

Employee Sustainability in the SDG Era: A Systematic Review of Human and Organizational Drivers across Key Sectors

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Abstract

This qualitative systematic review examines the multidimensional factors influencing employee sustainability within various corporate settings. The study combines findings across industries including manufacturing, healthcare, aviation, and finance. Key paradigms explored include sustainable leadership, personality traits (such as conscientiousness and openness), green human resource management (GHRM), cultural intelligence, and corporate governance. The review integrates insights from organizational psychology, environmental management, and cross-cultural studies to examine how these variables impact psychological empowerment, diversity and inclusion, intellectual sustainability, eco-conscious behaviour, and social connectedness at the workplace. Results highlight the critical role of leadership and GHRM in entrenching sustainability at the employee level, while cultural intelligence and governance mechanisms moderate these effects across industry contexts. The study offers a conceptual model and practical implications for HR practitioners and policymakers aiming to enhance holistic employee sustainability aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Keywords: Employee Sustainability; Sustainable Leadership; Green HRM; Personality Traits; Cultural Intelligence; Corporate Governance; Organizational Psychology; Diversity and Inclusion; SDGs; Cross-Industry Analysis; Systematic Review.

1. Introduction

Organizations in the current scenario are realizing how important employees are in promoting sustainable development in the face of global sustainability concerns. As businesses strive to align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), employee sustainability has evolved into a complex idea encompassing organizational, sociocultural, environmental, and psychological components. To provide a thorough grasp of the elements that influence sustainable workforce behaviors and results, this study examines employee sustainability via the lenses of leadership, personality traits, and green human resource management (GHRM) (Fauzi et al., 2025). Recent empirical research highlights the growing importance of personality traits, such as the Gender Factor of Personality (GFP) and proactive personality, in influencing professional performance,

leadership effectiveness, and environmentally responsible behaviour. These traits significantly impact job satisfaction, innovation, and career advancement, especially in interdependent, socially dynamic work environments. Furthermore, the rise of green HRM and green culture shows how strategic HR practices may instill sustainability in organizational principles and encourage eco-conscious behaviour (Gandía et al., 2024). GHRM activities ensure the development of a green organizational attitude, job performance, and employee engagement. By coordinating personal aspirations with organizational sustainability goals, incentive programs such as wellness and performance-based prizes serve to promote sustainable practices (Liu et al., 2024). The impact of green practices is increased by leadership

approaches, inclusive involvement, and cultural intelligence, especially in multicultural and global virtual teams (GVTs). Furthermore, sustainable governance guarantees long-term alignment with social and environmental objectives and moulds institutional accountability through ideas like green governance and financial innovations. Since these factors are interconnected, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how human traits and corporate tactics interact to influence employee sustainability. The study adds to the expanding conversation on sustainable organizational ecosystems by incorporating various viewpoints from the manufacturing, healthcare, aviation, and financial industries. It also provides practical advice for leadership, policy, and human capital development. Leadership personality influences environmentally responsible behaviour but not decision-making. Employee personality positively affects decision-making and pro-environmental actions. Employee performance and job satisfaction are improved by transformational leadership. The work environment moderates the association between performance and job happiness. Effective employee performance propels the expansion and sustainability of businesses (Lukito et al., 2025). Employee engagement with AI enhances non-financial performance metrics (Segbenya et al., 2024). Employee personal norms significantly mediate the relationship between GHRM and sustainability. Recommendations include integrating sustainability initiatives into HR practices. In recent years, evaluating environmental performance, quantifying decarbonization, and monitoring the circular economy have become essential components of green management. To develop performance indicators that may address each of these factors, academics and practitioners have concentrated on several approaches. Corporates have begun to link incentives for managers and staff for the accomplishment of organizational objectives. Workers in more polluting companies are less content. Additionally, management staff, employees between the ages of 30 and 40, and individuals with higher levels of education are more satisfied with their employers' environmental performance (Marrucci et al., 2023). These workers, who may

