

THE ROLE OF SUSTAINABLE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN ACHIEVING ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

**Misrokiah Husni Batubara¹, Kiki Aulia Paramita², Himi Agustina Daulay³,
Fauziah Nur Lubis⁴, Sri Afrida Wahyuni⁵, Rakesh Sitepu⁶, Anggia Sari Lubis⁷**

^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7}Master of Management Postgraduate School,

Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah

Email: anggiasarilubis@umnaw.ac.id

Received : 15 November 2025

Published : 05 January 2026

Revised : 01 December 2025

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.54443/ihert.v7i1.502>

Accepted : 20 December 2025

LinkPublish : <https://proceeding.unefaconference.org/index.php/IHERT>

Abstract

The global awareness of sustainability encompassing economic, social, and environmental aspects has fundamentally shifted corporate paradigms. Organizational sustainability is no longer seen as achievable through business strategy and technology alone but is critically dependent on how human resources are managed. This study aims to analyze the role of Sustainable Human Resource Management (Sustainable HRM) in realizing organizational sustainability. Using a descriptive analysis method, this research synthesizes and examines the theoretical foundations and practical applications of Sustainable HRM. The results indicate that Sustainable HRM, which integrates the principles of the Triple Bottom Line into HR practices, acts as a key facilitator for a sustainability culture, develops sustainable leadership, and aligns employee values with long-term organizational goals. Key practices distinguishing it from conventional HRM include Green HRM initiatives, promoting employee well-being and diversity, and fostering competency development for long-term employability. However, implementation faces challenges such as a lack of top management awareness and resistance to change. Conversely, it offers significant opportunities, including enhanced corporate reputation, increased employee engagement, and long-term resilience. The study concludes that Sustainable HRM is a strategic imperative for organizations seeking comprehensive and enduring sustainability.

Keywords: *Sustainable Human Resource Management, Organizational Sustainability, Green HRM, Triple Bottom Line, Employee Well-being, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

A. INTRODUCTION

The increasing global consciousness regarding sustainability spanning economic, social, and environmental dimensions has become a central force in contemporary business. Stakeholders, including investors, consumers, and regulators, now demand that organizations operate responsibly and contribute positively to society and the planet. In Indonesia, this trend is amplified by growing attention to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria, the pursuit of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and heightened expectations for corporate social responsibility. While strategies for sustainable operations and green technologies are crucial, their success is ultimately contingent upon the people who implement them. This reality underscores that organizational sustainability is deeply rooted in human capital management. Consequently, the field of Human Resource Management (HRM) is evolving. The traditional HRM model, often focused primarily on short-term economic performance and operational efficiency, is increasingly seen as insufficient to address complex sustainability challenges. In response, the concept of Sustainable Human Resource Management (Sustainable HRM) has emerged. Sustainable HRM represents a holistic approach that seeks to balance and integrate economic, social, and environmental goals within all HR policies and practices. It aims to simultaneously achieve positive outcomes for the organization (profit), its employees and society (people), and the natural environment (planet). This article aims to explore the pivotal role of Sustainable HRM in achieving comprehensive organizational sustainability. It is guided by the following problem statements: (1) How does the concept of Sustainable HRM contribute to organizational sustainability? (2) What are the main principles and practices that distinguish Sustainable HRM from conventional HRM? (3) What challenges and opportunities do organizations face in implementing Sustainable HRM?

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Concept of Sustainability

Sustainability is most commonly conceptualized through the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, which emphasizes three pillars: People, Planet, and Profit (Elkington, 1997). This framework posits that true organizational success and longevity require a balance between social equity, environmental stewardship, and economic viability. Beyond ethical imperatives, sustainability is linked to competitive advantage. Organizations that proactively manage their social and environmental impacts can enhance their reputation, foster innovation, mitigate risks, and attract and retain both customers and talent. Human resources are central to this endeavor, as employees are the agents who drive initiatives related to the SDGs and ESG performance, translating high-level goals into operational reality (De Stefano et al., 2018).

