
Guest editor's overview essay: Resourcing and realigning human resources in the light of sustainable development goals (SDG)

International
Journal of
Manpower

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1. Introduction

Businesses nowadays are increasingly realizing the importance of social, ethical and environmental goals (Chams and García-Blandón, 2019). When considering the poverty organizational effectiveness, management of corporate governance and ethics beyond financial success, and the realignment of the organization's future direction and vision for new methods of working are all aided by human resource management (HRM) (Chams and García-Blandón, 2019; Brewster and Brookes, 2024). Organizations are expanding their objectives to include environmental sustainability, personal sustainability and community sustainability in addition to financial success (Aust *et al.*, 2024).

For example, through expanding prospects for self-sufficiency, business growth and material wealth (Aust *et al.*, 2020, 2024). Sustainable human resource management (SHRM) is one of the fields pushed as part of the "green" movement (Chams and García-Blandón, 2019). New ecological methods and innovative sustainable strategies can help businesses reach the sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Tahir *et al.*, 2024).

When considering inclusive and sustainable economic growth, decent work and economic growth will contribute to the SDGs in many ways such as reducing the unemployment (Aust *et al.*, 2020), environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources, which have caused by human economic expansion (Tahir *et al.*, 2024). Despite this, social action is very limited to remedy this situation (Podgorodnichenko *et al.*, 2020). Human factors play a critical role in resource preservation and sustainable development. In response to the growing focus on social responsibility and sustainable performance, organizations have developed new goals beyond financial profit, such as achieving social and environmental objectives (Tahir *et al.*, 2024; Behl *et al.*, 2023).

According to a survey of 2,800 global corporations, 70% include sustainability as a primary issue in their strategic plans and agendas (Flammer, 2015). There are 17 SDGs and 169 targets included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that was presented by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2015 (Kiron *et al.*, 2012). As part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), these targets are intended to complete the unfinished goals that were set out in the MDGs (Flammer, 2015; Speth, 2010). A sustainable development approach encompasses three dimensions: economic, social and environmental (Adams *et al.*, 2016). Among the five Ps, there are "people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership" (Ioannou and Serafeim, 2015). SDGs aim to ensure that appropriate conditions and settings are created to promote sustainable economic growth, efficient resource allocation, collective prosperity and decent working conditions for people, in terms of "people" and "prosperity" (Flammer, 2015).

Additionally, this call for papers will also address decent work and economic growth for the reasons below. First, everyone should be afforded the chance to find a gainful job that allows them to support themselves and their families with a living wage, safe working conditions and adequate social safety nets (Chams and García-Blandón, 2019; Behl *et al.*, 2023). Sustainable labor is an economic and social concept that values people and the environment. Examining how labor organization (both productive and reproductive) contributes to environmental problems is an area of study central to degrowth, postwork and ecofeminism (Tahir *et al.*, 2024; Barth *et al.*, 2016). In order to accomplish the SDGs, one long-term objective is to create



International Journal of Manpower
Vol. 46 No. 4, 2025
pp. 597-604
© Emerald Publishing Limited
e-ISSN: 1758-6577
p-ISSN: 0143-7720
DOI 10.1108/IJM-07-2025-826

economies that are sustainable, innovative and oriented towards people; these economies should also work to expand employment possibilities, particularly for young people and women (Ioannou and Serafeim, 2015). According to Chams and Garca-Blandón (2019), it is essential for enterprises to take measures to guarantee that their workforce is both healthy and educated in order to cultivate productive employees as well as citizens who are proactive and make a positive contribution to society.

To achieve SDGs, several actors are involved: the private and public sectors, governments, multinational corporations, non-governmental and philanthropic organizations and individuals (Chams and García-Blandón, 2019). Many scholars use the resource-based view (RBV) theory to connect SHRM and sustainability since both are directly related to resource-oriented strategies and management. Considering the operationalization of SHRM, the institutional theory provides a clear explanation of how HR functions are integrated into an organization's "greening" process (Ye *et al.*, 2024). The current literature suggests that SHRM and sustainability are two paradigms that join towards a mutual structural benefit by not only satisfying shareholders' objectives but also operating in an accountable manner, with the collective welfare and the preservation of natural resources. Nevertheless, there are limited in-depth empirical studies that identify the types of individual behaviors that can promote specific sustainable performance toward others, organizations or the ecosystem as a whole. Additionally, proactive behaviors toward society and proactive behaviors toward the environment should be differentiated to classify their different effects on sustainability.