have core talents and are comparatively more experienced, are essential human resources that significantly impact the performance and efficacy of the firm. The study has a significant policy implication: improving environmental sustainability is crucial if businesses desire to establish and preserve a solid and pleasant relationship with their employees (Jing et al., 2023). Corporate Sustainability is very important for value generation and social requirements. Using the Delphi method with a panel of 11 experts, a study sought consensus on the impact of employee-related factors on sustainability variables. The results indicate a strong agreement that employee behaviors significantly enhance organizational sustainability (Ruiz-Pérez et al., 2021). Corporate governance approaches refer to the frameworks, policies, and practices through which corporations are directed and controlled, which encompass mechanisms for accountability, transparency, ethical conduct, and stakeholder engagement. Effective corporate governance plays a critical role in promoting sustainable development by aligning organizational practices with environmental, social, and economic goals and corporate governance approaches (Özcüre et al., 2011). Meaningfulness of work mediates job satisfaction and green performance, and sustainability initiatives enhance operational efficiency and reduce environmental impact. As organizations increasingly seek sustainable practices to address environmental challenges, Green human resource management (Green HRM) emerges as a critical strategy for integrating environmental management into HR practices. Green HRM implementation positively influences the meaningfulness of work, employee job satisfaction, green job performance, and organizational sustainability. Furthermore, meaningfulness of work significantly impacts organizational sustainability and employee job satisfaction. Similarly, green job performance positively impacts organizational sustainability and job satisfaction. Additionally, employee job satisfaction has a positive influence on organizational sustainability. Green Culture positively influences organizational efforts towards eco-consciousness and environmentally friendly practices. Employees who

perceive and embrace a culture that values sustainability are more likely to adopt responsible behaviours and actively contribute to environmental preservation (Huynh et al., 2024). Green HR procedures and green culture play important roles in promoting environmental sustainability, highlighting how they work together to support environmentally friendly behaviours and corporate dedication to sustainability objectives (Anshima et al., 2025).

2. Objectives

The following are the objectives of the study based on the network of themes in Figure 1:

- Examine the connection between personality qualities and long-term employee results,

emphasizing the function of the Gender Factor of Personality (GFP) and proactive personality. [1-5]

- 2 Understand how Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices promote eco-conscious behaviour, employee well-being, and corporate green culture.
- 3 Examine the impact of incentive-based engagement initiatives on encouraging staff members to adopt healthy and sustainable practices. [36-40]
- 4 Investigate how communication and corporate governance mediate or moderate the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives



Figure 1 Themes Interconnected in The Study to Understand the Objectives

3. Research Questions

- How do individual attributes like gender and personality traits (e.g., proactive personality, Gender Factor of Personality) affect employee sustainability outcomes, including job satisfaction, empowerment, creativity, and leadership effectiveness?
- How can organizational methods like incentive-based programs, cultural intelligence, and Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) promote eco-conscious behaviour, employee engagement,

and sustainability across many industries?

- How do organizational elements affect sustainable development practices and results across various industries? [6-10]

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative systematic review approach, synthesizing peer-reviewed literature to explore the interplay between human characteristics and organizational strategies in shaping employee sustainability. The aim is to gather, analyse, and interpret existing knowledge to develop an

integrative understanding of how different factors work together to influence sustainable employment outcomes across key industries. [11-15]

4.1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

4.1.1. Inclusion Criteria

- Peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2010-2025.
- Focus on human characteristics (e.g., gender, personality, cultural intelligence) and/or business strategies (e.g., GHRM, engagement, green governance)
- Studies related to employee sustainability, empowerment, job satisfaction, eco-behaviors, and innovation
- Research conducted in manufacturing, healthcare, aviation, or finance sectors

- Articles in English [31-35]

4.1.2. Exclusion Criteria

- Opinion pieces, conference abstracts, or editorial
- Studies not focused on sustainability or lacking clear connection to organizational strategy or human traits