2. The Concept and Definition of Sustainable HRM

Sustainable HRM is defined as the adoption of HRM strategies and practices that enable the achievement of financial, social, and ecological goals, with an intra- and inter-generational focus (Ehnert, 2009). Kramar (2014) further elaborates that it involves "the pattern of planned or emerging human resource strategies and practices intended to enable organizational goal achievement while simultaneously reproducing the HR base over a long-lasting calendar time." The core principle is moving beyond a purely instrumental view of employees as a means to profit. Instead, it seeks a balance, ensuring that while HR practices support economic objectives, they also promote employee well-being (social sustainability) and encourage environmentally responsible behaviors (ecological sustainability). This represents a significant shift from the short-term, efficiency-driven focus of traditional HRM.

3. Dimensions and Practices of Sustainable HRM

Sustainable HRM can be operationalized across several interconnected dimensions:

1. **Environmental Dimension (Green HRM):** This involves practices that support environmental management. Examples include recruiting for sustainability skills, providing eco-training, implementing green performance management and reward systems (e.g., linked to reducing waste/energy), and fostering an organizational culture of environmental responsibility (Ren et al., 2018).
2. **Social Dimension:** This focuses on the fair and equitable treatment of employees to ensure their long-term well-being and development. Key practices include ensuring occupational health and safety, promoting work-life balance, supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), fostering high levels of employee engagement, and ensuring fair compensation and career development opportunities.
3. **Economic Dimension:** This pertains to ensuring the organization's long-term economic health through its human capital. Practices include strategic workforce planning, investing in continuous learning and competency development to ensure long-term employability, effective talent retention strategies, and designing work systems that promote productivity and innovation over the long term.
4. **Ethical & Governance Dimension:** This underpins all other dimensions, emphasizing transparency, fairness, and ethical conduct in HR processes. It involves upholding labor standards, ensuring ethical leadership, promoting corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and maintaining transparent communication with internal and external stakeholders.

C. METHOD

This research employs a descriptive analysis method. Descriptive analysis is a statistical approach used to analyze data by describing or illustrating the collected data as it is, without intending to make conclusions that apply to the general population (Sugiyono, 2004). This study is a form of descriptive research aimed at describing existing phenomena, both natural and human-made. The data collection technique used is a literature study, which involves gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant theories and empirical findings from various scientific sources. Data sources consist of reputable academic literature, including journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (Q1-Q4), indexed conference proceedings, and prominent scientific books published in the last two decades. The analysis is conducted by thematically reviewing the literature to identify patterns, principles, practices, challenges, and opportunities related to Sustainable HRM and its role in organizational sustainability.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Role of HR in Organizational Sustainability

Human Resource Management plays a transformative role as a facilitator of organizational sustainability. First, HR is the architect of organizational culture. Through value-based recruitment, sustainability-focused training and development, and recognition systems that reward sustainable behaviors, HR can embed a culture where sustainability becomes a shared norm and value (Aust et al., 2020). Second, HR is critical in developing **sustainable leadership**. By identifying, developing, and promoting leaders who demonstrate a long-term perspective, ethical decision-making, and care for stakeholders, HR ensures that sustainability is championed at all organizational levels. Finally, HR acts as a strategic partner in aligning employee values and daily behaviors with the company's sustainability strategy, ensuring that strategic intent translates into consistent action across the workforce.

2. Key Principles and Practices Distinguishing Sustainable HRM from Conventional HRM

The primary distinction lies in the underlying philosophy and temporal focus. Conventional HRM often prioritizes short-term cost-efficiency, flexibility, and immediate performance, potentially at the expense of long-term human and social capital. In contrast, Sustainable HRM is characterized by:

1. **A Triple Bottom Line Focus:** Evaluating HR practices not just by their financial impact but also by their social and environmental consequences.
2. **Long-term Orientation:** Emphasizing the development and preservation of human resources for future generations of employees and the organization itself (e.g., through employability and well-being).
3. **Stakeholder Inclusivity:** Considering the interests of a broad range of stakeholders (employees, community, environment) alongside shareholders.
4. **Specific Practices:** While conventional HRM may train for job-specific skills, Sustainable HRM includes "green" training. While it manages performance, it may integrate sustainability KPIs. While it manages compensation, it may offer benefits that support well-being and work-life balance.

3. Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Sustainable HRM

The implementation of Sustainable HRM is not without obstacles. Key challenges include:

1. **Lack of Awareness and Commitment from Top Management:** Sustainability is often still viewed as an operational or PR issue, not a core strategic one requiring HR's deep involvement.
2. **Perceived High Costs and Resource Constraints:** Investments in training, well-being programs, or green technologies may be seen as costs rather than long-term investments.
3. **Resistance to Change:** Shifting from established, short-term focused HR practices requires overcoming inertia and changing mindsets at all levels.

Despite these challenges, significant opportunities exist:

1. **Enhanced Corporate Reputation and Employer Brand:** Organizations known for ethical and sustainable practices attract better talent and more loyal customers.
2. **Increased Employee Engagement, Retention, and Productivity:** When employees feel their well-being is valued and their work has a positive purpose, their commitment and performance improve.
3. **Long-term Organizational Resilience and Risk Mitigation:** By building a skilled, healthy, and motivated workforce and operating within environmental limits, organizations are better prepared for future challenges and regulatory changes.

E. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Sustainable Human Resource Management is a critical and strategic lever for achieving genuine organizational sustainability. It moves beyond the instrumental role of traditional HRM by integrating the principles of the Triple Bottom Line into all aspects of people management. Sustainable HRM contributes to organizational sustainability by fostering a supportive culture, developing responsible leadership, and aligning employee behavior with long-term environmental, social, and economic goals. Its distinguishing practices—spanning green initiatives, social well-being, and long-term competency development—address the comprehensive needs of people, planet, and profit. Although organizations face challenges in implementation, primarily related to mindset and resource allocation, the opportunities for enhanced reputation, employee loyalty, and enduring resilience present a compelling case for adoption. For organizations in Indonesia and globally aiming to thrive in the 21st century, embedding sustainability into the heart of HR practices is not an option but a necessity for long-term success and legitimacy.

REFERENCES

- Alam, Anto. 2010. "Perpustakaan Tempat Belajar Sepanjang Hayat". Media Indonesia, Kamis, 7 Oktober: Hlm. 1, kolom 2. Jakarta.
- ASTM Internasional. 2002. Measuring The Dynamics Characteristics Of Amusement rides and Cevices, Pactice for, F.2137 (15.07) USA.
- Badan Sandardisasi Nasional. 2011. Alas Kaki-Metode Uji Sepatu-Kekuatan Rekat Bagian Atas Sepatu dengan Sol. Adopsi SNI ISO 17708:2011. Jakarta.
- Bailey, Garrick, et al. 1999. Introduction to Cultural Anthropology. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Bambang, Dwiloka dan Rati Riana. 2005. Teknik Menulis Karya Ilmiah. Jakarta: Rineka cipta.
- Kramar, R. (2014). Beyond Strategic Human Resource Management: Is Sustainable Human Resource Management The Next Approach? The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 25(8), 1069-1089.
- Ren, S., Tang, G., & Jackson, S. E. (2018). Green Human Resource Management Research In Emergence: A Review and Future Directions. Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 35(3), 769-803.
- Rustandy, Tandean. 2006. "Tekan Korupsi Bangan Bangsa". (<http://www.kpk.go.id/modules/news/article.php?storydi=1291>, diakses 14 Januari 2007)
- Sugiono. 2004. Metode Penelitian. Alfabet.
- Suwahyono, Nurasi dkk. 2004. Pendoman Penampilan Majalah Ilmiah Indonesia. Jakarta: Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Ilmiah, LIPI.
- Wijana, I Dewa Putu. 2007. "bias gendr pada Bahasa Majalah Rema". Tesis, Fakultas Ilmu budaya. Yogyakarta: Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- Wilkinson, A., Hill, M., & Gollan, P. 2001. The Sustainability debate. Internasional Jurnal Of Operation Managenent, 21 (21), 1492-1502