

GREENING THE WORKPLACE: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE HR PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of sustainable Human Resource (HR) practices on employee engagement within contemporary organizations. As the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation become more evident, businesses worldwide are integrating sustainability into their core strategies to ensure long-term resilience. This study explores how embedding sustainability into HR functions can enhance employee motivation, job satisfaction, and overall organizational performance.

The research highlights sustainable HR practices such as green recruitment, eco-friendly workplace initiatives, employee environmental training, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. These initiatives foster a culture of shared values and collective purpose, strengthening employees' commitment to the organization's mission. Furthermore, when employees perceive their organization as environmentally responsible, their sense of belonging, pride, and engagement is substantially elevated.

While recognizing the opportunities of sustainable HR strategies, the study also addresses challenges such as resource constraints and resistance to change. By identifying both benefits and barriers, this research offers practical insights for businesses aiming to cultivate a more engaged and environmentally-conscious workforce, thereby reinforcing the critical role of HR in promoting sustainable development.

Keywords: Sustainable HR practices, employee engagement, green recruitment, eco-friendly workplace, corporate social responsibility, organizational performance, environmental sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of sustainability has permeated almost every facet of business operations, including human resource management. Sustainable HR practices refer to policies and strategies within an organization that are aligned with environmental, social, and ethical principles, ranging from green recruitment initiatives and eco-friendly workplace practices to promoting diversity, inclusion, and ensuring employees' well-being and fair treatment. The adoption of sustainability in HR is more than just a trend; it has become essential for businesses that want to thrive in an increasingly eco-conscious world. The integration of sustainable HR practices can positively affect employee engagement, which refers to the emotional commitment employees have toward their organization. When employees believe in their company's commitment to social and environmental causes, they are more likely to feel connected to its values, mission, and vision, fostering greater motivation, higher productivity, and deeper loyalty. Leadership plays a central role in the adoption and success of sustainable HR practices by setting the tone for organizational culture, making critical decisions regarding sustainability strategies, and acting as role models for employees. Organizations are also increasingly focusing on green recruitment strategies to attract environmentally conscious talent, creating eco-friendly workplaces that minimize environmental impact through energy efficiency, waste reduction, sustainable transportation, green building

designs, and sustainable procurement. Companies like Patagonia and Unilever have demonstrated through case studies that embedding sustainability into HR practices, from eco-friendly recruitment and employee empowerment to sustainable sourcing and performance management, leads to higher employee engagement, stronger brand reputation, and business success. Despite the challenges associated with implementing sustainable HR practices—such as resistance to change, lack of expertise, limited resources, and difficulty measuring impact—organizations that prioritize sustainability, communicate its benefits effectively, and invest in employee development are more likely to foster a highly engaged, loyal, and productive workforce. As sustainability continues to gain importance, the future of sustainable HR practices will be shaped by leveraging technology, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, embracing virtual training methods, adopting circular HR models, and setting measurable sustainability goals that are integrated into core business strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is a critical analysis and synthesis of existing research on a specific topic, used to contextualize new research by summarizing, evaluating, and identifying trends, gaps, and key findings in prior studies. It provides the foundation for the study, establishing its relevance and positioning it within the broader academic conversation. By organizing past research thematically or chronologically, a literature review highlights the strengths, limitations, and debates within the field, ultimately justifying the need for further research. This process not only demonstrates the researcher's knowledge of the field but also connects existing insights directly to the current research's objectives.

Abbaben (2021) examined the influence of green HRM practices on employees' green behaviors, with a particular focus on engagement and personality traits. This study found that green HRM practices positively affect employees' green behaviors, with employee engagement serving as a mediating factor. However, the study was limited in scope to a specific geographic area, which may not generalize to other regions or contexts. Additionally, it did not account for the long-term organizational impacts of green HRM practices.

Aboramadan (2022) analyzed the effect of green HRM practices in higher education, focusing on green work engagement as a mediating factor. The findings indicated that green HRM practices enhance green work engagement, which subsequently fosters pro-environmental behaviors in employees. This study's limitations include a concentration on higher education, which restricts the applicability of its findings to other sectors, thus leaving room for future research in different industries.