4.1.3. Duplicate publications

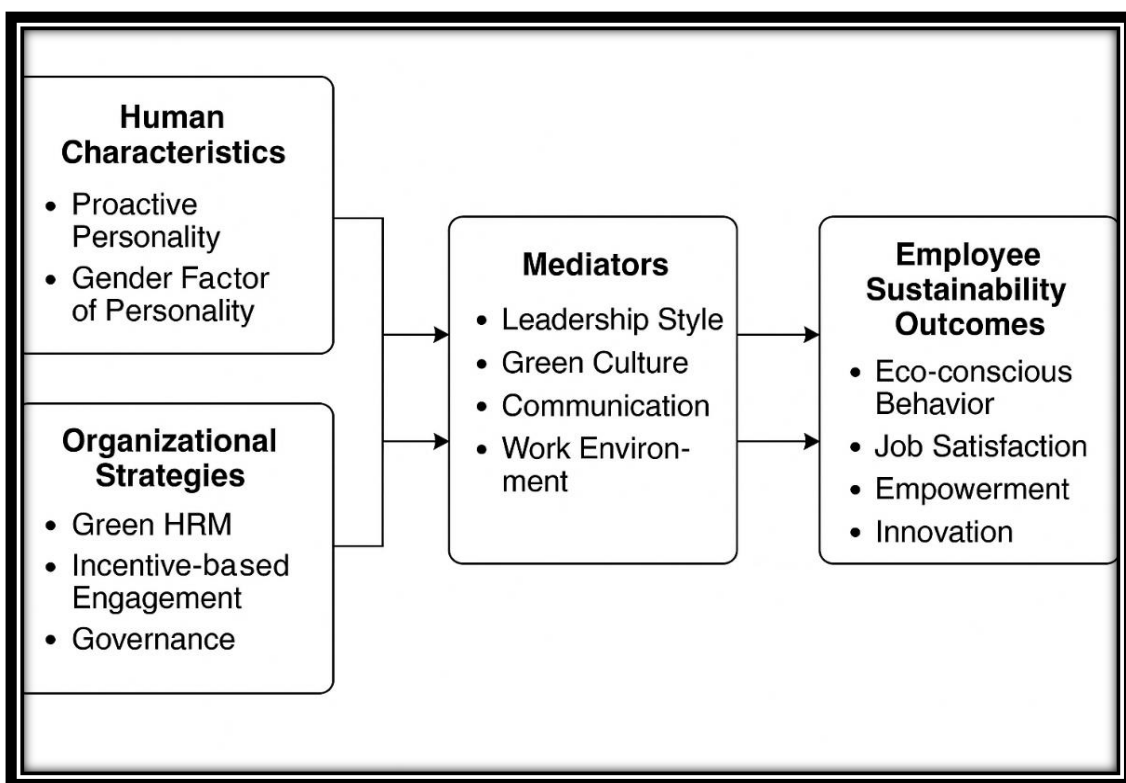
4.2. Data Sources and Search Strategy

A structured literature search was conducted across the following electronic databases:

- Scopus
- Science Direct
- Google Scholar

5. Conceptual Flow of Study

Figure 2 Below Depicts the Conceptual Flow of the Study



6. Search Strategy

To find pertinent literature on the impact of employee-related elements in fostering sustainability in corporate settings, a methodical data search

strategy was used. Search terms included combinations of keywords such as: “employee sustainability behavior”, “corporate governance and

sustainability”, “psychological empowerment”, “intellectual sustainability”, “eco-conscious behavior”, “job stability”, and “employee well-being”, often paired with terms like “sustainable development”, “corporate responsibility”, and “SDGs” (Sustainable Development Goals). Results were refined using truncation (e.g., sustain*) and boolean operators (AND, OR). Studies were included if they directly explored the relationship between corporate or employee-level actions and sustainability outcomes. Titles and abstracts were screened for relevance, followed by a full-text review of selected articles. The reference lists of key studies were also manually scanned to identify additional relevant sources through backward citation tracking.

