

Sustainable Human Resource Management Practices and Their Role in Enhancing Institutional Sustainability: An Integrative Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable Human Resource Management has emerged as a comprehensive approach that aligns human resource policies and practices with organizations' long-term economic, social, and environmental responsibilities. However, the relevant literature remains fragmented across HRM practices, sustainability dimensions, organizational sectors, and national contexts, with limited integrative attention to employee-level mechanisms and contextual conditions. This study synthesizes the conceptual and empirical literature on the contribution of Sustainable HRM to institutional sustainability. An integrative literature review was conducted using 50 Arabic and international sources identified through Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and backward reference searching. The sources were screened according to predefined eligibility criteria and analyzed through critical comparison and thematic synthesis. The analysis focused on four practices: recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation and rewards. The findings indicate that these practices contribute to institutional sustainability by strengthening employee capabilities, motivation, engagement, well-being, trust, innovation, resilience, and responsible behavior. Their contribution is strongest when they operate as an integrated system supported by leadership, organizational culture, employee participation, adequate resources, and digital capability. The review further clarifies that Green HRM represents the environmental component of the broader Sustainable HRM framework. Based on the synthesis, the study proposes an integrative conceptual framework linking Sustainable HRM practices, employee-level mechanisms, contextual factors, and the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of institutional sustainability. Important geographical, contextual, and methodological gaps remain, particularly in public institutions, Arab and developing-country contexts, and longitudinal and qualitative research.

Keywords: Sustainable Human Resource Management; Institutional Sustainability; HRM Practices; Employee-Level Mechanisms; Integrative Literature Review.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the paradigm of modern management has been radically changed as a result of the rapid economic, social, technological and environmental developments. These advancements have spurred organizations to think beyond standard goals focused on primarily profit and efficiency. The success of an organization is judged more and more on its skill to provide sustainable value to stakeholders, whilst protecting and sustaining the economy, environment and human resources for present and future generations. As a result, institutional sustainability has become one of the key concepts that are transforming modern administrative and strategic thinking. Sustainability is not only about environment protection but also a holistic approach that

considers economic, social and environmental factors in organizational strategies, decisions and activities (Ayyat, 2026b; Joel & Michael, 2019).

This transformation has stimulated growing scholarly and managerial interest in redesigning organizational functions to meet the sustainability needs. Human Resource Management (HRM) is significant in this aspect as it is the centre piece in developing the capabilities of the organization and the sustainable competitive advantage of the organization. The development of an innovation, organizational development, and performance improvement rely mainly on the role played by the employees, and the ability to successfully implement sustainability strategies depends largely on the capacity of the organization to effectively manage their workforce, build their knowledge and skills, and boost their commitment to sustainability-oriented values (Al-Wakeel, 2022; Sharqawi, 2016).

In this context, Sustainable Human Resource Management (Sustainable HRM) has emerged as an extension of Strategic Human Resource Management. It connects HR policies and practices with sustainable development goals by balancing economic performance, social responsibility, employee well-being and environmental protection (Ayyat & Abu Safieh, 2025; Abusafia et al., 2025). This approach extends beyond the traditional functions of recruitment, training, and Performance appraisal to include the preservation of human capital, organizational justice and employee well-being, responsible resources use, innovation, and the integration of sustainability values into organizational policies and practices (Ayyat, 2026b).

The literature indicates that HRM practices can have a significant impact on the ability of an organization to achieve institutional sustainability. The processes for recruitment and selection attract people whose competencies, values and attitudes align with sustainability goals. Training and development improves knowledge and skills needed to apply practices to meet changing organizational and environmental needs. Relevant economic, social and environmental indicators can be brought into performance appraisal systems, which then can shape employee behaviour towards sustainability goals. Likewise, incentive and incentive programmes can motivate engagement with sustainability initiatives, reinforce sustainable behaviours and help to drive sustainable performance over time (Taha, 2025; Ayyat, 2026b). The practices are best carried out within an overall system of practices that is consistent with the organization's overall strategy rather than individually as administrative practices.

Although there is growing interest in the link between HRM and sustainability, there is a fragmented body of literature based on countries, sectors, organizational levels and HR practices. There have been numerous attempts to study recruitment, training, performance appraisal or rewards individually, with limited views on how the practices interact to create institutional sustainability. Conceptualisation of sustainability in the literature also can differ, for example by highlighting environmental outcomes versus economic performance, social responsibility outcomes, or employee well-being. Due to this conceptual variation, the results comparison becomes more difficult and provides less space for creating an integrated understanding of Sustainable HRM.

Focusing on the Arab and developing countries context, Sustainable HRM is less studied than in developed economies, and this fragmentation is more noticeable. The literature on studies of Arabic in HRM is predominantly about conventional HRM practices and their connection to either employee or organizational outcomes, with few studies examining the interaction of these practices with the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability. Despite the unique legal, structural, financial and administrative environment operating in public-sector institutions, which could impact on how and if sustainability-focused HR practices are adopted and implemented, research on the subject is also limited (Al-Karki, 2022; Al-Wakeel, 2022; Ayyat, 2026b).

Furthermore, new challenges like the digital transformation, the development of artificial intelligence, workforce analytics, institutional resilience and sustainable employee well-being need to be explored in this area in more detail. Hence, this study aims to provide an integrative analysis of the literature concerning Sustainable HRM practices and their contribution to institutional sustainability. It focuses on four practices: recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation and rewards. The review

examines their relationships with the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability, together with the employee-level mechanisms and contextual factors through which these relationships may occur. It also identifies the principal areas of agreement, inconsistency, and conceptual, contextual, geographical, and methodological research gaps.

More specifically, the review addresses four questions: (1) How is Sustainable HRM conceptualized in the contemporary literature? (2) How do its principal practices contribute to institutional sustainability? (3) Through which employee-level mechanisms and contextual factors do these contributions occur? and (4) What major conceptual, contextual, geographical, and methodological gaps characterize the existing literature? By addressing these questions, the study consolidates fragmented knowledge into an integrated explanatory framework linking Sustainable HRM practices, employee-level mechanisms, contextual factors, and institutional sustainability outcomes. Theoretically, it clarifies the distinction between Sustainable HRM and Green HRM and explains how HR practices may contribute to economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Practically, it provides organizational leaders, policymakers, and HR professionals with guidance for developing coherent HR systems that support employee well-being, organizational adaptability, responsible behavior, and long-term institutional sustainability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an integrative literature review design to examine and synthesize theoretical and empirical knowledge concerning the role of Sustainable Human Resource Management (Sustainable HRM) practices in enhancing institutional sustainability. The integrative approach was selected because it permits the inclusion and critical comparison of studies employing different theoretical perspectives, methodological designs, organizational settings, and forms of evidence. It is particularly appropriate for Sustainable HRM, a multidisciplinary field that draws on human resource management, organizational behavior, sustainability management, and corporate social responsibility.

The review focused on four principal HRM practices: recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation and rewards. It examined how these practices contribute to the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of institutional sustainability. It also considered employee-level mechanisms and contextual factors that may strengthen or constrain these relationships.

Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted primarily through Scopus and Web of Science. Google Scholar and ResearchGate were used as supplementary sources to identify relevant publications that might not have been captured by the principal databases. Backward reference searching was also conducted by examining the reference lists of influential studies and review articles.

The search was updated through August 2026 and included publications in both English and Arabic. The search terms included different combinations of the following keywords: “Sustainable Human Resource Management,” “Sustainable HRM,” “Sustainable HRM practices,” “Green Human Resource Management,” “institutional sustainability,” “organizational sustainability,” “sustainable organizational performance,” “sustainable recruitment and selection,” “sustainable training and development,” “sustainability-oriented performance appraisal,” “sustainable compensation and rewards,” “employee well-being,” “digital HRM,” and “artificial intelligence in HRM.” Boolean operators such as AND and OR connected the principal HRM concepts with specific practices, employee outcomes, and the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability.

No fixed lower publication-date limit was imposed because the review sought to retain foundational contributions that supported the conceptual development of Sustainable HRM. Nevertheless, particular attention was given to studies published between 2021 and 2026 to reflect recent theoretical developments, emerging organizational conditions, digital transformation, and contemporary sustainability priorities.

Eligibility Criteria and Screening Process

Sources were included when they met the following criteria: (1) they explicitly examined Sustainable HRM, Green HRM, or HRM practices in relation to organizational or institutional sustainability; (2) they addressed at least one of the four HRM practices examined in this review or provided evidence relevant to sustainability-related employee and organizational outcomes; (3) they were published in English or Arabic; (4) they represented an identifiable academic or institutional publication; and (5) they provided sufficient theoretical, methodological, or empirical detail to contribute meaningfully to the research questions.

The review considered peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, scholarly reports, doctoral dissertations, and relevant Arabic academic publications. The inclusion of different source types was consistent with the integrative character of the review and enabled the analysis to incorporate both international evidence and contextually relevant contributions.

Sources were excluded when they were duplicates, non-academic opinion pieces, commercial materials, inadequately documented publications, or studies that referred generally to HRM or sustainability without establishing a clear relationship between them. Publications were also excluded when their content did not provide sufficient conceptual explanation, empirical evidence, or contextual information to address the objectives of the review.

The screening process was conducted in successive stages. Search results were first consolidated, and duplicate records were removed. Titles and abstracts were then examined to determine their relevance to Sustainable HRM and institutional sustainability. Potentially relevant publications were subsequently assessed through full-text examination against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. This process resulted in a final corpus of 50 sources.

The number of sources was not established as a predetermined target. Rather, the final corpus represented the publications that satisfied the eligibility criteria and provided adequate coverage of the principal concepts, HRM practices, sustainability dimensions, theoretical perspectives, research designs, and organizational contexts addressed in the study. The final selection combined foundational and recent studies, international and Arabic-language contributions, and conceptual and empirical evidence.

