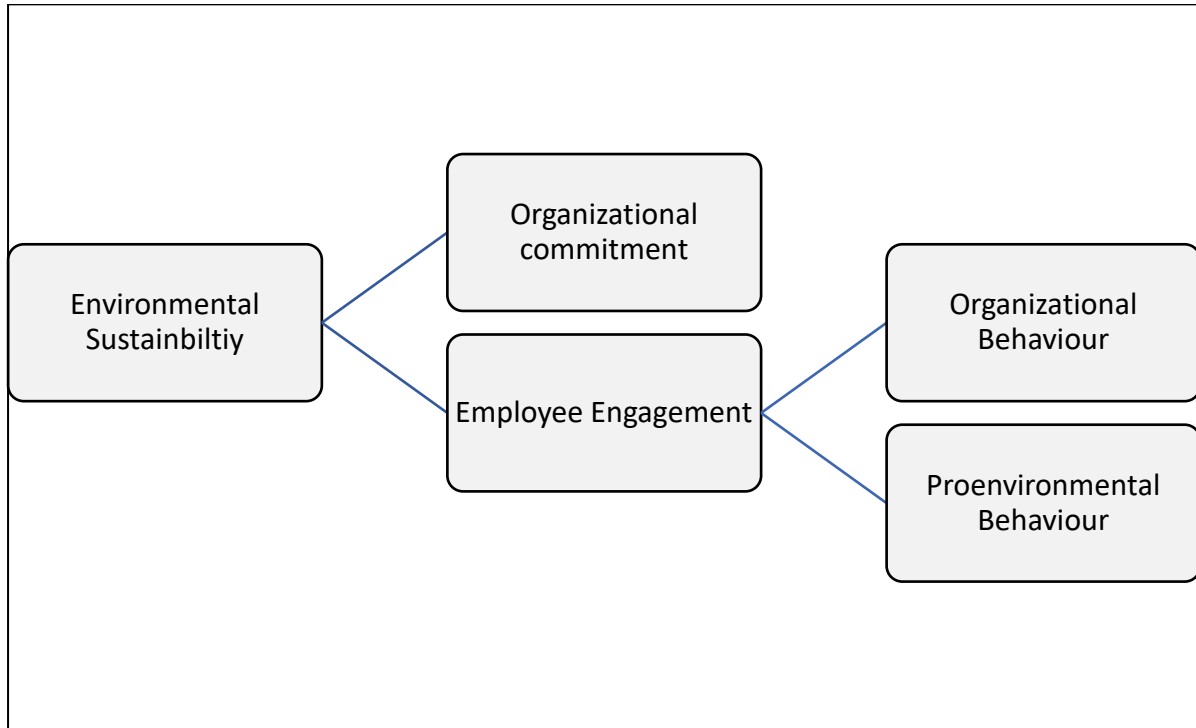
addressing social and environmental challenges, or are they merely symbolic gestures? Many sustainability initiatives appear self-serving, using “greenwashing” language to enhance brand reputation without a true commitment to sustainable practices. Such marketing-driven approaches often exclude HR from meaningful engagement, as these efforts are superficial rather than integrated into the company’s core values.

In contrast, authentic sustainability requires deep HR involvement and a genuine commitment to long-term goals. Examples of meaningful sustainable practices include improving working conditions throughout the supply chain, reducing organizational carbon footprints, and supporting corporate volunteering initiatives. These efforts go beyond symbolic gestures and demonstrate a commitment to addressing societal needs. When sustainability is integrated at this level, HR plays a crucial role in shaping and implementing policies that balance “economic”, “social” and “environmental objectives”.

In conclusion, while the potential for HR to drive sustainability is widely recognized, many organizations have yet to fully leverage HR’s strategic capabilities in this area. To realize this potential, companies must reassess HR’s role in sustainability and empower HR leaders to contribute meaningfully to CSR initiatives. This shift would not only enhance the credibility of corporate sustainability efforts but also align with societal expectations for organizations to prioritize people and the planet alongside profits. By doing so, HR can serve as a catalyst for authentic and impactful sustainability practices.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework





Source: Authors Study

Human Resource Management (HRM) is evolving to address the rising demand for sustainability by embedding environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles into corporate culture. This transformation aligns HR processes with the broader objectives of sustainable growth and responsible management. Moving beyond a singular focus on financial performance, modern HRM emphasizes human-centric approaches that support environmental sustainability, as reflected in the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV). This perspective suggests that sustainable HR practices—such as eco-conscious hiring, green training, and incentivizing sustainable behaviors—can simultaneously enhance organizational profitability and corporate responsibility.