7. Discussions

7.1. Leadership and Personality Factors

Employees frequently aim for favourable professional outcomes like increasing their resources, position, and expertise. Given this, the current study adds a fresh empirical perspective to the body of knowledge regarding the connection between personality and professional performance. Given that in almost every organization, people are interdependent, and that humans are social by nature, it can be assumed that having adequate social skills, as reflected by a higher Gender Factor of Personality (GFP), may be helpful and is related to earning power as well as the probability of ‘climbing the ladder’ in the organization. Furthermore, it also makes sense that people who are good at or prefer social interaction eventually more frequently end up in jobs in which they can apply their social skills (Van Der Linden et al., 2023). In the self-organized Global Virtual Teams (GVT) context, perceived leadership effectiveness is correlated with gender and personality factors. In self-organized GVTs, perceived leadership effectiveness correlated with extraversion and conscientiousness. The need for a more detailed knowledge of leadership in self-organized GVTs is highlighted by the other features' lack of replication. The results also shed light on the connection between perceived leadership and gender. By demonstrating that women are seen as successful leaders during the duration of projects in self-organized GVTs, they dispel gender-based

preconceptions. Further, this study reveals an interesting pattern regarding self- and peer-evaluations of leadership. Specifically, the gap between self- and peer evaluations is smaller for women than men, which persisted throughout the entire (Farrell et al., 2025). It is vital to emphasize to managers the value of expressing creativity regularly (Kato & Koizumi, 2024). By examining the effect of proactive personality on Employee Innovative Behaviour (EIB), this study acknowledges that in today's highly competitive economic climate, organizations increasingly value employees who demonstrate initiative and self-starting behaviour. Proactive individuals tend to identify opportunities, take charge, and drive change, all of which contribute to fostering innovation within the workplace. This sheds light on the direct relationship between proactive personality and improved EIB. Numerous studies on flow experiences in everyday life, leisure, sports, interpersonal relationships, etc., have been undertaken by previous researchers. These studies have shown that work-related flow is influenced by both external and individual factors (Dai et al., 2024).

7.2. Green HRM & Green Culture

GHRM has a favourable effect on workers' involvement and well-being in the healthcare industry. It also shows that green conduct on the part of employees mediates this association. These results demonstrate how important it is to use the supply value fit theory while developing and putting into effect GHRM procedures at work. Additionally, the relationships between GHRM and green employee behaviour are moderated by green individual values (A. U. Din et al., 2025). Results show that when organizational communication emphasizes the value of green behaviours, GHRM practices can help employees develop a green culture and mentality. Even in the lack of official standards, employees may embrace ecologically friendly behaviours as a result of such clear communication, which can inspire them to take a holistic green approach to working. (Tandon et al., 2023). Employee attitudes and behaviours toward sustainability are greatly influenced by eco-friendly HR strategies and regulations, as evidenced by the substantial association found between green HR practices and green culture. Businesses that place

a high priority on green human resources practices are more likely to cultivate an environmentally conscious culture in which staff members actively participate in sustainable practices that improve the overall ecological performance (Tanveer et al., 2025). Organizations can also foster a green culture by highlighting environmental accomplishments, educating people about environmental challenges, and emphasizing the need for environmental sustainability (Din et al., 2024). Companies that incorporate environmentally friendly practices into their HR strategy have a higher chance of winning management support for their efforts. This alignment emphasizes the role that managerial support plays in promoting sustainable practices and the strategic significance of sustainability in organizations. Furthermore, the results confirm a strong and direct correlation between GHRM and job engagement, indicating that incorporating eco-friendly HR practices is not only beneficial for sustainability but also a major factor in raising employee engagement. GHRM and the performance characteristics of human resource management are positively correlated. The relationship between GHRM and work engagement was shown to be partially mediated by management support (Gupta & Jangra, 2024). Performance-oriented and branding-oriented GHRM practices are the two components that make up GHRM. The goal of enterprises is to promote green branding internally and externally in branding-oriented GHRM practices, which include recruitment, training, involvement, and communication techniques (Vadithe et al., 2025). On the other hand, the goal of performance-oriented GHRM practices, which include performance management and awards, is to promote green habits among employees. We further found that the use of HPWS is positively associated with both types of GHRM adoption, but the difference in a plant's emphasizing one or the other is shaped by its internal green strategy and the external factor of industry emissions (Li et al., 2024). HR procedures can successfully direct and encourage such behaviours in employees, bringing their duties into line with tackling environmental issues like carbon emissions-induced air pollution and manufacturing waste. Encouraging employment opportunities that