Data Extraction and Quality Considerations

A structured review matrix was used to organize and compare the selected literature. For each source, the following information was recorded where available: author and year, country or geographical context, organizational sector, research design, conceptualization of Sustainable or Green HRM, HRM practice examined, sustainability dimension addressed, employee-level mechanisms, contextual factors, and principal findings.

Because the review included heterogeneous forms of evidence, a single quantitative quality-scoring instrument was not applied. Instead, the sources were considered according to their academic traceability, relevance to the research questions, clarity of purpose and design, adequacy of theoretical or empirical support, and coherence between the evidence presented and the conclusions reached. Greater interpretive weight was assigned to peer-reviewed empirical studies and systematic or integrative reviews with clearly reported methods. Reports, dissertations, and Arabic academic publications were used mainly to strengthen contextual coverage and conceptual interpretation where relevant.

Analytical Procedure

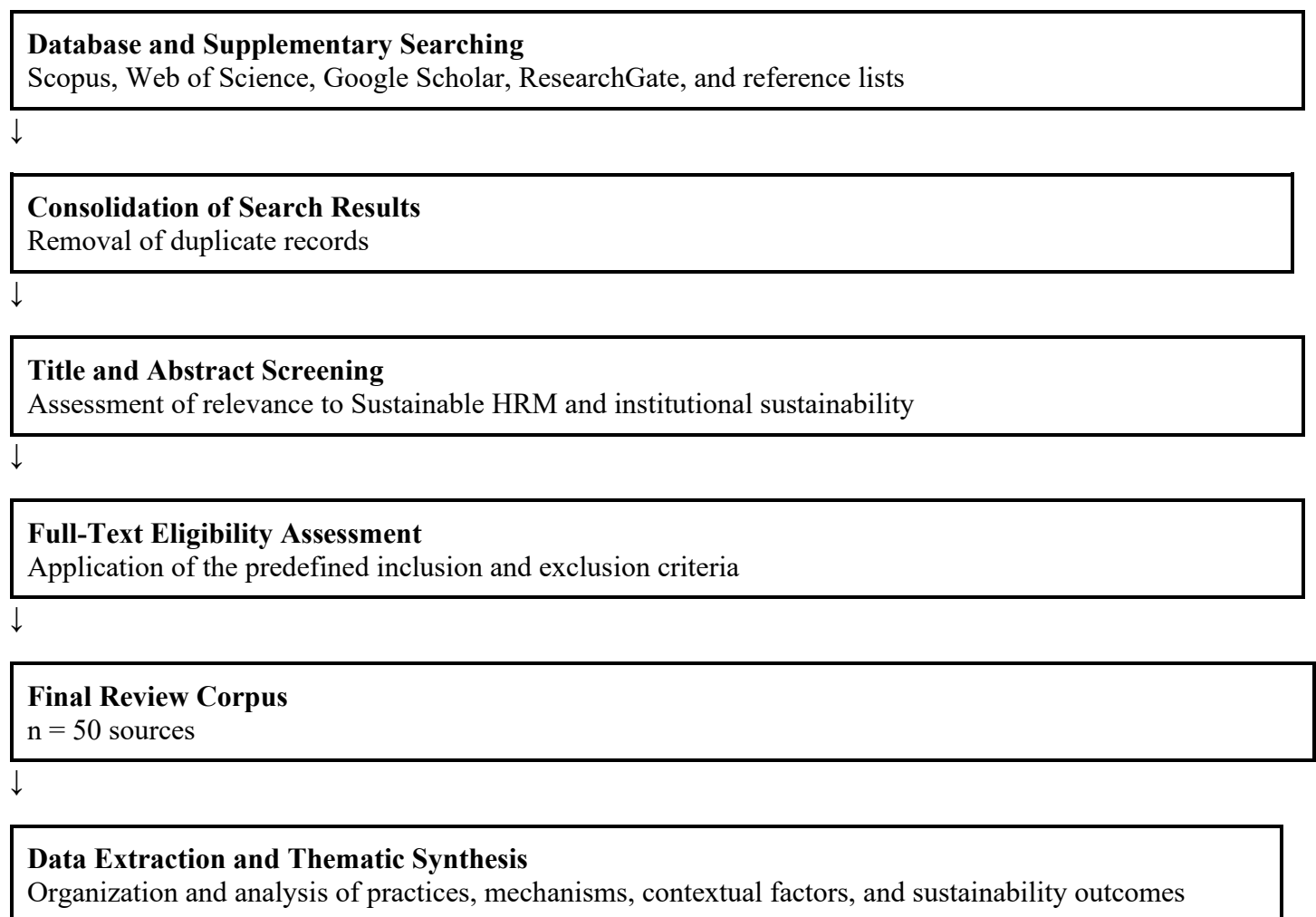
The selected literature was analyzed through a combination of deductive categorization and inductive thematic synthesis. Deductive categorization organized the evidence according to the four HRM practices recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation and rewards and the three dimensions of institutional sustainability: economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

The inductive stage identified recurring mechanisms and contextual conditions emerging from the reviewed literature. Employee-level mechanisms included sustainability-related knowledge and capabilities, motivation, engagement, trust, well-being, commitment, innovation, and responsible behavior. Contextual factors included leadership support, organizational culture, employee participation, resource availability, regulatory conditions, technological infrastructure, and digital capability.

The analysis compared areas of convergence and divergence across studies rather than relying on a simple count of positive and negative findings. It also examined differences associated with organizational sector, geographical setting, theoretical perspective, and research design. Particular attention was given to inconsistencies, underexplored relationships, and conceptual, contextual, geographical, and methodological research gaps.

This study should not be interpreted as a meta-analysis. A meta-analysis statistically combines effect sizes obtained from sufficiently comparable quantitative studies. In contrast, the present integrative review incorporated heterogeneous conceptual and empirical sources and used qualitative comparison, critical interpretation, and thematic synthesis. No statistical pooling or calculation of aggregate effect sizes was undertaken.

Figure 1. Literature Identification, Screening, and Synthesis Process



Source: Developed by the authors based on the review procedure.

Table 1 provides an overview of a subset of the key conceptual, review, and empirical studies that shaped the thematic synthesis, and highlights the variety of evidence that was reviewed. The table does not provide a

complete list of 50 sources that were part of the review; rather it shows the studies that are more closely tied to the conceptual frame, key HRM practices, explanatory mechanisms and sustainability outcomes of the study.

Table 1. Summary of Key Studies Included in the Integrative Review

Study	Context and scope	Design	Principal focus	Main contribution to the review
Bansal (2005)	Corporate sustainable development	Longitudinal empirical study	Organizational sustainability development	Demonstrated that sustainability develops over time in response to regulatory, competitive, and stakeholder pressures.
Birdi et al. (2008)	Manufacturing organizations	Longitudinal empirical study	HRM, operational practices, and productivity	Shown that employee-development and organizational practices can generate long-term improvements in organizational performance.
Jackson et al. (2011)	International Green HRM literature	Conceptual review	Green HRM practices and environmental management	Identified recruitment, training, performance management, and rewards as central HR mechanisms supporting environmental objectives.
DuBois and Dubois (2012)	Organizational environmental sustainability	Conceptual study	Strategic HRM as social design	Explained how HR systems can embed environmental sustainability into organizational structures, roles, and employee behavior.
Delery and Gupta (2016)	Strategic HRM literature	Conceptual and analytical study	Internal alignment among HRM practices	Emphasized that HR practices generate stronger outcomes when implemented as an internally consistent system.
Guerci et al. (2019)	HR managers and professionals	Empirical study	Employee reactions to Sustainable HRM	Extended Sustainable HRM research beyond economic outcomes by examining how HR professionals respond to sustainability-oriented practices.

Podgorodnichenko et al. (2020)	Sustainable organizations	Conceptual review	HRM contradictions and sustainability	Highlighted tensions between organizational performance, employee well-being, and broader social and environmental responsibilities.
Aust et al. (2020)	Sustainable HRM and the Sustainable Development Goals	Conceptual study	Common Good HRM	Proposed a stakeholder-oriented HRM paradigm that considers employees, society, and the natural environment.
Nisar et al. (2021)	Green hotels in Malaysia	Quantitative empirical study	Green HRM and environmental performance	Demonstrated that green intellectual capital and pro-environmental behavior help explain how Green HRM contributes to environmental performance.
Jaskeviciute et al. (2021)	Employees in Lithuania	Literature analysis and empirical examination	Employee well-being and organizational trust	Established the relevance of employee well-being and trust as social and relational outcomes of Sustainable HRM.
Tanova and Bayighomog (2022)	Service industries; 48 empirical studies	Systematic literature review	Green HRM antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes	Revealed substantial variation in theoretical perspectives, measurement instruments, mediators, moderators, and sectoral outcomes.
Vrontis et al. (2022)	International HRM and technology literature	Systematic literature review	Artificial intelligence and advanced HR technologies	Identified applications, opportunities, and research challenges associated with AI, robotics, and digital technologies in HRM.
Lu et al. (2023)	Employees and organizations	Empirical study	Sustainable HRM, resilience, engagement, and performance	Demonstrated that employee resilience and work engagement are important mechanisms connecting Sustainable HRM with employee outcomes.
Chowdhury et al. (2023)	International Green HRM literature	Systematic literature review	Green HRM and sustainable organizational performance	Proposed a holistic framework connecting HR practices, employee-level mechanisms, and sustainable organizational outcomes.

