Human Resource Management's Practices and Use of Technology for Sustainable Development

Ogbaneme Solomon Omokhudu, Abdulganiyu Braimah, Ughulu Eghoikhunu Stella

Ogbaneme Solomon Omokhudu
Department of Business Administration and Management, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.
soltech64@gmail.com, +234**8036288972**
Abdulganiyu Braimah
Department of Banking and Finance, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.
dr.gani@auchipoly.edu.ng, +2347038648431.
Ughulu Eghoikhunu Stella
Department of Public Administration, Wellspring University, Edo State
stella4excel@yahoo.com, +2348032442696

Abstract: *This study examined the integration of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and technology to drive sustainable development within organizations. HRM plays a crucial role in ensuring a positive and productive work environment, fostering employee engagement, and promoting ethical practices. The study adopts the secondary method of data collection. Current trends of HRM and technology integration were explored. The study found that HRM has evolved over the years and has adopted several measures in improving its practices like developing clear data privacy policies infusing ethical AI and Algorithmic Practices; assessing societal implications of technology-driven HR practices, carrying out regular review and audits to assess their effectiveness, adherence to privacy policies as well as ethical alignment. The challenges in the infusion of technology into HRM practices, include high cost of these technologies; lack of awareness and understanding of the potential benefits of sustainable technologies and their potential benefits; resistance to change within an organization's culture hinders the successful adoption of new technologies; absence of supportive policies and regulations for the implementation of sustainable technologies. The study concludes that the evolution of human relations management practices has played a crucial role in shaping an organization's commitment to sustainable development and thus advocates for continuous and adequate training of human resources on the use of technological devices and a holistic approach that recognizes the pivotal role of human-centric values in shaping the technological landscape for sustainability.*

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Organisation, Practices, Technology, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Human capital is now almost universally acknowledged as an organization's most valuable resource for achieving its goals. Since people are the most significant factor and source of progress, sustainable development and growth cannot occur without their participation (Kolinsky, 1998). The goal of human resource management (HRM) is to manage people inside organizations in a way that promotes employee performance, career growth, and general well-being. Contrarily, sustainable development aims to satisfy existing needs without endangering the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own. Technology and HRM practices can be combined to create novel solutions that advance both employee welfare and environmentally friendly corporate practices.

In today's world, the concept of sustainable development has been underlined as a major concern. Without endangering the environment or jeopardizing the ability of future generations to satisfy their own requirements, it enables individuals and organizations to meet their own needs. Success in today's organizations also depends on having an inventive spirit. As a result, companies now feel more accountable and are more concerned with maintaining the environment. HRM is therefore one of the driving forces underpinning sustainable development today. In order to create effective plans that are in line with the company's values and culture, investors' expectations, legal compliance, and, most significantly, the adoption of technologically friendly practices and employee awareness, HRM has a vital role to play.

Consequently, it is evident that a new approach to managing human resource (HR) as a system is developing, and future HR managers should manage themselves for sustainability (Anyim, Ikemefuna & Mbah, 2011).

The modern world is witnessing significant advancements in technology, which have had profound effects on various aspects of human life, including business and sustainable development. In this context, the relationship between human resource management practices and the integration of technology in sustainable development becomes a crucial concern. It then becomes imperative to understanding how organizations can effectively leverage HRM practices alongside technological innovations to promote sustainable development and address environmental, social, and economic challenges.

This study aims to investigate the following key questions:

1. How have HRM practices evolved over time and how do they impact an organization's commitment to sustainable development?
2. What are the current trends in integration of technology in human relations management and sustainable development initiatives?
3. What role does technology play in facilitating sustainable practices within organizations and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility and social welfare?
4. How do organizations balance the implementation of technology-driven HRM practices with concerns about data privacy, ethical considerations, and societal implications?
5. What are the potential barriers on the successful adoption and implementation of technology-driven sustainable development practices within organizations?

Methodology

The purpose of the current work is to investigate the human resource management's practices through the usage of technology in achieving sustainable development in organisations. The work is based on secondary data, which is gathered through published articles, journals, books, the Internet, seminar materials, and web technologies among other sources.