Al-Hawari et al. (2021) examined how frontline employees' environmental values influence creativity through green HRM practices. The study used quantitative survey-based research and SEM regression analysis, finding that employees' values and HRM practices are crucial in fostering creativity. This study is limited by its specific focus on frontline employees, potentially overlooking other roles and job levels where green HRM might have similar effects.

Al-Swidi et al. (2021) studied the combined influence of green HRM, leadership, and organizational culture on employees' green behaviors and environmental performance. Through structural equation modeling, they showed that these three factors collectively enhance environmental performance. However, the study is limited by its narrow focus on leadership and culture, without considering other organizational factors that could also influence green behavior and environmental performance.

Ansari et al. (2021) investigated the role of green HRM practices in promoting pro-environmental behaviors, with employee engagement as a mediating factor. The study found

that green HRM practices significantly enhance pro-environmental behaviors when mediated by employee engagement. However, the research is restricted to specific contexts and did not account for varying personality factors, indicating the need for future studies to explore these aspects for broader applicability.

Jamal et al. (2021) examined the perceived impact of green HRM practices on corporate sustainability in major industries. Their findings revealed that green HRM positively influences corporate sustainability, with a notable impact across industries. However, the study's scope is limited to specific industries and does not address green HRM practices' impact on small and medium-sized enterprises, which may limit its generalizability.

Karatepe et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between management's commitment to ecology, green work engagement, and hotel employees' green outcomes within the hospitality industry. The results suggested that management's commitment to ecological sustainability significantly enhances employees' green work engagement, which, in turn, positively affects green work outcomes. However, the study was limited to the hospitality sector, indicating a need to replicate the research across different industries to improve generalizability.

Ojo et al. (2022) explored how green HRM practices in the IT sector impact environmental performance through pro-environmental behavior. The study concluded that green HRM practices positively influence environmental performance by fostering pro-environmental behaviors among IT employees. However, this research is limited to the IT sector and lacks an exploration of cross-industry applications, suggesting a need for future studies in different sectors to confirm these findings.

Ren et al. (2022) explored the impact of CEO environmental beliefs on the effectiveness of green HRM practices, especially in relation to organizational performance. Utilizing a quantitative survey-based approach across various industries, the study demonstrated that CEO beliefs play a mediating role, enhancing green HRM's positive influence on performance. However, the study mainly focuses on CEO beliefs, without analyzing how other leadership styles might interact with green HRM practices.

Shoaib et al. (2021) analyzed the role of green HRM practices in fostering organizational commitment through green human capital. Through quantitative analysis and SEM mediation models, they found that green HRM practices positively impact organizational commitment by leveraging green human capital. Nonetheless, the study does not address potential direct effects, as it primarily focuses on the mediating role of green human capital.

Veerasamy et al. (2024) examined the role of green HRM in encouraging green behavior through participation, involvement, and training, with a focus on South Asian employees. Using moderated regression analysis on survey data, they found that training and development significantly enhance the relationship between green HRM and green behavior. However, this study is limited by its regional focus, as it concentrates on South Asian content and does not account for additional moderating factors that may affect green HRM outcomes in other cultural contexts.

Ybema et al. (2020) examined HR practices that promote sustainable employability by enhancing engagement. The study found that HR practices can improve employability by sustaining engagement, with engagement serving as a moderating factor. However, the study is limited in scope, focusing primarily on green HR practices without thoroughly addressing overall sustainability. Further research could expand on this by incorporating additional sustainability-focused HR practices.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Problem

The increasing emphasis on sustainability has put pressure on organizations to align their HR practices with environmental goals. Despite this trend, many organizations struggle to implement sustainable HR practices effectively and fail to understand their impact on employee engagement and motivation. The research problem, therefore, is to investigate how sustainable HR practices influence employee engagement and motivation. This includes understanding which sustainable HR practices are most effective in engaging employees, the role of leadership in promoting these practices, and the extent to which these practices contribute to employee well-being and job satisfaction.