prioritize environmental education, along with providing supportive work environments and consistent, reliable training in environmental management initiatives, enhances individuals' motivation to engage in ecological actions. Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices often require employees to adopt eco-friendly work practices. Implementing green HR methods not only raises employees' awareness of environmental issues but also fosters active participation in ecological initiatives, cultivates pro-environmental values, and promotes pro-environmental behavior (PEB). Encouraging employment opportunities that emphasize environmental education and offering conducive work environments that encourage environmental education, as well as continuous and dependable training in environmental management initiatives, increases people's motivation to take ecological actions. Employees are forced to implement eco-friendly working practices under GHRM practices. Putting green HR methods into practice raises employee understanding of environmental issues, encourages active participation in ecological endeavours, develops environmental values, and promotes PEB. Employees' desire to participate in PEB and actively support eco-friendly projects at work is said to be much increased when GHRM practices are effectively communicated to them (Perez et al., 2024). [16-20]

7.3. Employee Engagement and Incentives

The transforming power of cultural intelligence (CQ) in influencing employee outcomes reveals deep insights into managing multicultural work groups. The intersection of characteristics such as metacognition and cultural knowledge across various organizational levels can significantly influence economic outcomes. Both existing literature and the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory underscore the pivotal role of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) in shaping leader-member relationships. While LMX theory primarily emphasizes the quality of interactions between leaders and subordinates, the specific role of CQ within this dynamic remains underexplored (Wong et al., 2021). Employers may offer incentives under health programs for outcome-based programs, in which the member must reach a

health goal (such as a cholesterol level) to be eligible for the incentive. Programs that are progress-based, meaning they don't have a defined health target, can offer even greater incentives for reaching a health goal. While traditional wellness programs are likely to continue to be offered, comprehensive benefit design should consider participation-based programs as one way to reach the broader workforce. It will be crucial and required to conduct more research on utilization trends and the effects of incentive-based wellness programs as more businesses implement them (Gibson et al., 2017). The study contributes to our understanding that employee engagement is not something that just happens but rather something that is originated and sustained by favourable organisational conditions supporting learning and EDI. Another practical implication of this study is that measures should be taken to support employee engagement by creating organisational conditions that provide a more expansive learning environment. Taking employee engagement for granted may result in inadequate support strategies, such as training employees in procedural techniques for developing innovations and then expecting all employees to eventually catch on and fully incorporate them into their daily work, creating a self-perpetuating and lasting movement (Lidman et al., 2023). [21-25]

7.4. Sustainability Measurement & Governance

To promote and achieve the objectives of sustainable development, Industry 4.0 is essential. Sustainability is seen as attainable worldwide because of a new paradigm called "Green Governance (GG)". A sustainable technological revolution and a reshaping of economic growth are largely dependent on green governance. To embrace green practices at all levels and domains and meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), governance efficacy and processes are required. As businesses work to achieve the SDGs and achieve carbon neutrality, GG is becoming more and more popular (Usman et al., 2025). Digital financial inclusion, FinTech, green finance, and good governance affect sustainable natural resource management, emphasizing the moderating effect of governance. Green finance plays a consistently positive role, the impacts of FinTech and digital