Green HRM, which incorporates environmentally focused HR practices, integrates sustainability into core HR functions like recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and rewards. For instance, hiring employees who prioritize sustainability helps cultivate a workforce aligned with eco-friendly objectives. Similarly, providing incentives for reducing waste and emissions reinforces these values across departments. By supporting environmental initiatives, green HRM empowers employees to engage meaningfully in sustainability efforts, ultimately shaping the organization's ecological footprint. These practices not only bolster



environmental contributions but also enhance employee satisfaction, reduce operational costs, and foster a corporate culture centered on ecological mindfulness.

Building a sustainable organization requires collaboration among all departments, united under shared environmental goals. In this effort, HR serves as the backbone, guiding employees through necessary changes and aligning these shifts with organizational sustainability targets. HR practitioners play a pivotal role in facilitating the adoption of environmentally responsible practices, fostering new work habits, and encouraging interdepartmental collaboration. This transition to green HRM enables HR professionals to act as key agents of change management, promoting innovation and collaboration that can lead to a competitive advantage.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are universal framework of seventeen targets which were designed to end poverty, to protect the planet, to ensure equality and to promote prosperity through inclusive and environmentally responsible and collaborative global action by 2030.

A central tenet of green HRM is the recognition of human capital as a critical asset for sustainable growth. Human capital—comprising employees' skills, knowledge, and competencies—represents a unique, inimitable resource that contributes to long-term sustainability. According to the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, such distinctive resources can provide a competitive edge, especially when aligned with sustainable practices. In this context, HRM plays a vital role in developing employee capabilities that support sustainability and creating an adaptable, environmentally conscious workplace.

Implementing green HRM, however, presents challenges. Resistance from within the corporate hierarchy, higher initial costs, and a scarcity of required skill sets can hinder these efforts. To overcome these obstacles, organizations must prioritize clear communication, engage leadership, and provide continuous training to align employees with environmental objectives. Proactive initiatives such as employee workshops on environmental issues and community involvement programs can reinforce the company's commitment to green HRM. These efforts not only help reduce the organization's carbon footprint but also foster a loyal and engaged workforce.

As environmental responsibility becomes a growing priority, green HRM has proven to be more than a passing trend—it is a fundamental component of organizational strategy. Companies like India's ONGC demonstrate that green HRM practices can drive cultural shifts,



fostering employees' commitment to both corporate goals and environmental stewardship. In conclusion, green HRM lays the groundwork for a lasting commitment to sustainability, advancing organizational objectives while instilling a strong sense of purpose among employees.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

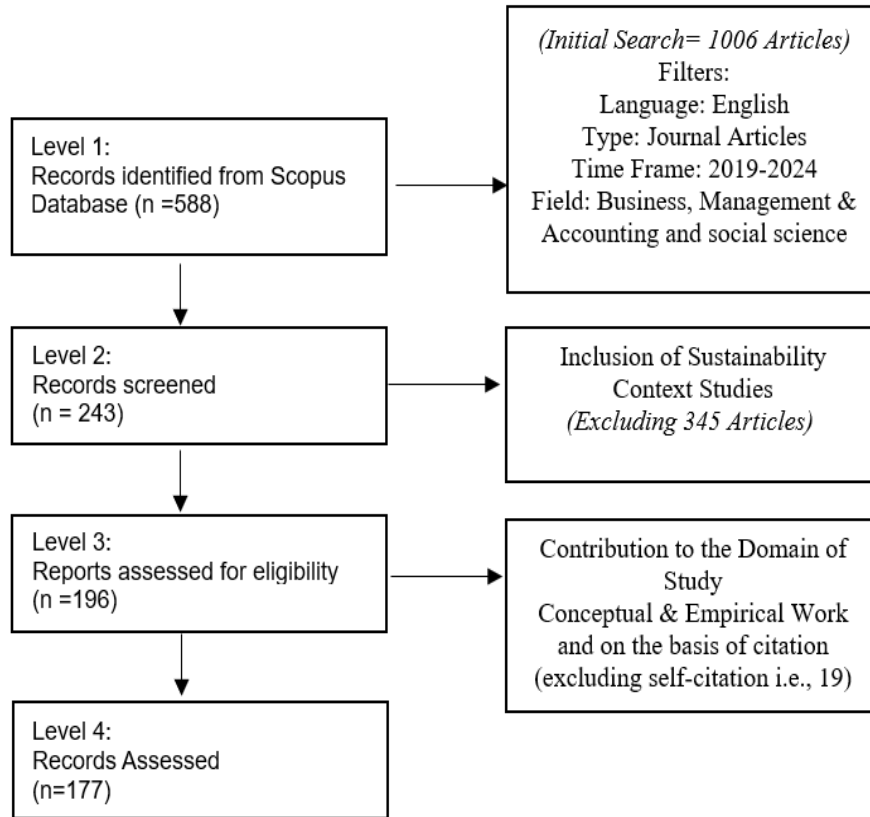
The study conducted systematic review literature from the Scopus database (2019–2024) to explore the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in advancing organizational sustainability. The objective of the study is to propose and suggest a new role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in advancing organizational sustainability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A literature review is an essential component of research as it establishes familiarity with current research, identifies gaps in knowledge along with this provides a rationale for the study. For the present study, only peer-review publications are published in academic journals were considered to uphold the quality of the quality of the research. For the same, data for the present study was gathered from the most relevant data base for social science i.e., Scopus from the period 2019-2024 (5 years). The database search was restricted to keywords, title and abstract. This resulted in 177 articles on “Green Human Resource Management”, “Sustainability”, “Sustainable Development Goals” articles. The search terms used in the query of the list of eligible publications in English are contained within the title, keywords or abstract of every publication and also limit has been mentioned here: Green Human Resource management, Innovative ideas, Sustainability, Sustainable Development Goals.