Xie and Lau (2023)	International Green HRM literature	Systematic literature review	Evidence-based Green HRM	Synthesized major Green HRM practices and showed the importance of their integration in shaping knowledge, motivation, and behavior.
Ren et al. (2023)	Strategic HRM and sustainability literature	Integrative conceptual analysis	HRM and the sustainability agenda	Argued for expanding HRM research beyond organizational economic outcomes to include employees, society, and the environment.
Jamil et al. (2023)	Organizational sustainability performance	Quantitative empirical study	Green recruitment	Provided evidence that green recruitment can contribute to organizational sustainability when aligned with broader Green HRM practices.
Cooke et al. (2023)	Contemporary international HRM research	Critical conceptual review	Sustainable HRM research ecosystem	Called for a more human-centered, socially responsive, context-sensitive, and inclusive HRM research agenda.
Wojtczuk-Turek et al. (2024)	14,502 employees across 54 countries	Cross-cultural multilevel study	Sustainable HRM and job satisfaction	Found a positive association between perceived Sustainable HRM and job satisfaction, with variations across organizational and cultural contexts.
Miah et al. (2024)	Green HRM and organizational sustainability literature	Systematic literature review	Trends and configurations of Green HRM practices	Confirmed that sustainable outcomes depend on interconnected recruitment, training, appraisal, involvement, and reward practices.
Liang et al. (2024)	32 HR managers in Italy	Qualitative interview study	HR managers' understanding and implementation of Sustainable HRM	Identified the social emphasis of Sustainable HRM, HR managers' implementation roles, and major barriers to adoption.
Sadek and Karkoulian (2025)	Firms in Lebanon	Quantitative empirical study	Green performance appraisal and organizational sustainability	Showed that green appraisal can support sustainability through employee green behavior and the use of environmental knowledge.

Bai (2025)	Sustainable HRM literature	Conceptual and analytical study	Sustainable HRM and employee well-being	Positioned employee well-being as a central outcome of Sustainable HRM rather than a secondary consequence of performance.
Liang and Li (2025)	Sustainable HRM and performance literature	Conceptual review and research agenda	Mechanisms and boundary conditions	Developed a framework explaining how Sustainable HRM affects performance through mediating mechanisms and contextual conditions.
Bučiūnienė and Goštautaitė (2025)	Education sector	Empirical study	Sustainable HRM, crises, and employee well-being	Demonstrated relevance of Sustainable HRM in protecting well-being and reducing adverse effects of organizational crises.

Note. The table presents 25 key publications selected from the complete analytical corpus of 50 sources. The remaining publications were used to support conceptual definitions, individual HRM practices, contextual interpretation, and the identification of research gaps.

The reviewed literature encompasses cross-sectional and longitudinal empirical studies, qualitative and conceptual research, and systematic reviews conducted across diverse organizational and national contexts (Table 1). This methodological and contextual diversity supports an integrative examination of Sustainable HRM and institutional sustainability. However, it also reveals substantial variation in the definition, measurement, and operationalization of both concepts. The following section therefore examines the conceptual foundations of institutional sustainability and Sustainable HRM before analyzing the contribution of the four focal HRM practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutional Sustainability: Concept and Dimensions

There has been significant evolution in the definition of sustainability over the past few decades. It has grown from a very predominant environmental issue to a strategic approach that provides organizations with a framework to balance the economic, social and environmental objectives. One of the foundational definitions supporting this development was provided by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), which defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This definition later became a cornerstone for understanding sustainability and its implications in the organizational context.

In the context of the development of management thought, sustainability has been interpreted as an all-encompassing management philosophy and not just a simple environmental responsibility. It now shapes the actions of organizations, administration, resource distribution, relationships with stakeholders and decision making. Bansal (2005) identifies several organizational and contextual factors that influence organizations’ commitment to sustainability. Sustainability is thus increasingly linked with an organization’s ability to generate enduring value and to respond responsibly to the greater environment. Institutional sustainability refers to an organization’s ability to operate effectively, respond to environmental changes, and create lasting value without undermining the economic, human, social, or natural resources on which its continuity depends. It demands an organization to go beyond short-term maximization of financial returns and look at the broader implications of

its actions for employees, communities, stakeholders and the natural environment. Thus, institutional sustainability involves sustainable use of resources, social equity, organizational resilience, and ongoing human and organizational capacity building (Ayyat & Abu Safieh, 2025; Abusafia et al., 2025).

The literature typically defines sustainability in terms of the Triple Bottom Line, which is composed of three interdependent sustainability dimensions: economic, social and environmental sustainability (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010; White & Lee, 2009). This is a framework that places importance on the fact that sustainable organizational performance can't be measured in a financial sense alone. Rather, organizations need to create value for the economy, meet their social obligations and reduce any negative environmental impacts at the same time. It is therefore important that all these dimensions are kept coherent and balanced to make sustainability strategies effective.

Economic sustainability refers to an organization's ability to manage its financial, material, and human resources effectively, maintain productivity, support innovation, and create value over the long term. It extends beyond short-term profitability to include resource efficiency, cost control, risk management, adaptability, and the capacity to respond to future challenges. Economic sustainability is achieved when an organization maintains its long-term viability without undermining the social and environmental foundations necessary for its continued operation (Al-Rikabi, 2022; Ayyat, 2026a).

Social sustainability is related to an organization's obligations to its employees, stakeholders and community at large. It encompasses fair and safe employment practices, the recognition of employee rights, organizational justice, diversity and inclusion, employee involvement in decision-making processes, employee training and development, and the community's welfare and wellbeing. Investment in employees, and enhancements in the quality of working life, in particular, are pivotal for strengthening organizational commitment, employee well-being, productivity, and the long-term preservation of human capital (Siddharth et al., 2021).

Environmental sustainability is the process of minimizing undesirable environmental impacts of activities carried out by an organization. This is related to responsible consumption of natural resources, energy efficiency, waste minimisation, emissions control, awareness of the environment and adoption of environmentally responsible technologies and work practices. The use of environmental considerations in organizational culture, policies and day-to-day decision making is essential for the success of environmental sustainability, according to Linnenluecke and Griffiths (2010) rather than environmental considerations being adopted as a separate or temporary project.

Although the three dimensions can be distinguished analytically, they remain closely interconnected. Organizations that neglect employee well-being, social legitimacy, or environmental risks may find it difficult to maintain economic continuity. Similarly, social and environmental initiatives cannot be sustained without adequate financial resources and organizational support. Sustainable organizations must therefore manage the relationships and potential trade-offs among these dimensions rather than pursue each dimension independently (Bansal, 2005; Kolk et al., 2010; Ayyat & Abu Safieh, 2025).

Institutional sustainability should therefore be understood as a strategic orientation embedded throughout the organization rather than as a short-term program or an isolated environmental initiative. Achieving it requires organizations to reconsider their administrative processes and align their policies with long-term economic, social, and environmental objectives. HRM occupies a central position in this process because the implementation of sustainability commitments ultimately depends on employees' competencies, values, behavior, participation, and capacity to translate strategic objectives into everyday organizational practices. This connection provides the foundation for the development of Sustainable Human Resource Management.

Sustainable Human Resource Management: Concept and Intellectual Development

HRM has undergone a significant transformation in its philosophy and organizational position. It has evolved from an administrative function concerned primarily with personnel matters into a strategic function that directly influences organizational performance and long-term objectives. This shift has been stimulated by economic,

technological, environmental, and social changes that demand new thinking about human capital management, development, and retention in today's complex and unpredictable landscape (Al-Karki, 2022; Delery & Gupta, 2016). In this context, Sustainable Human Resource Management has become a new and current way to include the concept of sustainability in the management practices, strategies and policies for human resources. It aims to harmonize the efficiency and economy of the organization and the employees with social responsibility and environmental protection (De Guercio et al., 2018; Ayyat & Abu Safieh, 2025). Unlike traditional HRM which focuses on immediate needs of the organization and short-term performance, Sustainable HRM focuses on a longer-term perspective, thus it takes into consideration the preservation of human capital, maintaining workforce capabilities and the fact that HR decisions made today do not compromise the organization's future viability.

The evolution of Sustainable HRM has been a gradual process that has been paralleled by the overall sustainability agenda. The focus of the earlier HRM was mainly on productivity, efficiency and competitive advantage. As the years went by, employee health and well-being, organizational justice, diversity and inclusion, work-life balance, environmental responsibility, and the long-term employability of workers became part of the scope of HRM. This is a sign of the increasing understanding that organizational sustainability is not just a matter of finances and technology, but a matter of the ability, commitment, health and adaptability of the workforce (Cohen et al., 2010; Jackson et al., 2011).

The evidence from recent cross-national studies validates the social and employee-centered contribution of Sustainable HRM. Wojtczuk-Turek et al. (2024) conducted a study on Sustainable HRM and Job Satisfaction, with 14,502 employees from 54 countries, and found that the employees' perception of Sustainable HRM is positively correlated with Job Satisfaction. Such a relationship was not consistent across organizational identification and national cultural context, which suggests that Sustainable HRM outcomes are not homogenous in employees nor in countries. The results of this study corroborate the importance of employee wellbeing and attitudes towards work as integral elements of institutional sustainability.

This employee-centered reading is supplemented by more recent scholarship in Sustainable HRM. Bai (2025) states that employee well-being needs to be regarded as a core component of sustainable people management, and not as a by-product of organization performance. Thus, sustainable HRM should safeguard the physical, psychological, and professional resources of employees and establish a framework that enables them to be meaningfully engaged in work, to grow and develop, and to continue their participation in the organization in a sustainable way.

Employee well-being can also yield relational benefits, which can help ensure continuity within the organization. Jaskeviciute and colleagues (2021) have found that employee well-being has both direct and indirect links with organizational trust in the context of Sustainable HRM. This indicates that safeguarding employees' emotional, psychological and professional capacities can not only improve individual results but can also improve the quality of the working relationship and employees' trust in the organization. Recent literature has further highlighted the need to view Sustainable HRM as a multidimensional system and not a set of individual HRM practices. It affects employee performance via a series of interrelated psychological, behavioural, and organizational processes, and is likely to be different in different contexts and for different people, according to Liang and Li (2025). This view emphasizes the importance of studying not just if HRM for sustainability impacts on organizational outcomes, but also how and when these impacts occur.