This calls for exploring the pressing need of the hour to understand the intersection of SDG with HRM in the evolving nature of work in organizations. While technology transformations are often given importance and priority, it is also important to assess and improve the role of each stakeholder in making each of the 17 SDGs better aligned with the mission and vision of the firm's operations.

The special issues reflect upon some critical research questions like.

RQ1. To what degree do firms align their human resource operations with SDG?

RQ2. How can firms and stakeholders assess the need and impact of SDG in transforming their human resource operations?

RQ3. How does the future of work embed SDG as a practice, and to what degree will it be successful in implementing it in various HR functions?

The Special Issue received a total of close to 30 research papers, of which 9 research papers that addressed one or more of these broad research questions were accepted. The next section presents a snapshot of each of the papers.

2. Overview of research papers

The first paper, "*The influence of organizational commitment on employee green behavior: mediating role of work-related social media use*," by Rahul Bodhi, Shakti Chaturvedi and Sonal Purohit, proposes a theoretical model grounded in social exchange theory to assess the effect of organizational commitment on employee green behavior, work-related use of social media and friendly practices to attain sustainability objectives, and EGB has emerged as an essential area of research. Considering the need for sustained employee green behavior, it is important to understand what stimulates such behaviors in an organization. The study collected primary data from Indian manufacturing and service industries. The results revealed positive and significant effects of organizational commitment on psychological well-being, social well-being, work-related social media use and employee green behavior. Further, psychological well-being mediates the association between work-related social media use and employee green behavior. Additionally, the findings empirically establish organizational commitment, work-related social media use and psychological well-being as antecedents to

employee green behavior, thus offering novel insights and theoretically contributing to the employee green behavior, well-being and organizational literature (Bodhi et al., 2025).

The second paper, *“Is human resources management sustainable enough? Evidence from the food industry,”* authored by João J. Ferreira, Claudia Dias, Pedro Mota Veiga and Justin Zuopeng Zhang, aims to analyze the association between the SDGs related to gender equality, decent work, innovation and climatic action in the food industry. The study uses a quantitative study based on the 2019 World Bank Enterprise Survey microdata. The database includes 1,242 food enterprises from 16 European Union countries. Upon performing a longitudinal analysis, the study found that food firms, characterized by significant environmental impacts and seasonal tasks, employ diverse HRM strategies based on whether they pursue innovation or environmental objectives. Grounded in the natural resource-based view (NRBV) theory, the findings underscore the importance of investing in qualified workers and offering attractive wages to meet environmental goals, as well as providing stable contracts for female workers. The NRBV framework also highlights the crucial role of product and process innovations, whether green or not, in achieving climate action objectives. The study applies the NRBV to analyze how human resources and product and/or process innovations can boost environmental preservation in an industry characterized by strong environmental impacts, seasonal tasks and financial constraints (Ferreira et al., 2025).

The third paper, *“Empowering small farmers for sustainable agriculture: a human resource approach to SDG-driven training and innovation,”* authored by Satyendra C. Pandey, Pratik Modi, Vijay Pereira and Samuel Fosso Wamba, attempts to understand the interrelationships between training effectiveness and farmers’ psychological and demographic characteristics in explaining the adoption of sustainable farming practices. Amid the growing global emphasis on sustainable agriculture, organizations and governments face a pressing need to equip farmers with the knowledge and tools necessary for the adoption of sustainable farming practices, aligning with the SDGs. However, understanding the complex relationship between training programs and the adoption of sustainable practices among small-scale farmers remains a critical challenge. The study employed a multi-stage random sampling method and administered a structured questionnaire to collect data from 331 small farmers who were part of a government-led, large-scale intervention aimed at training them in sustainable farming practices. The study not only emphasizes the critical role of the HR approach through training but also underscores its importance in the broader mission of aligning with the SDGs. Specifically, the study demonstrates that sustained exposure to training, intrinsic motivation to acquire knowledge and the innovative capacity of farmers collectively enhance the effectiveness of training programs, thereby contributing significantly to the widespread adoption of sustainable farming practices in line with SDGs. The study further extends the debate on self-determination theory. Drawing from the results, training effectiveness literature and the call for improved alignment with the SDGs, this study presents a model that explains how psychological characteristics, combined with the quality and quantity of training influence, the adoption of sustainable farming practices among small-scale farmers (Pandey et al., 2025).