Literature review

HRM has been defined in a number of different ways, its significance and desirability can be interpreted in a number of different ways. According to Anikeze (2010), HRM is that organizational function that enables effective utilization and development of personnel to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization as well as those of the employees. HRM is the most important function of the organization because the effectiveness of HRM directly affects how well an organization achieves its goals and objectives. It is a branch of management that is focused on making the best use of human resources inside a company (Ekeh-Momoh, 2002). According to Sahidul (2015), human resource management is now frequently seen as the fundamental factor that differentiates successful organizations from failure and is essential to achieving a competitive edge. This is in contrast to technology or money. Since employees are the primary point of contact for customers in the service sector, whether in-person during a service transaction, on the phone, or online, this is essential. To improve quality of life and the environment through the concept of a healthy, sustainable, and vibrant community in the future of HRM, innovative and creative techniques are needed. According to Klaus (2016), the Industrial Revolution 4.0 will dramatically boost business efficiency, create new employment opportunities, and be able to link billions of people to the internet. These new technologies will have an impact on every field of research and industry, raising questions about what it means to be human. Keeping up with the most recent developments is a challenge for HR management in order to ensure the long-term viability of the company. Most of the time, staff will require further training to comprehend how to use new apps.

The evolution of HRM techniques over time has been significant, reflecting shifts in cultural values, labour regulations, and corporate requirements. Organizations' commitment to sustainable development has been significantly impacted by the change from a traditional, hierarchical strategy to a more participative and employee-centric approach. Over time, human resource management (HRM) has evolved to reflect shifting societal standards, technology breakthroughs, and workplace dynamics (Dhawan, 2023).

Era of Personnel Administration (late 19th to Early 20th Century): during this time, human resources management (HRM) was more commonly referred to as Personnel Administration and concentrated on hiring, record-keeping, and labour law compliance. The key priority was establishing a steady workforce and keeping track of employment data (Lucknow University, 2020).

The Human Relations Era (1920s– 1950s), saw a shift in emphasis on employee motivation and satisfaction as a result of the Hawthorne research in the 1920s. Managers started to pay attention to employee morale and well-being as they realized how critical it was to take human factors into account in the workplace (Sapru, 2013).

The Personnel Management Era, which was from 1945 – 1970s, concentrated on administrative responsibilities but took a more strategic approach. Employees were viewed as significant assets under the people management strategy, which tried to match worker strengths with company goals (Cox, 1993).

The Human Resource Management (HRM) Era followed, lasting from the 1980s to the 1990s. During this time, the word "Human Resource Management" became well-known and began to denote a more strategic and comprehensive approach to managing people, talent acquisition, development, and retention became the responsibility of HRM, which emerged as a crucial organizational function. (Lucknow University, 2020; Sharma, Sadana & Kaur, 2012) Later, in the late 20th century, strategic HRM emerged, and it was soon strongly associated with total organizational strategy. By coordinating human resources with organizational objectives, HR experts began to play a significant role in developing and carrying out corporate strategies (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005).

The Digital and Technological HRM (21st Century) era, which brought about technological improvements and changed HRM methods, came immediately after the Strategic HRM era. Processes have been streamlined, decision-making has been improved, and the employee experience has been improved thanks to automation, data analytics, and artificial intelligence (Bersin, 2019; Gorski, Fuciu & Dumitrescu, 2017; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Merih, 2017;). It was the Employee Experience and Well-being (21st Century) era that brought to modern HRM, which emphasizes the value of work-life balance, employee well-being, and a pleasant employee experience. The development of a positive and inclusive workplace culture is a current priority for firms (Courtnell, 2022; Saks, 2020).