- Only articles published only in Scopus database, peer-reviewed journals were considered,
- Articles written in English language only were included.

Figure 2. PRISMA Chart



Source: Authors Study

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Primary goals of sustainability

Sustainability ambitions to achieve equilibrium among economic growth, social progress, and environmental protection, commonly known as the "three pillars" of sustainability (Talan, Pathak, & Tyagi, 2020). These pillars guarantee that present prerequisites are met without compromising the ability of future generations to thrive (Dabija, 2021; Johnston, 2023).

1. **Economic Development:** Sustainable economic growth focuses on creating systems that are inclusive and resource-efficient. Rather than prioritizing profits alone, it emphasizes generating value that benefits the economy, society, and the environment. This approach involves minimizing waste, optimizing resource use, and adopting practices that support a long-term, resilient economy, fostering prosperity while preserving natural resources (Talan, Pathak, & Tyagi, 2020; Bedenik, 2018; Henriksen, Thapa, & Elbanna, 2021).



2. **Social Inclusion:** Social sustainability prioritizes well-being by addressing issues like poverty, inequality, and access to essential services. It focuses on building a fair and equitable society, ensuring access to education, healthcare, and employment for all. By promoting human rights, gender equality, and community participation, it fosters inclusive systems where everyone can contribute and thrive (Bedenik, 2018; Henriksen, Thapa, & Elbanna, 2021).

3. **Environmental Protection:** Environmental sustainability focuses on preserving and restoring natural ecosystems. It involves safeguarding biodiversity, reducing pollution, and promoting practices that prevent environmental degradation while enhancing resilience to climate change. These efforts are essential for maintaining a healthy planet capable of sustaining life for future generations (Talan, Pathak, & Tyagi, 2020; Dabija, 2021; Srivastava, 2022).

STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY

Achieving sustainability requires collaborative frameworks and strategies that integrate global, corporate, and governmental efforts:

1. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The United Nations' 17 SDGs provide a comprehensive framework for addressing critical global issues such as climate change, education, clean energy, and sustainable consumption. These goals encourage collective action by uniting governments, organizations, and individuals to tackle pressing challenges and drive sustainable progress worldwide (Muñoz-Arteaga, García, & Collazos, 2022; Srivastava, 2022).
2. **Corporate Responsibility:** Businesses play a crucial role in advancing sustainability by adopting practices that balance profitability with positive social and environmental outcomes. Companies committed to responsibility focus on conserving energy, reducing waste, and ensuring ethical supply chains while fostering long-term societal and ecological well-being.
3. **Policy and Regulation:** Strong policies and regulations provide the foundation for sustainable development by establishing standards that promote accountability and responsible practices. Governments, in collaboration with international organizations, design and enforce policies that protect ecosystems, support vulnerable communities, and encourage sustainable growth.



CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABILITY

While the path to sustainability is well-defined, there are following challenges to address:

1. **Developmental Gaps:** Many regions face significant inequalities, with some areas lacking the resources needed to meet sustainability goals. Bridging these gaps requires targeted support and cooperation to ensure all communities can work toward sustainable progress (Talan, Pathak, & Tyagi, 2020).
2. **Resource Management:** Managing resources efficiently, especially in urban areas, is a key challenge. Sustainable urban planning, conserving water, and increasing the use of renewable energy are vital to addressing resource limitations (Tionardi & Wijaksono, 2023).
3. **A Balanced Future:** Sustainability is not just about implementing policies; it is about adopting a balanced approach where economic growth, social well-being, and environmental health coexist. By following frameworks like the UN's SDGs and promoting responsible business and policy practices, society can build a future that thrives in harmony with nature. This holistic strategy is essential for creating a fair, strong, and lasting world (Muñoz-Arteaga, García, & Collazos, 2022; Henriksen, Thapa, & Elbanna, 2021; Dabija, 2021; Srivastava, 2022).

Role of HRM in Promoting Environmental Sustainability Within Organizations

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a key role in promoting environmental sustainability within organizations by adopting various strategies and practices:

1. **Incorporating Sustainable Practices:** HRM integrates sustainability into core HR processes like recruitment, training, and employee engagement. These efforts create a culture of environmental responsibility, improving the organization's overall environmental performance (Kaur, 2024; Singha, Singha, & Jasmine, 2024; Ravesangar, Ping, & Pachar, 2024).
2. **Green HRM Practices:** Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) focuses on eco-friendly policies and practices. This includes green hiring, training, performance management, and rewarding employees for sustainable behaviors. These initiatives enhance environmental performance while boosting employee satisfaction (Issac, 2023; Zihan & Makhbul, 2024; Raja & Manoharan, 2024).



3. Employee Engagement and Motivation: HRM encourages employees to actively participate in sustainability programs and environmental policies. This engagement fosters a sense of responsibility, builds a culture of environmental care, and helps achieve long-term sustainability goals (Tony et al., 2016; Jain & D'lima, 2018; Hong et al., 2024).

4. Strategic Role of HR Professionals: HR professionals play a critical role in driving organizational change toward sustainability. By integrating sustainability into performance management, reducing waste, and promoting eco-friendly commuting options, they help build a culture of environmental stewardship (Singha, Singha, & Jasmine, 2024; Ravesangar, Ping, & Pachar, 2024).

5. Support from Top Management: Support from leadership is crucial for the success of GHRM practices. When top management values and prioritizes sustainability, it strengthens the organization's performance and environmental outcomes (Sathasivam, Che Hashim, & Abu Bakar, 2021; Chatterjee, Chaudhuri, & Vrontis, 2023).

6. Examples from Industry: Companies like McDonald's, Unilever, and Toyota have implemented GHRM practices successfully, showcasing their positive impact on sustainability and workplace culture (Issac, 2023).

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays an essential role in making environmental sustainability a core part of organizations. By integrating green practices, involving employees, and gaining top management support, HRM helps promote sustainable performance (Kaur, 2024; Singha, Singha, & Jasmine, 2024; Ravesangar, Ping, & Pachar, 2024; Issac, 2023; Chatterjee, Chaudhuri, & Vrontis, 2023).

Traditionally, HRM has focused mainly on economic goals, often measuring its success by how well it demonstrated a return on investment (ROI) through financial outcomes. For many years, this approach limited HR's potential to contribute to broader goals like corporate sustainability and social responsibility. By concentrating on profits alone, HR often overlooked its ability to serve as a connection between business growth and larger environmental and social priorities. As a result, HR's involvement in sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts has sometimes been minimal, despite its potential to create meaningful change for both organizations and their stakeholders.

In recent years, however, this perspective has started to change. The growing focus on sustainability and environmental awareness in both developed and developing countries has



reshaped the corporate world. International environmental standards and the rising demand for environmentally responsible practices have made green initiatives essential for businesses that want to remain competitive and relevant. This shift has sparked the development of “green HRM,” where HR takes on a proactive role in promoting eco-friendly and sustainable practices within the workplace.

Green HRM merges traditional HR functions with environmentally conscious strategies. It aims to create a balance between efficient resource use and encouraging employees to adopt sustainable behaviors. By embedding an eco-friendly mindset in the organization, green HRM fosters a culture where employees are motivated to contribute to sustainability both at work and in their personal lives. Examples of green HRM initiatives include encouraging resource conservation, reducing waste, and implementing energy-efficient practices in daily operations. These efforts not only reduce the environmental impact of the organization but also boost employee engagement, improve retention, and align individual values with corporate goals.