3.2 Research Design

The study will use a descriptive research design to provide a comprehensive analysis of sustainable HR practices and their influence on employee engagement and motivation. This design is suitable because it allows for a detailed examination of the relationships between sustainability-focused HR practices and various employee engagement indicators. Descriptive research facilitates the exploration of trends, attitudes, and practices associated with sustainable HR initiatives. By using this approach, the study will capture insights into employee perceptions and identify specific sustainable practices that contribute most significantly to engagement and satisfaction.

3.3 Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the key drivers of employee engagement in sustainable organizations
2. To examine the relationship between sustainable HR practices and employee motivation
3. To assess the impact of sustainable HR practices on employee well-being and job satisfaction

3.4 Data Collection

A **structured questionnaire** was used to collect primary data from **210 respondents** in Ludhiana. Structured questionnaires will be administered directly to participants to capture their views on sustainability practices, engagement, motivation, well-being, and satisfaction. Primary data collection will also allow for the analysis of variations in employee perceptions based on demographic factors such as age, role, and tenure.

3.5 Sampling

- **Sampling technique:** Convenience sampling
- **Sample size:** 210 respondents
- **Target respondents:** Employees from organizations that have adopted sustainable HR practices, across various industries, job levels, and employment types.

3.6 Data Analysis

This section contains the analysis of data collected by the survey. **Data is analysed by using technique of Questionnaire.** The data collected through questionnaire, converted in the form of table and then presented in the form of pie charts and bar diagrams, through which there will be proper understanding of the" **GREENING THE WORKPLACE: EXPLORING THE**

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4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Consumer Demographics

Age: The majority of respondents (47.6%) were aged between 18–30 years, highlighting a predominantly young workforce more receptive to sustainable practices.

Gender: The gender distribution was nearly equal, with 51% male and 48.6% female respondents, ensuring balanced perspectives across genders.

Education Level: A significant proportion of respondents were highly educated, with 35.2% holding a Master's degree and 33.8% holding a Bachelor's degree, suggesting strong awareness of sustainability issues.

Job Level: 35.7% of respondents were at entry-level positions, 29% at mid-level, and 28.1% at high-level positions, providing insights from various organizational hierarchies.

Years of Experience: Around 62.9% of respondents had less than five years of work experience, indicating a dynamic and evolving workforce.

Employment Type: 55.7% of the respondents were employed full-time, while 29.5% were part-time employees.

Industry Sector: Respondents represented diverse industries, with 32.4% from manufacturing, 21.9% from government/non-profit organizations, and 19% from healthcare.

4.2 Impact of Sustainable HR Practices on Employee Engagement

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Sustainable practices in my organization make me feel more engaged at work.	24	20	43	81	42
I am proud to work for an organization that values environmental sustainability.	16	19	42	76	57
Being part of an environmentally responsible organization strengthens my commitment to my job.	15	18	43	86	48
I feel more connected to my organization because of its commitment to sustainability.	14	21	33	90	52
Opportunities to participate in sustainability initiatives increase my engagement at work.	15	19	41	85	50

- A majority of employees (**over 70%**) agreed that sustainable practices within their organizations enhanced their engagement at work.
- **76%** of respondents expressed pride in working for environmentally responsible organizations.
- **86%** agreed that being part of a sustainable organization strengthened their commitment to their jobs.
- **85%** stated that opportunities to participate in sustainability initiatives increased their work engagement.

4.3 Sustainable Hr Practices And Employee Motivation

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)
My organization's sustainable HR practices align with my personal values.	18	32	68	56	36
Knowing that my organization cares about sustainability motivates me to perform better.	15	29	44	78	44
I am more likely to stay in my current role because my organization promotes sustainable practices.	17	31	56	53	53
My organization's sustainability initiatives make me feel that my work contributes to a meaningful cause.	16	19	57	60	58
Sustainable HR practices, like green training and development, increase my motivation to learn and grow in my role.	13	20	42	76	59

- A majority of employees feel that their organization's sustainable initiatives align with their personal values and make their work more meaningful.
- **78%** of respondents strongly agreed that knowing their organization cares about sustainability motivates them to perform better.
- Over **50%** indicated they are more likely to stay with their organization because of its commitment to sustainable practices.
- Additionally, sustainable HR initiatives, like green training and development programs, significantly boosted motivation for learning and professional growth, with **76%** strongly agreeing.