Current trends in integration of technology in human relations management and sustainable development initiatives
As the world embraces rapid technological advancements and grapples with environmental challenges, organizations are increasingly leveraging technology to streamline Human Resource management and enhance sustainable development initiatives. Some of the current trends in integrating technology in HR practices and sustainable development strategies are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Current Trends in integrating technology into HRM practices

Nos	Trends	HRM Activities
1	Digital Transformation of HR processes.	HR departments are adopting technology to streamline and automate various HR processes, such as recruitment, on-boarding, performance management, and employee engagement (PwC, 2021). This allows HR professionals to focus on more strategic tasks and make data-driven decisions.
2	Data Driven Decision Making	The availability of data and advanced analytics tools is empowering HR managers to make informed decisions regarding talent acquisition, employee performance, and workforce planning (United Nations Global Compact, 2020). This data-driven approach can lead to better outcomes for sustainable development initiatives.
3	Employee Experience and Engagement	Companies are using technology to enhance the overall employee experience and foster better engagement. From employee feedback platforms to virtual team-building activities, HR is leveraging technology to create a positive and inclusive work environment.
4	Remote Work and Flexible arrangements	The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work and flexible work arrangements (Acendre, 2020). HR departments are using technology to manage remote teams effectively and ensure a seamless workflow.
5	Artificial Intelligence (AI)	AI is being integrated into various HR processes, such as resume screening, chat-bots for employee support, and predicting employee attrition. AI can help HR professionals identify patterns and optimize their strategies for sustainable development (United Nations Global Compact, 2020).

Source: Researchers' findings (2023).

Role of Technology in facilitating sustainable practices within organizations
Technology plays a pivotal role in facilitating sustainable practices within organizations and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility and social welfare. It enables businesses to make more informed decisions, optimize processes, reduce waste, conserve resources, and engage stakeholders effectively.

Advanced data analytics tools enable organizations to track and analyze their environmental and social impact accurately. By collecting and analyzing data on energy consumption, waste generation, supply chain practices, and employee behavior, organizations can identify areas for improvement and set sustainability goals (Searcy, 2019). Internet of Things (IoT) devices and smart sensors can be integrated into buildings, manufacturing facilities, and supply chains to monitor resource usage in real-time. This data allows organizations to optimize energy consumption, minimize water usage, and reduce material wastage (Melton & Hartman, 2018).

Technology facilitates the adoption of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and geothermal power. Additionally, energy-efficient technologies like LED lighting, smart thermostats, and energy management systems help organizations minimize their carbon footprint (Reames, 2018). Technology solutions like blockchain enable transparent and traceable supply chains, ensuring responsible sourcing of materials and products. This helps prevent environmental and social issues like deforestation, child labour, and unfair wages (Chauhan, Kaur, Arrawatia, Ractham & Dhir, 2022; Gamboa-Bernal, Moreno-Mantilla & Orjuela-Castro, 2021; Reames, 2018;). Technology facilitates collaboration among employees, suppliers, and customers, leading to better communication and coordination for sustainable initiatives. Virtual meetings and remote work options also reduce the need for travel and associated emissions (Fichter & Lorek, 2019).

Green product development: Advanced technologies enable businesses to design products with sustainability in mind. Computer-aided design (CAD) software, simulation tools, and virtual prototyping allow organizations to create more eco-friendly and durable products (Chen & Kim, 2021). Online platforms and e-commerce encourage the sharing economy, where products and resources are shared or reused instead of being discarded. This approach supports the circular economy concept, minimizing waste and maximizing resource utilization (Fichter & Lorek, 2019; ParcelLab, 2022).

How HRM Implement Technology-driven Practices for Sustainability
A significant difficulty for enterprises in the modern day is juggling the adoption of technology-driven human relations management strategies with worries about data privacy, ethical considerations, and societal ramifications. Technology has the ability to improve

HR processes' efficiency and decision-making, but it also introduces possible risks and ethical conundrums around data processing and the effects on people and society. The following strategies can be used by organizations to balance the adoption of technology-driven human relations management practices, according to the European Commission (2021); Information Commissioner's Office (ICO); International Labour Organization (ILO) (2020); Privacy International (2019); UNESCO (2021):

1. Establishing strong data privacy rules that abide by applicable laws and regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union, is step one in developing clear data privacy policies. These guidelines should describe how to gather, utilize, keep, and share employee data while maintaining privacy and obtaining informed consent.