The fourth paper, *“Fostering a safe workplace: the transformative impact of responsible leadership and employee-oriented HRM,”* by Huma Bashir, Mumtaz Ali Menon and Nuttawuth Muenjohn, explores how responsible leadership ensures a psychologically safe workplace for everyone, leveraging employee-oriented HRM. Specifically, drawing on signaling theory, this study aims to examine the impact of responsible leadership on employee-oriented HRM and the subsequent effect of employee-oriented HRM on employees’ psychological safety. Furthermore, it investigates the mediating role of employee-oriented HRM in the relationship between responsible leadership and psychological safety. Promoting a safe workplace for everyone is a key tenet of SDG-8, which focuses on promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. The findings reveal that responsible leadership ensures employee-oriented HRM, which subsequently enhances employees’ psychological safety. Further, the results suggest that employee-oriented HRM acts as a mediator between responsible

leadership and psychological safety. The study offers a novel contribution by conceptualizing and empirically validating employee-oriented HRM as a mechanism that links responsible leadership and psychological safety. It stands as the first of its kind to establish this significant relationship, shedding new light on the dynamics between responsible leadership, HRM practices and employees' sense of psychological safety [Bashir et al. \(2025\)](#).

The fifth paper, "*Inclusive and sustainable economic growth for MSME firms: examining the impact of sustainable HRM practices on women's well-being*," by Debolina Dutta, Prashant Srivastava, Nazia Zabin Menon and Chaitali Vedak, explores inclusive and sustainable growth in MSME by examining people-oriented practices that expand employment opportunities for women. It uses the conservation of resources theory to explore sustainable HRM practices like telecommuting, managerial support and understanding generational preferences to enhance women's well-being. The study captures the impact of HRM practices on employee well-being using multi-source data that were collected through an online questionnaire administered to 2,856 female employees in 18 Indian MSMEs. The data analysis revealed that satisfaction with HRM practices positively impacted employee well-being. Secondly, satisfaction with telecommuting mediated the relationship between satisfaction with HRM practices and employee well-being. Thirdly, managerial support positively moderated the relationship between satisfaction with telecommuting and well-being. Lastly, generational cohort membership moderated the satisfaction with HRM policies and well-being, with Generation Z having a stronger need than Generation Y. This study emphasizes the significance of robust and gender-sensitive HRM practices in MSMEs in high-growth emerging markets. It emphasizes the need for telecommuting policies and the role of managers in creating a supportive work environment for women. By focusing on gender inclusion and the impact of telecommuting, generational preferences and managerial support, the study contributes to mechanisms for sustainable labor as an economic and social concept. This study explores sustainable MSME HRM practices supporting gender inclusions and women's well-being in high-growth emerging markets ([Dutta et al., 2025](#)).

The sixth paper, "*Workplace bullying and job outcomes: intersectional effects of gender and culture*," by Connie Zheng, Shazia Nuaman and Nida Usman Jahangir, explores the under-researched phenomenon of workplace bullying against women in male-dominated Pakistani society, highlighting its severe impacts and bridging the research gap on intersectional effects of gender and cultural dynamics in developing countries. The study uses a mixed-methods research approach and conducted 2-wave surveys with 308 female workers in Pakistan's educational and health sectors. Data analysis examined relationships between workplace bullying and job outcomes like productivity and satisfaction, complemented by insights from in-depth interviews with 18 female workers. The study reveals that workplace bullying significantly undermines job productivity, increases emotional exhaustion mediated by job anxiety and decreases job satisfaction among female workers. Bullying persists due to weak institutions and inadequate law enforcement, with perceived social support found to be an insignificant moderator. The study findings underscore the economic implications of workplace bullying, as it drives female workforce attrition, hindering economic development. The study recommends conflict resolution strategies, effective HR policies, national law enforcement and supportive social networks to combat bullying and create a conducive work environment. The study aligns with the UN's SDG goals #5 (gender equality) and #8 (decent work and economic growth), addressing pertinent issues related to workplace bullying in pursuit of these global objectives ([Zheng et al., 2025](#)).