financial inclusion can vary, becoming positive when paired with strong governance structures (Rahman & Hossain, 2025). Studies show how governance quality, energy use, and economic growth affect environmental outcomes and SDGs (Naseer et al., 2024). This nuance advances social identity theory by positioning corporate identity as a proactive alignment with social and environmental expectations, particularly relevant in the automobile industry. Corporations engage in sustainability practices not only for competitive or economic gain but also to establish a distinct, socially valued identity as environmentally responsible entities (H. Liu et al., 2023). This shifts the focus from purely financial motivations to identity-driven motivations, where companies aim to be seen as leaders in environmental stewardship. Moreover, the study illustrates how external economic factors impact the corporate identity narrative, pushing companies to reinforce their identity as sustainable entities amid economic challenges (Helfaya & Bui, 2025). The report offers some policy recommendations in light of its findings. Encourage environmentally friendly infrastructure development in low-income nations, energy efficiency, and responsible e-waste management as key components of sustainable information technology practices. Additionally, to lessen adverse effects on environmental degradation, strengthen environmental governance frameworks in lower-income nations by increasing transparency, upholding laws, and encouraging community involvement (Zhang et al., 2021). By integrating sustainable practices in renewable energy projects for lower-income countries by ensuring community engagement, biodiversity conservation, and responsible land use to mitigate potential environmental degradation. Lastly, promote public health in lower-income countries by expanding access to renewable energy, reducing reliance on polluting sources, and implementing clean cooking solutions to improve air quality and mitigate health risks (Khan & Khan, 2024). [26-30]

8. Challenges and The Way Forward

The mindset toward pro-environmental initiatives is the most frequently mentioned obstacle. Attitude encompasses the ethical duty to engage in pro-

environmental activities, nature-consciousness, and personal beliefs that are unlikely to vary between people's homes and workplaces. Lack of environmental awareness and education among employees has a direct impact on companies. Individuals' past experiences and habits influence their willingness to change behaviours in the workplace which plays a part in the workers' willingness to act ecologically friendly in the office (Farooq et al., 2021) & (Jabbour, 2011). One of the reasons for these difficulties is that putting sustainability into practice in an organization differs greatly from putting other techniques into practice. New products and processes are the intermediate goal of innovation, which is long-term and frequently challenging to forecast, measure, and manage. The ultimate goal is higher profit (Epstein & Rejc Buhovac, 2010). However, achieving excellence in social, environmental, and financial performance at the same time is the aim for sustainability. Compared to most of the consequences managers usually deal with, the social and environmental implications of corporate actions are frequently more difficult to quantify and have longer-term effects (Hassan et al., 2020). It is becoming more and more challenging to recruit and hire enough skilled workers due to demographic shifts. Additionally, a significant number of workers worldwide lack a deeper sense of purpose in their work, which leads to a startlingly low level of motivation and engagement at work. This issue is especially pertinent to the hospitality sector because, although the sector operates with a high labor intensity, which results in a significantly high staff turnover rate, jobs in the sector are thought to require high performance but are generally poorly compensated. There might actually be a complete solution for the set of issues listed. The strategy aims to actively engage staff in sustainability concerns (Casey & Sieber, 2016) Employees are greatly motivated by motivational factors such a good work team, a basic income, and the work environment. Men and women, however, have varied perspectives on how important these elements are. Men placed more value on basic pay as a motivating element, while women placed more value on a positive work environment and a cohesive team (Lorincová et al.,

2019). The factor that affects sustainability the most is the cultural aspect of long-term orientation. Firm reputation, corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, and organizational culture are required to support a business's growth and enhance its performance (Kucharska & Kowalczyk, 2018). [41]

Conclusion

The purpose of this review is to examine how employee sustainability is fostered by a combination of organizational, cultural, and human elements rather than existing as a stand-alone idea. Green HRM practices and sustainable leadership have emerged as key motivators, creating work cultures where employees feel ecologically conscious, intellectually stimulated, and psychologically empowered. Conscientiousness and openness are two other personality traits that improve sustainability practices, especially when backed by inclusive policies and culturally aware leadership. Although they serve as facilitators, corporate governance frameworks differ in their efficacy depending on the sector and geographic location. The findings advocate for integrated strategies that align leadership style, HR policies, and diversity frameworks to reinforce employee well-being and performance. Future research should adopt longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to validate the proposed conceptual model across diverse global contexts.

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