2. Implementing Secure Data Management: To safeguard employee data from unauthorized access, security breaches, and cyber threats, use secure IT systems and data management procedures. Data protection must include encryption, access limits, and frequent security audits.

3. Transparency and Communication: Promote transparency about the use of technology in HR procedures and the usage of employee data inside the firm. Having open lines of communication with employees regarding the reasons of data collecting can help foster trust and reduce privacy concerns.

4. Ethical AI and Algorithmic Practices: Make sure that any algorithms or artificial intelligence used in HR decision-making processes have been created ethically and impartially. To find and address any potential biases, routine audits and monitoring should be carried out.

5. Data Minimization: Use a "data minimization" strategy in which only essential and pertinent employee data is gathered and kept. Avoid gathering excessive or pointless data that could put your privacy at needless risk.

6. Employee Consent and Training: Ensure that employees receive sufficient training regarding data privacy, their legal rights, and the effects of technology-driven HR practices. Before collecting and processing employee data, get their express consent.

7. Evaluate Societal Implications: Conduct in-depth analyses of how technology-driven HR practices will affect society. Think about the possible effects on the general community, diversity and inclusion, and employee well-being.

8. Collaborate with Experts: Gain insights into best practices and fresh ethical issues in technology-driven HR by collaborating with privacy experts, ethicists, and pertinent stakeholders.

9. Conduct frequent assessments and audits of technology-driven HR processes to evaluate their efficacy, adherence to privacy policies, and ethical coherence.

Challenges of Implementing Technology-driven Sustainable Development Practices

In order to achieve sustainable development within organizations, a number of authors, including Deloitte (2018), Su, & Tsai (2017), Ganz, Kharas, & McArthur (2017), and UN Global Compact (2020), have identified a variety of challenges that must be overcome:

a. Investment and Cost: For many firms, the initial expense of adopting and implementing sustainable technologies can be a major obstacle. Some businesses may be reluctant to make the switch because the initial expenditure in technology, infrastructure, and training may be more than with conventional methods. The initial expense of implementing sustainable technologies is one of the major obstacles. Even while they can offer long-term advantages, businesses might find it difficult to afford the up-front costs. Furthermore, it can be challenging to calculate the return on investment (ROI) of sustainability projects because the advantages are frequently elusive and take time to materialize. Even while they understand how important it is to fund and staff sustainable initiatives, smaller organizations or those with few resources may find it challenging to do so.

b. Lack of Knowledge and Awareness: Many firms may not be aware of or appreciate the potential advantages of sustainable technologies. They might not completely understand the solutions that are offered or how they apply to their particular business or activities. They can also lack the skills and knowledge necessary to implement these technologies successfully.

c. Organizational culture: A culture that is resistant to change can impede the effective adoption of new technology. It might be difficult to effectively integrate sustainable technologies if sustainability is not a core value or if there is a reluctance to change from accepted methods. Employee and stakeholder opposition may make it difficult to implement sustainable practices. To prioritize sustainability and win support from all levels of management, the firm may need to undergo a cultural transition.

d. Policy and regulatory environment: In some instances, the lack of supportive laws and policies might pose obstacles to the adoption of sustainable technologies. Organizations may be reluctant to invest in such activities due to uncertainty around government assistance or murky rules. Organizations may become unsure as environmental laws and policies change quickly. People can be reluctant to invest in sustainable technologies if future regulatory obligations are unclear.

e. Technology Maturity and Integration: Different sustainable technologies have different levels of maturity, and some may still be in the early phases of development or haven't been completely incorporated into current systems. Technical difficulties and compatibility problems may make implementation difficult. Because technology develops quickly and cutting-edge sustainable solutions can become outdated in a few years, a technology's adaptability and longevity will undoubtedly have an impact on how businesses run.

f. Data security and privacy issues are becoming increasingly important as technology is integrated more deeply into business processes. If businesses believe that adopting sustainable technologies may make them more vulnerable to cyber attacks,

they may be reluctant to do so. Data analysis and data gathering are frequently used in sustainable technology. Making sure data security and user privacy are protected becomes essential because any breach could have a negative impact on the organization's reputation and ability to comply with the law.