According to Minbaeva (2005) HR practices can be described as an integrated set of policies and procedures aimed at building the capacity of employees, creating opportunities for knowledge sharing and creating good relationship between employees and the organization. A systemic approach is especially significant from a sustainability point of view as each HR activity has limited impact on sustainability if it is done alone. Delery and Gupta (2016) also state that value in HRM is not just about individual practices but having them work in a consistent and coherent manner that is aligned with the organizational strategy. All recruitment, training, performance appraisal and reward activities must therefore be sustainable and reinforce each other and adhere to the organization's sustainability agenda.

On the macro level, Guercio et al. (2018) define Sustainable HRM as a philosophy of organizations that takes into consideration the current organizational demands and future needs by investing resources in employees over a long period of time. Such awareness puts human capital as a fundamental factor ensuring sustainable development, and not just as a means to achieve operational goals. Companies rely on their employees to generate new concepts, carry out environmental programmes, develop relationships with stakeholders and adapt to social and technological change. Thus, Sustainable HRM brings together the management of people with the broader responsibilities of the organization towards society and the environment.

A similar shift in HRM role is evident in the Arabic literature. The HR function is now considered a strategic partner tasked with attracting the right competencies, nurturing skills, enabling learning and fostering cultures of innovation and organizational responsibility. This job goes beyond the mere application of standard employment practices, and must involve HR policies that are adaptive to both the environment and will support an organization's long-term development (Al-Ajmi & Al-Enezi, 2016; Al-Karki, 2022). Ayyat and Abu Safieh (2025) also stress that Sustainable HRM contributes to institutional sustainability by integrating HR policies with economic, social, and environmental goals in long-term planning, investing in human, innovation, and institutionalizing sustainability values.

Additionally, empirical evidence also suggests that HR managers do not interpret Sustainable HRM only in the aspect of environmental goals. Through interviews with 32 HR managers from Italy, Liang et al. (2024) determined that the respondents had a knowledge of Sustainable HRM that aligned with a number of organizational goals, but had a particular focus on the social aspect of HRM. The study also validated certain functions for HR managers, such as being owner of sustainability strategy, social innovation, employee advocacy and building partnerships for corporate responsibility. The findings show that HR is not only administrative supporters of sustainability related practices, but key actors in the interpretation and implementation of the organization's sustainability agenda.

A clear distinction should be made between Sustainable Human Resource Management and Green Human Resource Management. Green HRM primarily refers to the integration of environmental objectives into HR policies and practices. It emphasizes activities such as recruiting environmentally responsible employees, providing environmental training, incorporating green criteria into performance appraisal, rewarding environmentally responsible behavior, and encouraging employees to reduce waste and resource consumption (Renwick et al., 2013; Ren et al., 2018). Its principal concern is therefore the environmental dimension of organizational performance, although its practices may also generate economic and social benefits.

Sustainable HRM represents a broader and more comprehensive perspective. It considers the long-term effects of HR decisions on employees, organizations, society, and the natural environment. In addition to environmental responsibility, it addresses employee well-being, fair employment relationships, workforce continuity, capability development, organizational resilience, social responsibility, and long-term economic viability (Ehnert et al., 2016; Kramar, 2014; Aust et al., 2020). Sustainable HRM therefore seeks to meet current organizational needs without compromising the organization's future human-resource base or transferring negative consequences to employees, society, or future generations.

Also a wider stakeholder perspective is required to differentiate Sustainable HRM from traditional performance management oriented approaches. Ren et al. (2023) suggest that sustainability studies in strategic HRM should include other measures besides economic impacts, such as employee, community, society, and natural environment impacts. This view sees Sustainable HRM as a management response to and contribution to broader sustainability issues in the organization, not only in terms of gaining efficiency within the organization.

This broader understanding aligns with the Common Good HRM paradigm put forward by Aust et al. (2020). This approach to HRM do not simply focuses on the contribution to organizational performance but also takes into account the impact on employees, society, and nature. It thus reinforces the ethics and stakeholders thinking base of Sustainable HRM and links HRM practices more directly with SDGs.

Accordingly, Green HRM can be understood as an important environmental component of Sustainable HRM rather than as an interchangeable concept. In the present review, Sustainable HRM is adopted as the overarching framework because the analysis examines the contribution of recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation and rewards to the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of institutional sustainability. This broader perspective also makes it possible to examine employee-level mechanisms, including knowledge, motivation, engagement, responsible behavior, and well-being, together with contextual conditions such as leadership, organizational culture, employee participation, and digital capability.

This conceptual variety is due to the relative freshness of the subject and to the interdisciplinary nature of the study. However, there is a consensus in the literature on key principles, including a long-term perspective, maintenance and development of human resources, responsibility for employees and stakeholders, integration of sustainability in HR decisions, and coherence between HR practices and organizational strategy. In this regard, Sustainable HRM is a great step forward in management theory as it sees employees as a partner in attaining sustainability, instead of only being a factor to generate short-term output.

Recent systematic reviews provide supporting evidence on HR practices and the need for a focus on the entire employment process. Xie and Lau (2023) state that the recurring elements of Green HRM systems are recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, rewards and employee involvement. Their review also indicates that the success of these practices is dependent on their organizational integration and their capacity to influence the employees' environmental knowledge, motivation and behavior.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

Drawing on the literature reviewed, this study proposes an integrative conceptual framework explaining how Sustainable HRM practices contribute to institutional sustainability. The framework combines four interrelated practices: sustainable recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation and rewards. Rather than treating these practices as independent administrative activities, the framework views them as a coordinated system through which sustainability objectives are incorporated into the employment cycle and translated into employee attitudes, capabilities, and behavior (Kramar, 2014; Ehnert et al., 2016; Ren et al., 2018).

The framework proposes that Sustainable HRM practices influence institutional sustainability through employee-level mechanisms. Recruitment and selection introduce sustainability-related values and competencies into the organization; training and development build the knowledge and capabilities required for responsible action; performance appraisal communicates expectations and strengthens accountability; and compensation and rewards reinforce behaviors and outcomes consistent with sustainability priorities. Collectively, these practices can enhance employee knowledge, motivation, engagement, organizational trust, well-being, innovation, and responsible behavior. These mechanisms explain how formal HR policies may be translated into economic, social, and environmental outcomes rather than assuming an automatic or direct relationship between HR practices and institutional sustainability.

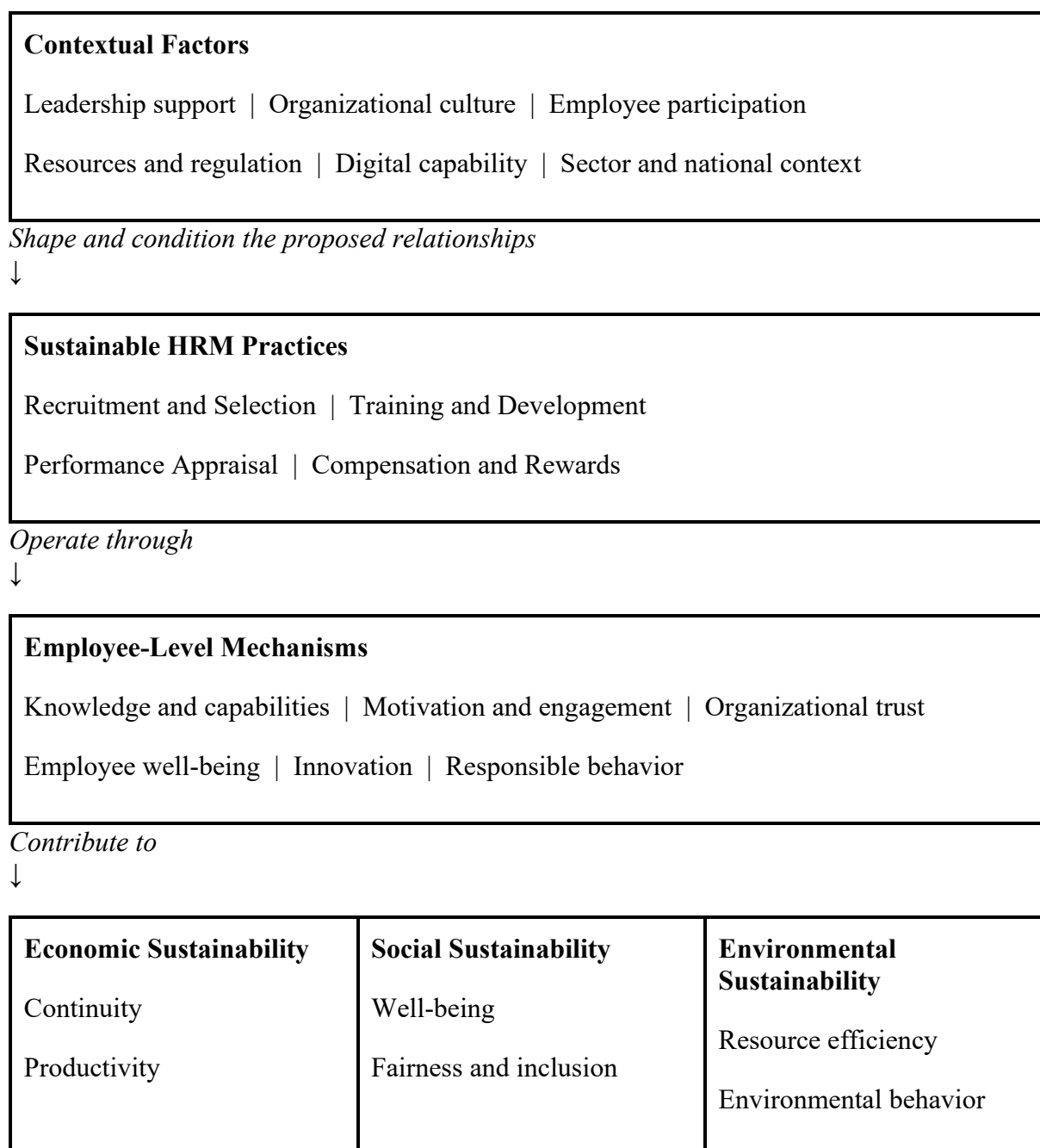
The effects of these practices are also shaped by contextual factors. Leadership support provides strategic direction and resources, while organizational culture determines whether sustainability is embedded in everyday decisions or remains a symbolic commitment. Employee participation influences the acceptance and practical implementation of sustainability initiatives, whereas digital capability affects the organization's capacity to collect information, deliver training, monitor performance, and support evidence-based HR decisions. Regulatory requirements, resource availability, organizational size, sector, and national context may also strengthen or constrain the relationships proposed in the framework.