The seventh paper, "*Inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem for PWDs: a reflection on SDGs*," by Snigdha Malhotra, Tavleen Kaur, Kokil Jain, Prashant Kumar Pandey and Aniket Sengupta, explores challenges encountered by entrepreneurs with disabilities (EwDs) in starting or sustaining a business in an Indian ecosystem. The study further aims to examine the status of entrepreneurial outcomes while comprehending the intersection of the challenges of disability and entrepreneurship. The study draws on stakeholder and social identity theories to

understand this critical connection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 EWDs and 5 entrepreneurship support organizations (ESOs) to explore the challenges faced and the available support in the Indian context. The study explores the level of coordination and roles these organizations play in fostering an entrepreneurial culture for PWDs. People with disabilities (PWDs) encounter several impediments to employment prospects, contributing to India's huge employment gap. Entrepreneurship offers a different avenue for PWDs to overcome these constraints. ESOs play a significant role in assisting PwD entrepreneurs. The study further offers implications for policymakers to foster inclusive infrastructure, financial institutions to provide accessible credit options and ESOs to amplify tailored assistance. Importantly, these dynamics have implications for advancing relevant SDGs. The intersectional lens of disability and entrepreneurial challenges offered to study PwD entrepreneurship highlights new directions for exploring the phenomenon in deeper detail. Further, the theoretical underpinnings of stakeholder and social identity theories provide practical and indispensable insights into the phenomenon (Malhotra *et al.*, 2025).

The eighth paper – “*Metaverse meetings: fantasy or sustainable future of work?*” – by Aman Kumar, Amit Shankar, Rajesh Kumar and Ajith Kumar Vadakki Veetil, examines the effect of crucial factors (benefits and sacrifices) influencing employees' perceived values (hedonic and utilitarian) towards metaverse meeting platforms. Further, the study investigates the impact of employees' perceived values (hedonic and utilitarian values) on behavioral intention to use metaverse meeting platforms. The study also examines how behavioral intention to use metaverse meeting platforms influences organizational SDG achievement. Finally, the authors analyzed the moderating impact of employee creativity. The study enriches the existing literature pertaining to the metaverse, strategic human resources, sustainability, employee creativity and technology adoption. The research also enriches the value-based adoption model and stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theories. Social presence and technostress are significantly associated with perceived hedonic value. Further, social presence, exhaustion and technostress are significantly associated with perceived utilitarian value. Similarly, perceived hedonic and utilitarian value is significantly associated with behavioral intention to use metaverse meeting platforms. Further, behavioral intention to use metaverse meeting platforms is also significantly associated with SDG achievement (Kumar *et al.*, 2025).

The ninth paper, “*Integrating sustainable development goals into HRM in emerging markets: an empirical investigation of Indian and Chinese banks*,” by Sehrish Shahid, Kuldeep Kaur, Parth Patel, Sanjeev Kumar and Verma Prikshat, explores the role of HRM practices in advancing SDGs within emerging markets. Specifically, this study examines how HRM practices in financial institutions in the emerging markets of India and China promote SDGs 8 (decent work and economic growth), 10 (reduced inequalities) and 13 (climate action). The study also proposes a framework integrating these key SDG goals with core HRM functions. Secondary data analysis was employed using data from sustainability reports of the top five Indian and Chinese banks listed in Forbes – the Global (2000) ranking for 2022–2023. These sustainability reports were analyzed based on their reporting of indicators from the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) 400 series, aligned with the SDGs 8, 10 and 13. The result of the comparative analysis indicates that both Indian and Chinese banks use HRM practices of recruitment and selection, rewards and payments, workplace health and safety, and training and development to meet SDGs 8 (decent work and economic growth), 10 (reduced inequalities) and 13 (climate action). Regarding the reporting and disclosure of HRM practices in diversity, equity and inclusion, Indian banks outperform Chinese banks, and these practices contribute significantly to SDGs 8, 10 and 13. The dominance of state-owned initiatives in China dictates the alignment of HRM strategies with economic priorities at the national level, highlighting the challenge of balancing global sustainability initiatives with a centralized management system. The study provides a comprehensive examination of sustainability reports with a specific focus on HRM practices and their role in advancing SDGs (Shahid *et al.*, 2025).