g. Integration and Supply Chain Complexity: It might be difficult to integrate new sustainable technology with current systems. Older systems might not work with more modern ones, necessitating expensive upgrades or even a total rebuild of the infrastructure of the company. It can be difficult for businesses with intricate supply networks to incorporate sustainable practices all the way through the chain. It takes a lot of work to coordinate with suppliers, ensure compliance, and keep track of sustainability key performance indicators (KPIs) throughout the supply chain.

Discussion

Since change is the only constant in life, organizations constantly seek to better their procedures by implementing new technologies. Organizations that adopt new technology open the door to sustainability. In the context of sustainable development, the study explores how human resource management and technology may work together to achieve sustainable development which is essential as companies and organizations come to understand the value of sustainability.

According to this study, HR practices have changed from a traditional, hierarchical approach to one that is more participative and employee-centric. This evolution has had a significant impact on how committed organizations are to sustainable development through increased employee engagement, talent attraction and retention, and risk mitigation. . HRM has changed to reflect shifting societal standards, technological breakthroughs, and workplace dynamics. The study found that integrating technology into HR practices has enabled organizations to accurately track and analyze their environmental and social impact, optimize energy consumption, minimize water use, and reduce material waste, use renewable energy to minimize their carbon footprint, and utilize technology for e-commerce platforms and e-commerce, among other findings.

The study found that organizations have implemented strategies for integrating technological practices for sustainable development. These strategies include creating transparent data privacy policies that adhere to applicable laws and regulations, putting in place secure data management procedures to safeguard employee data from unauthorized access, breaches, and cyber threats, encouraging internal transparency regarding the use of technology in HR practices and how employee data is being used, and ensuring employees are given the necessary information about their rights, data privacy, and the effects of technology-driven HR practices; undertaking in-depth analyses of the social impact of technology-driven HR practices. Conduct periodic reviews and audits of technology-driven HR practices to evaluate their efficacy, adherence to privacy policies, and ethical alignment. Collaborate with privacy experts, ethicists, and pertinent stakeholders to gain insights into best practices and emerging ethical considerations in technology-driven HR.

There are a number of obstacles that organizations using technology to promote sustainable development must overcome, such as the high cost of these technologies, a lack of knowledge about the potential benefits of sustainable technologies, resistance to change within an organization's culture, the absence of policies and regulations that would support the use of sustainable technologies, and compatibility problems with tech.

Conclusion

The development of human relations management techniques has been a major influence on how committed organizations are to sustainable growth. In order to solve the difficulties of global sustainability, the study on HRMpractices and the role of technology in sustainable development emphasizes the interaction between human-centric approaches and technological advancements. Organizations have a lot of options to accomplish sustainable development objectives when HRM practices and technology are integrated effectively.

Organizations may increase their contributions to sustainable development, establish a healthy workplace culture, and advance the wellbeing of their workforce by integrating HRM practices with technology. Companies can link their company objectives with sustainable practices for a brighter future by supporting employee wellbeing, diversity, and ethical behavior and utilizing technology for data-driven decision-making. Organizations can build a culture of sustainability that benefits not only the business but also society and the environment through valuing people, fostering diversity, and adopting corporate social responsibility (CSR). Technology simultaneously equips companies with data-driven insights and effective supply chain and resource management solutions. We can create the conditions for a more sustainable and successful future by combining these two foundations. The synergistic relationship between HRM practices and technology emerges as a fulcrum for advancement as we set out on a path towards a sustainable future. Organizations may build a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable society for both the present and future generations by adopting technology responsibly and utilizing it in conjunction with humane practices. Technology can be a powerful tool, but it must be utilized ethically and without unforeseen bad effects. To guarantee this, ethical considerations must be made. In addition to a holistic strategy that acknowledges the crucial role of human-centric values in designing the technology environment for sustainability, this study promotes continual and proper training of human resources on the usage of technological equipment.

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