Institutional sustainability constitutes the principal outcome of the framework and includes three interconnected dimensions. Economic sustainability concerns organizational continuity, productivity, adaptability, innovation, and the efficient use of resources. Social sustainability includes employee well-being, fairness, inclusion,

employability, trust, participation, and responsibility toward stakeholders. Environmental sustainability involves reducing resource consumption, supporting environmentally responsible behavior, and integrating environmental objectives into organizational operations. Improvements in these dimensions may occur simultaneously or sequentially; for example, environmental and behavioral improvements may contribute indirectly to longer-term economic outcomes.

The conceptual contribution of the framework lies in connecting Sustainable HRM practices, employee-level mechanisms, contextual conditions, and multidimensional sustainability outcomes within a single explanatory structure. It extends approaches that examine individual HR practices or focus primarily on environmental outcomes by adopting Sustainable HRM as the overarching concept and positioning Green HRM as its environmental component. Because the framework is derived from an integrative review rather than direct empirical testing, the proposed relationships should be regarded as theoretically grounded propositions that require examination in different sectors, organizational settings, and national contexts.

Figure 2. An Integrative Conceptual Framework Linking Sustainable HRM Practices to Institutional Sustainability



Adaptability	Employability	Reduced environmental impact
Innovation	Stakeholder responsibility	Environmental integration

Source: Developed by the authors based on the literature synthesis.

Sustainable Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection of staff are the first step in developing an organization's human capital as it determines the competencies, values and behavioural orientations of the staff that will contribute to the future performance of the organization. As such, these practices are an important pathway for integrating the principles of sustainability into the organization's earliest phases of the employment relationship (Cohen et al., 2010; Jackson et al., 2011).

The traditional recruitment has been mostly concerned with attracting qualified applicants who can fulfil the jobs' requirements at present. The aim of sustainable recruitment takes this one step further and looks for the candidates who have all the skills, attitudes and values that match the economic, social and environmental commitments of the organization. Those hired based on these general attributes are more likely to be aware of the sustainability goals, engage in sustainability efforts and help to embed sustainable practices within their institutions (Cohen et al., 2010).

An organization's commitment to sustainability can also enhance its attractiveness as an employer. According to Langwell (2013), organizations that integrate sustainability in their recruitment processes might have an advantage in attracting qualified and talented individuals, especially those who take employee social responsibility and environmental performance into account when choosing their employer. Sustainability therefore becomes an organization goal and a part of employer brand that can foster attraction and retention. Empirical evidence further suggests that green recruitment can play a role in organizational sustainability by attracting individuals who are more "green" in terms of values and by strengthening the organization's sustainability image. Results from Jamil et al. (2023) showed that there is a positive relationship between green recruitment and organizational sustainability performance, although this relationship varies based on the links between green recruitment and the rest of the Green HRM practices or with the organizational sustainability priorities.

Sustainable recruitment starts before candidates formally start the selection process. The organization's sustainability orientation can be conveyed through job advertisements, employer-branding communications, job descriptions and competency profiles and the responsibilities can be clarified.

Dubois and Dubois (2012) suggest that the recruitment policies should take into account the relevant environmental and social aspects and that the vision of sustainability of the organization should be clearly communicated. Electronic recruitment system can also fulfil this goal by minimising paper usage, the administrative time and the operational costs for recruitment processes and extending the reach and effectiveness of recruitment processes.

When it comes to sustainability-oriented selection, much more than just technical skills are being assessed. It also measures behavioral skills like working collaboratively, innovativeness, lifelong learning, environmental awareness, ethical responsibility and responsiveness to social issues (Jackson et al., 2011). These criteria are integrated to ensure that the organization processes candidates who not only have the professional qualities needed for the long-term, but also the personal orientation. Such criteria, however, must be precisely identified and evaluated on the basis of clear and objective processes based on job requirements, providing fairness and preventing arbitrary selections.

The social aspect of sustainable recruitment is present in processes of justice, equal opportunity, diversity of the work force and transparency. Well-designed recruitment processes that are based on consistent and fair principles can increase the confidence in the organization and enhance the quality and sustainability of the workforce. Al-Karki (2022) argues that if an institution puts in place transparent and fair employment criteria, it will be better equipped to hire and retain qualified employees. Likewise, Al-Ajmi and Al-Enezi (2016) link fairness in selection with increased levels of organizational trust, commitment and person–organization fit.

Sustainable recruitment and selection has taken another dimension with digital transformation. The use of online applications, Virtual interviews, electronic assessments and integrated applicant management systems, can help to save money, speed up processes, make candidates more accessible and limit the waste of resources. Ayyat and Abu Safieh (2025) believe that digitalization of recruitment could create simultaneous economic and environmental benefits. However, digital recruitment must continue to be accessible, secure and transparent, without exacerbating inequality, privacy issues, or exclusion of candidates because of technology.

It is obvious from literature that the sustainable recruitment and selection is linked to the three dimensions of institutional sustainability. On the economic side, these practices can be used to better quality appointments, lower recruitment expenses and minimize employee turnover. Socially they encourage fairness, diversity, equal opportunity and compatibility of employee and organizational values. Electronic procedures save paper, and save other resources. The outcomes of a technologically efficient recruitment system are inextricably linked to each other: it is impossible to consider one outcome without considering the other.

Although the literature has a consensus that there is a need for recruitment and selection, the way of conceptualizing sustainable recruitment varies. Some studies focus mainly on environmental practices, such as paperless recruitment, others focus on diversity, justice, ethical values or the attraction of talent that is interested in sustainability. The variation implies that sustainable recruitment is still not fully developed conceptually and in some cases, it is only a green recruitment. A more comprehensive approach should take into account economic efficiency, social responsibility, environmental considerations and the sustainable development of human capital.

Sustainable Training and Development.

HRM practices that are most consistently related to institutional sustainability include training and development. They offer an important means by which organizations can build the human resources they need to meet changing organizational, technological, social and environmental conditions. However, training is no longer just seen as a tool to equip employees with the skills to do their jobs in today's management. It has become a strategic process that aims to build knowledge, foster innovation, facilitate learning and develop staff capacity to effectively contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals (Jackson et al., 2011).

But the role training plays in sustainability is not limited to enhancing the quality of the job. A culture of learning, innovation, and sustainable change can be fostered in these sustainability-oriented organizations through the use of training. It can also enhance employees' understanding of how to use resources efficiently, be concerned about the environment, care about the community, and link their daily work with the long-term goals of the organization (Haugh & Talwar, 2010). Training is thus not a corrective or operational activity, but rather an investment in human capital.

Empirical studies have shown how critical training is in helping achieve sustainable organizational outcomes. In a longitudinal study of manufacturing organizations, Birdi et al. (2008) concluded that employee-development practices play a role in enhancing organizational performance and promoting more effective working methods. Through training, the competencies of employees can be developed, problem-solving skills can be enhanced, efficient resource utilization can be achieved, and unnecessary operational waste can be minimized. The results show that without the knowledge and skills of employees, sustainability efforts are difficult to be successful.

It is also possible that training for sustainability can bring about important social and organization benefits. Epstein et al. (2010) suggest that employee-development programs can help to increase job satisfaction,

organizational commitment, performance, and decrease absenteeism and turnover. Training can help build the employee's sense of value for the organization's development and its recognition of his or her contribution to the strategic goals of the organization. This perception can, in turn, enhance their involvement in sustainability programs and improvement within their organization.

Sustainable HRM can also enhance the employees' ability to adapt to new and challenging working conditions. Based on the job demands-resources theory, Lu et al. (2023) concluded that sustainable HRM actions can lead to employee resilience, work engagement, well-being and performance. They conclude that employee development should not be judged solely on short-term gains in technical performance, instead long-term adaptability and the ability to sustain required performance in changing conditions should also be considered.

Sustainable training shouldn't only be for the needs of the job; it must last. Cohen et al, (2010) recommend that organizations also need to build the future skills such as strategic thinking, team working, change management, innovation, continuous learning and the ability to solve complex problems. These capabilities enhance the ability of the organization to adapt and withstand shocks, including those arising from technological change, increasing competition, and evolving stakeholder demands.

The Sustainable Training content is therefore more comprehensive than traditional technical training. Content relevant to the programmes can be related to environmental management, resource efficiency, occupational health and safety, social responsibility, the ethics of environmental issues, green economy, innovation, and digital transformation. Dubois and Dubois (2012) believe that the themes should be integrated into the strategic learning and development system of the organization, not through isolated or short term projects. This integration assists employees in understanding the link between sustainability goals and their respective jobs and duties.