4.4 Sustainable HR Practices And Employee Well Being And Job Satisfaction

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)
The sustainable practices in my organization positively impact my job satisfaction.	14	26	62	55	53
Working in an eco-friendly workplace improves my overall well-being.	12	21	32	75	70
My organization's commitment to reducing waste and energy consumption makes me feel proud of where I work.	12	22	33	71	72
Sustainable HR practices contribute to a healthier work environment.	12	16	48	73	61
Green initiatives, like recycling and energy efficiency, help me feel more satisfied with my job.	11	19	35	80	65

- A large number of employees (**75% strongly agreed**) that working in an eco-friendly workplace improves their well-being.
- **71%** of respondents strongly agreed that their organization's commitment to reducing waste and energy usage made them feel proud.
- Most employees also linked sustainable HR practices to a healthier work environment, with

73% strongly agreeing.

- Furthermore, green initiatives like recycling and energy efficiency efforts significantly increased job satisfaction, as reflected by **80%** strong agreement.

5.1 Findings

- **Sustainable HR practices significantly enhance employee engagement.** Employees reported feeling a stronger connection and commitment when their organizations engaged in environmentally responsible initiatives. Participation

opportunities in sustainability initiatives (not just passive observation) were highlighted as a major driver of engagement.

- **Sustainable HR practices have a positive relationship with employee motivation.** Employees expressed higher motivation when their organization's values aligned with sustainability goals. Knowing that their organization cared about environmental responsibility inspired employees to perform better and feel enthusiastic about their work. A sense of shared values between the organization and employees acted as a strong motivational factor.
- **Sustainable HR practices positively impact employee well-being and job satisfaction.** Eco-friendly workplace environments (such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and green office designs) significantly improved employees' physical and mental well-being. A majority of employees (over 70%) agreed that working in sustainable workplaces boosted their overall job satisfaction. Initiatives like recycling programs and sustainable office spaces increased employees' sense of pride and satisfaction with their organization.

5.2 Recommendations

- **Employee Involvement:** Create platforms for employees to suggest ideas, join green projects, and act as sustainability ambassadors.
- **Sustainability in Recruitment:** Highlight environmental initiatives in job ads, onboarding, and employer branding to attract eco-conscious talent.
- **Green Training Programs:** Offer training on environmental responsibility, green technologies, and sustainable practices to keep employees motivated.
- **Recognition and Rewards:** Establish programs to recognize and reward employees' contributions to sustainability efforts.
- **Transparent Communication:** Regularly share updates on sustainability goals, achievements, and future plans to build trust and engagement.
- **Eco-Friendly Well-being Initiatives:** Invest in sustainable office designs, wellness programs, and flexible work options to support employee health and satisfaction.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that sustainable HR practices are now essential for modern organizations. Employees feel more motivated, engaged, and connected when their workplace commits to environmental and social responsibility, leading to better performance and retention. While most employees responded positively, some neutral or dissatisfied feedback highlights the need for personalized communication and stronger leadership involvement. Overall, organizations that integrate sustainability into HR practices can achieve higher employee engagement, job satisfaction, and long-term success by aligning business goals with employee values and global needs.

5.4 Scope for Future Research

- **Long-term Impact:** Future studies could examine the effects of sustainable HR practices over extended periods to better understand their influence on employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention over time.

- **Industry-Specific Research:** Different industries may face unique sustainability challenges. Research focused on sectors like manufacturing, IT, healthcare, and education could reveal sector-specific strategies and best practices.
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons:** Studying how cultural differences shape employee perceptions of sustainability initiatives can help multinational organizations tailor their global sustainability efforts more effectively.
- **Impact of Leadership Styles:** Further research could explore how various leadership styles—such as transformational, servant, or authentic leadership—affect the success of sustainability programs within organizations.
- **Demographic Factors:** Investigating how employee characteristics like age, gender, education, and job role influence their response to sustainability initiatives can help design more targeted and inclusive strategies.
- **Focus on SMEs:** Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often face different resource constraints and challenges. More focused research could provide practical sustainability frameworks for SMEs.

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