3. Summary of research papers and themes

Put together, all these papers underpin a set of pivoting themes that highlight the role of organizational strategy, HR practices and innovative approaches in furthering sustainability and inclusivity across sectors.

3.1 Sustainability and SDGs

A common theme in all of them is their linkage to the UN SDGs, where organizational efforts regarding decent work (SDG 8), gender equality (SDG 5), climate action (SDG 13) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10) have been represented, highlighting relevance to the attainment of broader global sustainability objectives. These themes thus form the foundation and offer directions in which research is progressing at the cusp of SDG and HRM.

3.2 Application areas in human resource management

For both sustainability and well-being, HRM then emerged as one of the vital drivers. All the way to encouraging inclusivity through addressing issues of work problems, HRM practices in relation to recruitment, training and telecommuting become very powerful tools toward reaching economic, social and environmental objectives.

3.3 Psychological well-being and safety

Various studies highlight psychological safety and well-being as important features of workplaces. It is emphasized that responsible leadership and employee-oriented HRM are decisive in creating safe and supportive environments that have a positive impact on productivity, satisfaction and sustainability goals.

3.4 Gender and inclusion

Gender-sensitive policies and inclusion practices are crucial for sustainable economic growth. Various studies have identified managerial support, fair contracts and HR practices adapted to the needs of women and marginalized groups as key enablers, in line with SDG 5, toward a more equitable workplace.

3.5 Innovation and technology

The second thread is innovation: technological and procedural. From green innovations in food industries to the metaverse platforms for virtual meetings, organizations embrace such advancements that influence efficiency, inclusiveness and sustainability performance.

3.6 Intersectionality and cultural dynamics

Workplace bullying against women in male-dominated societies or the struggles of EwDs raise the call for intersectionality of gender, culture and ability. These call for nuanced solutions in context and enabling ecosystems.

3.7 Policy and leadership

Effective leadership and robust policy frameworks are crucial in fostering sustainability. Responsible leadership ensures employee engagement and psychological safety, while inclusive policies address systemic challenges like workplace discrimination and accessibility.

3.8 Training and capacity building

Capacity building through effective training programs is pivotal in sectors like agriculture and MSMEs. Studies show that sustained training, coupled with intrinsic motivation, equips individuals and organizations to adopt sustainable practices and drive SDG alignment.

These themes together show how organizations, leadership and innovative strategies can work together to create inclusive, sustainable and forward-thinking ecosystems.

4. Conclusion

The focus of the reviewed studies clearly points to sustainability, inclusivity and innovation shaping the future of organizational and societal outcomes. Using the attainment of the SDGs, it has been indicated that businesses are at the frontline in fighting pressing challenges such as climate action, gender equality, and decent work. HRM emerges as a cornerstone for fostering employee well-being, inclusivity and productivity, with tailored practices such as telecommuting, training and leadership-driven psychological safety proving critical. Innovation and technology adoption, whether through green practices or digital platforms like the metaverse, further enable organizations to enhance efficiency and sustainability. It is at the junction of gender, culture and ability that inclusive frameworks have the most meaning; meanwhile, such systemic barriers like workplace bullying or entrepreneurship challenges felt by the marginalized group demand policies and leadership just as strong to break them. Training and capacity building also become important to turn individuals and industries around in leap-starting greener practices in line with global goals. Collectively, these themes support that a holistic approach is required for developing resilient, equitable and sustainable ecosystems through HRM, innovation, inclusivity and policy reform, which shall address current challenges and contribute towards the global cause in the long run.

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