Organizations have further evolved their training and development as a result of digital transformation. E-learning, virtual training, digital learning platforms, and simulation technologies enable organizations to offer greater flexibility and accessibility to development opportunities. They enable a reduction in travel, administrative costs, time requirements, and the use of physical resources, in addition to increasing employees' access to knowledge (Ayyat & Abu Safieh, 2025). Digital learning might then be able to simultaneously increase the economic efficiency, make social participation more accessible and reduce environmental impact. However, it is relying on technological readiness, employees' digital skills, quality of the learning content and on an equitable access to digital resources.

Training is also seen as a long-term investment in human resources in Arabic literature. Al-Ajmi and Al-Enezi (2016) state that continuous employee capability development is a key factor in organizational success in both organizational and technological change. Al-Karki (2022) also links strategic planning of training to increased innovation, adaptability and institutional excellence. Training also enhances the employees' knowledge of sustainability principles and helps them integrate sustainability principles into their working practices (Ayyat 2026b), from a sustainability point of view.

Training can play a role in each of the four dimensions of institutional sustainability. Economically, it can help to enhance productivity, operational efficiencies, innovation and the ability of the organization to adapt to change. Socially, it facilitates staff learning and development, employability, participation, occupational well-being, and equitable access to learning. Environmentally it cultivates awareness and skills around the conservation of resources, minimization of waste and responsible operation. It is likely that these contributions will be made when training goals coincide with organizational goals and are followed by work opportunities to apply training concepts. Another way that an employee's development can contribute to the environment could be through knowledge and behaviour, which could stem from HR practice. The findings of green hotels in Malaysia reveal that green HRM practices can contribute to the environmental performance by building green intellectual capital and employees' pro-environmental behavior (Nisar et al., 2021). The finding demonstrates that training can impact on sustainability in not just skills, but through the development of common understanding and the motivation to apply environmental values in the job.

The literature all agrees that training has a positive effect, but it disagrees on what types of training are effective. There are some studies that highlight environmental training, while others are more oriented towards digital skills, innovation, sustainable leadership and/or social responsibility. This difference is due to variations between sectors and between organizational contexts and indicates that it is not possible to have one training model that fits all institutions. The content of the program should, therefore, reflect the gaps found in competence, the needs and priorities for sustainability in an organization, and the working environment of employees.

Sustainability-Oriented Performance Appraisal

Performance Appraisal is an integral part of HRM as it serves as a measurement of employees' performance, helps determine employees' developmental needs and links individual effort to organizational goals. Institutions are increasingly making sustainability issues a priority and the scope of performance appraisal has broadened beyond basic productivity and task completion measures. Sustainability-based appraisal also takes into account employee's role in achieving the organization's economic, social and environmental goals (Garavan & McGuire, 2010).

Performance appraisal offers one of the key avenues by which sustainability strategies can be translated into observable behaviours in the workplace and measurable outcomes. Including sustainability targets into appraisal systems helps to clarify expectations and individual roles with regard to long-term goals. This alignment can foster accountability, promote ongoing improvement, and reinforce employee actions for long-term organizational results.

The integration of sustainability indicators in the assessment of employees can help develop human capital (Garavan & McGuire, 2010) and to align economic performance with social and environmental considerations. This type of strategy mandates that appraisal be based on more than short-term outputs. Criteria can be related to innovation, teamwork, resource efficiency, ethics, stakeholder interaction, community involvement, and environmental enhancement (Jackson et al., 2011).

Dubois and Dubois (2012) propose the use of a clear, relevant and measurable approach to sustainability-oriented appraisal. These can include staff members' efforts in waste reduction, resource conservation, environmental improvement, social initiatives and ethical and professional values. To embed sustainability into day-to-day working, incorporating such indicators into formal assessments helps make sustainability a strategic commitment become a series of practical responsibilities.

However, the indicators for sustainability need to be tailored according to the duties and nature of the role. Assessing outcomes and behaviours that are beyond the authority and responsibility of employees is inappropriate. For example, resource efficiency could be clearly relevant for operational roles while strategic integration, employee health and safety, stakeholder management, or responsible decision making might lend themselves better to managerial roles. This differentiation enhances the validity and equity of assessment and helps prevent sustainability being treated as a catch-all for assessment, outside of the context of the job.

Performance appraisal is also helpful for sustainability as it enhances the continuous and constructive feedback. It allows organizations to identify employee strengths, competency gaps, and opportunities for employee development and create training and development programs based on the company's true developmental needs. Appraisal and training and development integration enhances the organizational learning and adaptability, a key determinant of sustainable institutional performance (Ayyat, 2026a, b). The consequences of appraisal should thus be directed towards the development of the employee, not as a basis for promotion or disciplinary action.

Digital transformation has also had an impact on the structure and function of performance-management systems. Electronic platforms can deliver real-time performance information, enable ongoing feedback, combine multiple indicators and enhance the uniformity of reporting. Digital performance management can also help to reduce paperwork and administrative costs, enhance transparency and the quality of HR decisions (Ayyat & Abu Safieh, 2025). It is important, however, that the adoption of digital systems is accompanied by suitable

safeguards in terms of data accuracy, privacy, transparency and the ability to understand and challenge the results of the appraisal.

Sustainability oriented appraisal considers both the outcomes of employees' work and how they do the work. A narrow focus on output can be a catalyst for short-term actions that have negative consequences for employee health, ethics, teamwork, or the environment. Sustainable appraisal takes into account behaviors including cooperation, responsible use of resources, adherence to environmental standards, social participation and innovative solutions to problems (Dubois & Dubois, 2012; Jackson et al., 2011). This broader view deepens the concept of sustainable performance both the outcome and how the outcome is achieved.

This general view of performance appraisal is validated by evidence from an Arab context. Sadek and Karkoulian (2025) discovered that green performance appraisal can be an enabler for the organization's sustainability because it fosters employees to be green and it enhances the application of green knowledge. Their research shows that appraisal can impact sustainability in more than just measuring outcomes; it also can shape communication of environmental expectations and motivate workers to demonstrate the knowledge they are learning in the workplace.

Similarly, Arabic literature interprets performance appraisal as a vehicle of strategic institutional development and not just as an instrument to evaluate employees. According to Al-Ajmi and Al-Enezi (2016) effectiveness of an appraisal is linked with the identification of training needs, recognition of future leadership potential, and the increased fairness in promotion and reward decisions. Al-Karki (2022) also highlights the need for objective and transparent criteria that correspond to the institutional goals. These are especially relevant to the social sustainability aspect since employees might lose confidence and commitment in the organization due to a lack of fairness or ambiguity.

If properly developed, performance assessment can help with all aspects of institutional sustainability. It supports productivity, efficiency and the better matching of employee effort to business strategy from an economic perspective. Socially, it can foster fairness, employee development, responsibility, good behavior and employee engagement. It fosters responsibility and awareness of resource conservation and environmental improvement on the environment. These contributions are related to the trustworthiness of the system, the management support, the involvement of employees, and the link between appraisal outcomes, training programs, and rewards from the organization.

However, a number of issues can limit the potential for the effective use of sustainability oriented appraisal. There can be some challenges for organizations to develop reliable environmental and social performance indicators and others may still be using mainly conventional productivity measures. This can be further diminished due to subjective evaluation, lack of management support, low management commitment to sustainability, and the non-integration of sustainability with training and rewards. The study of sustainability oriented performance appraisal in public-sector organizations is also relatively small in number.

Compensation and Rewards for Sustainability

Compensation and reward systems are one of the important HRM mechanisms to ensure that the behavior of employees is linked with the objectives of the organization. Contemporary literature does not consider compensation only as payment for work performed. Rather, it is seen as a strategic system that can enhance organizational commitment, retain human resources, foster innovation, and sustain the institution. This viewpoint is based on the concept that behaviours are more likely to be accepted and maintained by staff when they are formally acknowledged and rewarded within the organization (Jackson et al., 2011).

The organization that is on the journey towards sustainability are increasingly associating rewards with productivity, individual achievement, behaviour and outcomes relating to the economic, social and environmental performance. These systems can identify the effective utilization of resources, reduction of waste, innovation, cooperation, ethical behavior, involvement of the community, training programs for employees, and

initiatives to improve the environment. Rewards can thus make sustainability policies more tangible and meaningful to employees and actionable in their daily work (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010).

Ramos (2007) considers compensation as a strategic tool of organization behavior. Well-structured incentives can incentivize environmental measures, sustainable resource usage, social responsibility and innovative solutions to operational issues. They can also tie the interests of employees to long-term institutional goals. This alignment matters because, when employees see sustainability initiatives as another job on their to-do lists and are not recognized or supported by the organization, they are not likely to achieve long-term results.

Sustainable compensation is not just about monetary rewards but also about non-monetary ones. Rewards can be monetary such as performance bonuses, team payments and also monetary rewards based on explicit sustainability targets. Non-financial incentives may be public recognition, professional-development opportunities, flexible working arrangements, participation in decision-making, and career advancement and working conditions. However, Mankelow (2008) states that this diversity may have a positive impact on employee satisfaction and commitment and in turn on the social sustainability of the organization in terms of quality of working life.

The impact of sustainability-oriented incentives is dependent on the link with clear and measurable performance criteria. Rewards on abstract or symbolic sustainability goals can lead to inconsistencies and imbalances. However, setting incentives for 'observable' outcomes, like reducing resource use, better environmental practices, community-based projects, or sustainable innovations, is more likely to encourage the target behavior (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). Reward structures can also be used to incentivize workers to offer innovative ideas, enhance environmental outcomes, and take on more responsibility for longer-term organizational outcomes, as do Jackson et al. (2011).

Collective contributions should be rewarded as well. A number of sustainability goals involve collaboration between departments, and can't be claimed by just one person. Too much use of individual incentives, therefore, could be detrimental to teamwork or to employees focusing on individual goals rather than institutional results. A balanced system could incorporate team, individual and organizational rewards, and ensure that only performance outcomes are measured that the employee has the authority and control over.