A strong green HRM strategy is built on two main pillars: environmentally responsible HR practices and the preservation of organizational knowledge. By creating a workplace culture focused on environmental responsibility, companies can boost employee morale, attract environmentally conscious talent, and save costs. For example, HR can incorporate sustainability into recruitment by selecting candidates who prioritize eco-friendly values. Similarly, HR can design training programs to educate employees about sustainability and equip them with the skills needed to support environmental initiatives, such as reducing the company’s carbon footprint.

Research highlights that a successful Environmental Management System (EMS) depends on employees who have specialized knowledge and skills related to sustainability. This means HR’s role goes beyond hiring and involves creating development programs that train employees to be effective environmental stewards. Additionally, green HRM can incorporate performance reviews and reward systems that recognize and encourage environmentally friendly behaviors, reinforcing the importance of sustainability within the organization.

By adopting green HRM practices, organizations can move away from a narrow focus on profits and embrace a broader role where sustainability is at the forefront. These practices help build a workforce that supports the organization’s environmental goals while also meeting the growing societal demand for responsible business practices. Green HRM not only provides



companies with a competitive edge but also allows them to make a meaningful contribution to the planet's sustainability.

In conclusion, green HRM is a strategic approach that enables HR departments to shift their focus from purely financial outcomes to fostering practices that benefit both businesses and society. By embedding sustainability into recruitment, training, performance management, and workplace culture, organizations can create a motivated and eco-conscious workforce. This shift positions companies as forward-thinking and responsible, helping them thrive in a world that increasingly values environmental stewardship. Green HRM represents a win-win strategy—improving organizational performance while supporting the broader goal of a sustainable future.

Challenges in Implementation of HRM strategies for Environmental sustainability

Implementing Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies to promote environmental sustainability, often called Green HRM (GHRM), faces several challenges that are:

1. **Economic Constraints:** Sustainable practices often require significant financial investment, which organizations may find difficult to justify due to unclear immediate returns (Ye, Liu, Wang, & Zhang, 2023; Tanveer, Yusliza, & Fawehinmi, 2024).
2. **Political and Regulatory Issues:** Inconsistent or weak regulations fail to incentivize sustainable practices, making it harder for organizations to implement GHRM strategies effectively (Ye, Liu, Wang, & Zhang, 2023).
3. **Cultural and Educational Barriers:** Lack of awareness and knowledge about sustainability within organizations can lead to resistance to green initiatives. Training and orientation are often needed to overcome this (Ye, Liu, Wang, & Zhang, 2023; Tanveer, Yusliza, & Fawehinmi, 2024).
4. **Organizational Support and Leadership:** Strong backing from senior management is essential for the success of GHRM initiatives, but such support is often lacking (Ahmad, Rabbany, & Ali, 2019; Zihan & Makhbul, 2024).
5. **Integration with Organizational Culture:** Aligning sustainability with organizational culture requires a holistic approach and consistent effort, which can be challenging to achieve (Coelho, Couto, & Ferreira-Oliveira, 2024; Tunio, 2024).



6. Complexity and Variability: Organizations differ in their commitment to sustainability, making it difficult to create and implement universal GHRM strategies (Gollan & Xu, 2013).
7. Employee Engagement: Engaging employees in sustainability initiatives is challenging and requires continuous training and development to build skills and promote environmental responsibility (Tanveer, Yusliza, & Fawehinmi, 2024; Okunhon & Ige-Olaobaju, 2024).

These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive strategies and support systems to effectively implement HRM strategies for environmental sustainability.



CONCLUSION

Human Resource Management (HRM) must adopt innovative approaches to address the skill and knowledge challenges brought by advanced technologies in Industry 4.0. Modern HRM emphasizes the need to balance traditional profit-oriented goals with social, ethical, and environmental objectives. This shift highlights the importance of creating comprehensive strategies and support systems to effectively implement HRM practices that promote environmental sustainability. The study, which reviewed research from the Scopus database over the past 5 years (2019-24) acknowledges its limitations in scope. Future research could explore HRM's role in fostering organizational sustainability across diverse cultures, long-term impacts, and the integration of technology to advance sustainable practices. Additionally, examining HRM's influence on achieving environmental goals and incorporating insights from other disciplines, such as psychology, could enrich understanding.

Other areas for future exploration include industry-specific HRM approaches, social sustainability initiatives like diversity and ethical practices, and the development of effective metrics to measure the success of sustainable HRM strategies. By addressing these topics, future studies can enhance sustainable practices and adapt HRM strategies to meet the unique needs of organizations in various cultural and industry contexts.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All Authors confirm lack of any conflict of interest.

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