Equally, in Arabic literature emphasis is laid on fairness, transparency and adherence to the facts. Al-Ajmi & Al-Enezi (2016) call compensation an important tool that motivates employees and helps to keep qualified employees. Moreover, Al-Karki (2022) relates flexible and fair incentive structures to job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and enhanced performance. Ayyat (2026) highlights the importance of recognizing innovation and accomplishment in sustainability, including in the form of organizations' tangible appreciation of exceptional contributions.

The three aspects of sustainability can be supported by compensation and reward. Culturally, they can foster a workplace environment of trust, authenticity, and respect. Personally, they can help build strong relationships and facilitate employee well-being. Socially, good pay, and recognition, are part of a good life, justice, participation, and commitment for employees. Incentives may affect resource use and involvement in environmental activities in an environmentally responsible way. However, the contributions rely on procedural fairness, trustworthy performance metrics, managerial credibility and consistency between the organization's expressed sustainability principles and the reward processes.

There are a number of obstacles to sustainable incentive design. This includes the inability to measure individual impacts on social or environmental results, the lack of reliable measures, too much attention is paid to short-term financial results, and poor linkages between rewards, performance appraisal, and training. Reward systems can also yield unintended behavior – if employees are rewarded for one set of indicators but ignore other responsibilities. Thus, it is necessary to have a robust organizational culture, credible leadership, equitable measures and periodic review to support sustainable compensation.

Empirical evidence further indicates that the impact of green appraisal and compensation is not necessarily across the board. Ardiza et al. (2021) found that the various relationships between green performance appraisal, green compensation, organizational citizenship behavior and employee performance varied by tenure of their employees. The results confirm the importance of taking into account the characteristics of the workforce in developing and evaluating reward systems that are geared toward sustainability.

Integration of Sustainable HRM Practices

While recruitment, training, performance appraisal and compensation and rewards can be analysed individually, its implications for institutional sustainability are reinforced when these aspects are put together in a comprehensive HRM system. Bringing in people who value sustainability will do little to change the culture of an organization if they are not then empowered, evaluated and rewarded for the actions they are expected to take. Similarly, when only short-term productivity is the focus of appraisal and reward systems, then sustainability training is unlikely to be effective in changing workplace behavior (Delery & Gupta, 2016; Guercio et al., 2019).

This systemic interpretation is supported by evidence from recent reviews. According to Miah et al. (2024), the areas of green recruitment, training, performance management, employee involvement, and reward are typically prevalent and studied as interdependent parts of a sustainability system within the organizations. The literature, however, has seen differences in what practices are included and what outcomes are measured to determine sustainability, which further stresses the requirement for a more integrated and multidimensional approach.

Likewise, Chowdhury et al. (2023) suggest that the relationship between Green HRM and sustainable performance of organizations is better understood when the three elements, namely HR practices, HR level mechanisms, and organizational level mechanisms, are aligned. This means that the "formal" adoption of individual practices is not enough; it's the interrelationships among the practices as well as the organizational conditions that facilitate their adoption that matter.

Cohen et al. (2010) define Sustainable HRM as a whole system in which the effectiveness of some practices rely on the consistency of other practices and the consistency with the organizational strategy. Then there is the issue of establishing the competency and value base with recruitment, developing the knowledge and skills with training, and then applying an appraisal process to put the strategic priorities into terms of expected performance, and finally reinforcing the employee's contribution with rewards. This sequence provides vertical alignment of HRM and institutional strategy and horizontal alignment of the HR practices.

Integration also contributes to the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability. Digital recruitment can, for instance, enhance efficiency and reduce paper usage, but it needs to be accessible and equitable. Training can enhance environmental competence, but it should also safeguard the employee development and employability. Performance assessment and reward can boost efficiency, but not to the detriment of the individual and should not put undue pressure. In this context, it is essential for organizations to manage potential trade-offs and not simply add isolated green practices to the traditional HR system, making sustainable HRM.

This integration should also be aware of possible tensions which can occur between organizational goals. Podgorodnichev et al. (2020) warn that HRM can carry benefits of sustainability efforts while also maintaining practices that increase work effort, focus on short-term results, or deplete employees' physical and psychological capacity. Sustainable HRM thus needs a clear focus on the conflicts between the efficiency of the organization, the health and welfare of employees, and other environmental and social concerns. From this perspective, the literature thus bolsters a systemic view of Sustainable HRM. The full employment cycle is more sustainable when it is embraced by an organization's sustainability strategy, has strong support from leadership, is tied to the organizational culture, and is backed up by consistent information. Thus, the impacts of Sustainable HRM should be studied at the level of the configuration of practices, and not only at the level of the single practice.

Findings: Critical Review and Synthesis of The Literature

From the thematic synthesis, four main findings were generated in relation to the research questions as follows: Sustainable HRM is multidimensional; the four main practices of sustainable HRM contribute to institutional sustainable development; the four practices of sustainable HRM are differently perceived in terms of attention and influence and; the field of sustainable HRM has conceptual gaps, contextual gaps and methodological gaps. The results of these are given and discussed critically in the following paragraphs.

The literature reviewed reflects a huge transformation from HRM as an administrative support role to one where HRM is seen as a strategic partner in sustainable development. In all the reviewed studies, a consensus is reached that recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation and rewards are factors that affect institutional sustainability, as they shape employee competencies, values, motivation, and behavior (Cohen et al., 2010; Jackson et al., 2011; Ayyat & Abu Safieh, 2025).

This is also in line with the ongoing trend in HRM research to be more humanistic and socially oriented. Cooke et al. (2023) suggest that research into HRM in the present day should take a broader view and focus on the employee, the community, public policy, and societal issues. In this view, Sustainable HRM has the potential of offering a crucial link between organizational performance and overall social accountability of HRM.

But there is not a comprehensive description of Sustainable HRM in the literature. A large share of research focuses on Green HRM and most of it addresses the environmental results, which include resource conservation, waste reduction and environmentally responsible behavior (Dubois & Dubois, 2012; Renwick et al., 2008). Other studies focus on social aspects such as employee wellness, organizational justice, employability, and social responsibility. There are relatively fewer studies that combine the economic, social and environmental aspects in one analysis. At times, this misbalance may cause confusion over the use of Sustainable HRM and Green HRM interchangeably although the scope of these is different.

Evidence from a previous meta-analytic study indicates that the economic benefits of Green HRM may emerge indirectly through improvements in environmental performance and related organizational processes, including green supply chain management (Carballo-Penela et al., 2023). This evidence is cited as part of the literature synthesized in the present integrative review and does not indicate that the current study conducted a meta-analysis.

The level of evidence, along with its consistency, also depends on the HRM practice under investigation. The training and development practice is one of the most widely studied practices and is often reported as having the stronger correlation with sustainability outcomes. Training increases employee awareness and capabilities and facilitates innovation, learning, adaptability and resource efficiency. Sustainable recruitment criteria, sustainability-oriented appraisal indicators and integrated reward systems, on the contrary, are less studied aspects. They are also harder to measure to implement, as they need to be interpreted into job-specific standards by organizations.

Another conclusion that can be drawn is that HR practices are interdependent. The previous studies, although they have been conducted as system of Sustainable HRM, examine individual practices separately. The results combined in this review suggest that the effect of an individual practice is dependent on its compatibility with the other practices. Without a link between appraisal/reward systems and sustainable contributions, training employees in sustainability is unlikely to change their behavior. The literature is thus growing moving towards a configurational and strategically aligned understanding of Sustainable HRM (Delery & Gupta, 2016; De Guercio et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the organizational and institutional environment affects the implementation and results of Sustainable HRM. The effect of Sustainable HRM practices can be fortified or weakened with respect to organizational size, industry type, regulatory obligations, resources, leadership, technological readiness, and culture. Some institutions might have specific limitations, including centralized procedures, restricted managerial discretion, fixed compensation systems, financial restrictions and complicated accountability

demands. However, these contextual differences have received little attention as the bulk of the empirical literature is on private firms in developed economies.

The relevance and functioning of the Green HRM practices can vary from one sector to another, thus the importance of the same. Tanova and Bayighomog (2022) conducted a systematic review of 48 empirical studies across service industries and found significant differences in the measures of Green HRM, conceptual underpinnings, antecedents, outcomes and mediators. This variation restricts the ability to compare between studies and shows the necessity of context dependent measurements of Sustainable HRM.

Based on this, the review concludes that Sustainable HRM has three interconnected mechanisms for contributing to institutional sustainability. First, it builds employees' sustainability knowledge and skills through recruiting and training. Second, it reinforces their motivation by appreciating, recognizing and rewarding them. Thirdly, it provides organizational possibilities for involvement, learning, innovation and responsible action. These mechanisms link HRM practices to sustainability outcomes, but in order to be effective, they rely on strategic integration, and supportive organizational conditions.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this integrative review indicate that Sustainable Human Resource Management contributes to institutional sustainability most effectively when it is implemented as a coherent system of mutually reinforcing practices rather than as a collection of isolated initiatives. Sustainable recruitment, training and development, appraising performance and rewarding and recognizing employees have an impact on the knowledge, motivation, capacity and behaviour of workers. The findings align with the strategic HRM theory, which states that the HRM practices must be aligned internally to achieve long-term organizational results (Delery & Gupta, 2016). It is also in line with the results of systematic reviews indicating that the effects of Green HRM practices will be more pronounced when they are implemented as an integrated configuration compared to their individual implementation (Tanova & Bayighomog, 2022; Chowdhury et al., 2023; Miah et al., 2024).

Sustainable recruitment is the first step in institutions' path towards matching their human capital with their sustainability goals. Knowing and aligning the values, knowledge and professional orientations of candidates with the responsibilities of the environment and society can enhance person organization fit and therefore offer a better base for further employee development. But recruitment is not enough if sustainability is not backed up with training, appraisal, participation and rewards. There is evidence that when green recruitment is integrated into a wider Green HRM system, it has a positive impact on the sustainability of organizations (Jamil et al., 2023). This means that it is important for organizations not to do 'symbolic' work in relation to sustainability recruitment that is not linked to their employment practices.

Training and development was identified as a strong mechanism as new knowledge, technical competencies and behavioral skills are demanded to sustain about employees. Through training, general commitment to sustainability can become tangible business practices such as resource management, responsible decision-making, innovation and working together to solve problems. Furthermore, it could have a broader impact than environmental effects by enhancing employee resilience, engagement, and adaptability (Lu et al., 2023). However, the success of sustainability training is dependent on the support from the organization and opportunities to implement knowledge gained. Awareness training may create awareness and awareness alone may not lead to lasting organizational change if the training is not reinforced by managerial behavior, resources, and participation of employees.

The review also shows that performance appraisals and reward systems are seen as institutional supports needed for maintaining employee commitment. Performance appraisal defines what is expected and expected to be done in sustainability and integrates that into formal accountability processes; rewards signal the importance of and value of sustainable behavior in the organization. Empirical studies show that green performance appraisal has potential to help organizations achieve sustainability goals through employees' green behavior and effective utilization of environmental knowledge (Sadek & Karkoulia, 2025). But too much reliance on financial

incentives can foster compliance, not commitment. Therefore, sustainable reward systems should include some form of financial and non-financial reward, as well as encouraging participation, providing developmental feedback, providing career opportunities and acknowledging collective achievements.

One of the most important findings of the review is the fact that the well-being of employees should not be regarded as a way of enhancing the performance of organizations, but as an outcome of Sustainable HRM. Sustainable HRM encompasses more than Green HRM, as it extends to future impacts on the environment, society, and employees and organizations (Aust et al., 2020; Ren et al., 2023). Previous research indicates that workers' perceptions of Sustainable HRM are positively related to job satisfaction, but the degree of the relationship between them is dependent on cultural and institutional factors (Wojtczuk-Turek et al., 2024). Organizational trust and employee well-being are thus important social sustainability indicators (Jaskeviciute et al., 2021; Bai, 2025).

The connection between environmental, social and economic sustainability of institutions should not be viewed as being mutually independent and simultaneous. Indirect economic benefits can occur due to better employee behaviour, environmental performance, operational efficiency, reputation, innovation and stakeholder relationship. Thus, Sustainable HRM does not have to be expected to provide immediate financial returns in all organizational settings. The economic contribution can evolve over time, either by behavioral or operational channels, and in this sense, sustainability is an organizational process that can be prolonged through time and different pressures, such as from stakeholders, around rules and regulations, or from competition (Bansal, 2005). This interpretation is also the reason why short term performance indicators are less effective in measuring the institutional value of Sustainable HRM.

The results also indicate that there are some conditions of the organization and context that affect the relationship between Sustainable HRM and institutional sustainability. HR managers play a central role in implementing sustainability-oriented HR practices, but may face challenges such as limited authority, lack of resources, ambiguous sustainability roles, and resistance to change (Liang et al., 2024). This reinforces the idea of the importance of both the formal implementation of practices, but also the way that employees interpret and experience these practices in specific institutional settings (Guerci et al., 2019; Liang & Li, 2025).

Digital technologies can help with this process through the recruitment, online training, ongoing performance feedback, institutional workforce analytics and tracking of institutional sustainability indicators. Technology, however, is not a magic bullet for sustainable results. It relies on ethical government, data security, equal employee access, quality management and retention of human judgment. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and HR advanced technologies have presented juicy opportunities for HRM, as well as challenges around the issues of transparency, privacy, bias, and employee acceptance (Vrontis et al., 2022). Digitalization is, therefore, a tool that should be used to enable Sustainable HRM, rather than be a replacement for responsible leadership and employee involvement.

The integrative conceptual framework developed in this review suggests that Sustainable HRM contributes to institutional sustainability through a sequential and context-dependent process. The four HRM practices first shape employees' knowledge, capabilities, motivation, engagement, trust, well-being, innovation, and responsible behavior. These employee-level mechanisms subsequently contribute to organizational resilience, operational effectiveness, stakeholder legitimacy, and economic, social, and environmental sustainability. However, these relationships are conditioned by leadership support, organizational culture, employee participation, resource availability, regulation, and digital capability. The principal theoretical contribution of the study therefore lies in integrating HRM practices, employee-level mechanisms, contextual factors, and multidimensional sustainability outcomes within a single explanatory framework. This framework extends environmentally focused Green HRM approaches by positioning Green HRM as one component of the broader Sustainable HRM concept and by treating employee well-being as both a sustainability outcome and a mechanism supporting long-term institutional performance. Since the framework is derived from an integrative review, its proposed relationships require future empirical examination across different sectors and national contexts.

Research Gaps And Future Research Directions

Despite the expansion of Sustainable HRM research, several important gaps remain. First, the field requires greater conceptual and definitional clarity. Future research should differentiate between Sustainable HRM and Green HRM, Strategic HRM, socially responsible HRM and other approaches. More distinct conceptual boundaries would facilitate measurement and allow meaningful comparisons between studies.

Second, the geographical coverage of Sustainable HRM research remains uneven, with limited evidence from fragile and resource-constrained settings, developing economies, and Arab countries. Further research is required to understand the impact of cultural values, labour market conditions, institutional capacities, regulation and economic uncertainties on the adoption and results of Sustainable HRM.

Thirdly, there is a lack of representation of public-sector institutions in the research of Sustainable HRM. The impact of centralized procedures, legal constraints, public exposure, restricted financial flexibility and political and administrative uncertainty on sustainable recruitment, employee development, performance management, and remuneration should be explored. Comparative study between public and private entities would be of great value.

Fourth, much of the existing evidence relies on questionnaires and cross-sectional quantitative designs. These methods find statistical correlations, but fail to give insights into implementation processes and organizational change over time. Future research should employ qualitative case studies, longitudinal designs, mixed methods, comparative studies, and multilevel analyses.

Fifth, the measurement of sustainability remains inconsistent across studies. The use of various economic, social and environmental indicators makes findings across different studies difficult to compare. Future studies should build and test multidimensional instruments to separate HR practices, implementation, employee reactions, and institutional sustainability outcomes.

Sixth, individual HR practices are often the focus of research, not the combination of practices. The complementarities and potential contradictions among recruitment, training, appraisal, rewards, participation, employee well-being, and workforce planning should receive greater attention. Future studies should also empirically test the proposed relationships among Sustainable HRM practices, employee-level mechanisms, contextual factors, and the three dimensions of institutional sustainability.

Seventh, the impact of the digital transformation needs to be explored further. In future, electronic HR systems, AI, people analytics, remote working, digital learning, and algorithmic performance management should be the focus of research. Future research should examine both the potential contributions of these technologies to efficiency, learning, inclusion, and sustainability and their possible risks concerning privacy, bias, inequality, surveillance, and employee well-being.

Finally, Palestinian institutions represent a distinctive and insufficiently examined context. Empirical research is needed to investigate the adoption, constraints, and outcomes of Sustainable HRM in Palestinian public institutions. Such studies could generate context-sensitive models that reflect administrative structures, resource constraints, institutional priorities, and the wider social and economic environment.

CONCLUSION

This integrative review examined how Sustainable Human Resource Management practices contribute to institutional sustainability, with particular attention to recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation and rewards. The results show that these practices have an impact on sustainability in terms of employee capability development, responsible employee behavior, innovation, and resilience, as well as aligning individual employee actions with economic, social, and environmental goals. However, their effectiveness is really contingent on their incorporation into a comprehensive HRM system that is coherent with the organization's strategy and institutional setting.

The study contributes theoretically by consolidating fragmented literature into an integrative explanation of how Sustainable HRM supports institutional sustainability. It clarifies that Sustainable HRM is broader than Green HRM because it incorporates employee well-being, social responsibility, human capital preservation, economic continuity, and environmental responsibility. The proposed framework further demonstrates that HRM practices influence institutional outcomes through employee-level mechanisms, including knowledge, capabilities, motivation, engagement, trust, innovation, well-being, and responsible behavior. These relationships are shaped by contextual factors such as leadership, organizational culture, employee participation, resources, regulation, and digital capability.

From a practical perspective, organizations should integrate sustainability considerations throughout the employment cycle. Sustainability competencies and values should be included in recruitment criteria, sustainability training should be built to have a focus on environmental, social, digital and adaptive skills, sustainability indicators should be part of appraisal systems and the reward system should account for individual and collective efforts. These practices should be transparent, equitable, measurable, and sensitive to employee well-being.

Effective implementation also requires coordination between HR departments and the organizational units responsible for strategy, finance, operations, technology and sustainability. Senior management must be prepared to provide resources, policy support and direction; and employees must have meaningful opportunities to be involved in decisions related to sustainability. Organizations need to regularly assess the intended and unintended effects of Sustainable HRM practices to ensure that they are not being implemented symbolically and that they are aligned with their employment decisions.

This review is limited by its reliance on previously published evidence and the substantial variation among the reviewed studies in definitions, theoretical perspectives, research designs, measurement instruments, sectors, and national contexts. Available evidence is also largely cross-sectional, and focuses on outcomes in the environment, reducing the scope of generalizability regarding the social and long-term economic sustainability. The review, however, shows that to be sustainable, institutions need HRM that is context-sensitive, ethically implemented, human centered and integrated. Investment of employees is therefore not merely an administrative function but a strategic requirement for the organizational continuity, adaptability, innovation, legitimacy, and responsible long-term performance.

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