



Chapter 5

Integrating Sustainability Into HR Practices Using the Best Worst Method

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ABSTRACT

This chapter delves into the intricate task of integrating sustainability principles into human resources practices using analytical methods as a guiding framework. It unveils the potential for harmonizing various sustainability aspects within HR, moving beyond theory to provide a practical roadmap. Analytical techniques enable decision makers to navigate between conflicting interests and chart a path towards common understanding and workable strategies. By a hypothetical case study, this chapter illustrates how analytical tools illuminate the way forward, promoting alignment with ethical, environmental, and social responsibility goals. This journey underscores the pivotal role of analytical methods in resolving conflicts among decision-makers, facilitating consensus-building to make ethical HR decisions. This chapter signifies the transformative potential of integrating sustainability into HR, propelling organizations toward a future where HR practices are not only functional but also ethically grounded, ensuring the welfare of employees, the community, and the planet.

NAVIGATING SUSTAINABILITY IN HR PRACTICES

The integration of sustainability into HR practices is an issue of ever-increasing importance in today's business world (Prakash et al., 2022). Underlying this lies the necessity of harmonizing economic success with social and environmental responsibility. This justification can be based on three important arguments. *i) Meeting Stakeholder Expectations and Improving Reputation:* Organizations are responsible to

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-0972-8.ch005

a wider range of stakeholders (employees, customers, investors and societies) than shareholders (Billiet et al., 2023). These stakeholders have high expectations regarding ethical behavior, environmental management and social responsibility (Bozoklu, 2018). Failure to meet expectations can seriously damage the organization's reputation. Integrating sustainability principles into HR practices serves to meet these expectations and strengthen the organization's position. *ii) Attracting and Retaining Talent:* It is observed as an increasing trend in the labor market that top talent directs employer organization preferences within the framework of sustainability concerns (Lawler, 2017). Organizations recognize the urgency and value of attracting and retaining the best employees to generate greater profits (Phillips & Addicks, 2010). In particular, Generation Y, who has different values, is looking for workplaces that are compatible with values such as purpose and collaborative work environment (Santillo, 2019). HR practices that center on sustainability can attract individuals who are not only highly skilled but also passionately committed to ethical and environmental causes. From a different perspective, organizations that respect and align with their employees' values are more likely to retain their workforce (Ortiz Gómez et al., 2022). *iii) Increasing Operational Efficiency and Reducing Costs:* Integrating sustainability practices into HR can indirectly provide operational efficiency and cost savings. For example, sustainability-focused actions such as waste reduction or energy conservation can effectively reduce operational expenses. On the other hand, by respecting employees' values, employees' work motivation can be increased, thus financial gains can be achieved by reducing absenteeism. In this context, the benefits that organizations can achieve by optimizing their HR practices with a focus on sustainability are two-dimensional: achieving social responsibility and gaining economic advantages (Mukhuty et al., 2022). Integrating sustainability into HR practices is promising in terms of meeting stakeholder expectations, attracting top talent, and operational efficiency.

Researchers have shown keen interest in the integration of sustainability into human resources practices. Some of these can be mentioned as follows. Mandip (2012) introduced the concept of green human resources management by emphasizing the necessity of environmentally friendly human resources practices. Buller & McEvoy (2016) conceptual model in which they show how sustainability can be integrated into human resources practices underlines the complex interaction of organizational capabilities, group competencies and individual abilities. Priyadarshini (2020) emphasize that the success of sustainable human resources practices lies with human resources managers. Becker & Smith (2012) focused on the strategic consequences of sustainable human resources practices. So much so that the study emphasizes the need to attract, develop and manage employees who are aware of social and environmental responsibilities. The aforementioned studies see and emphasize the integration of sustainability into human resources practices as the cornerstone of long-term corporate success.

Integrating sustainability into human resources practices requires overcoming several challenges. Among these challenges, the most important is the multifaceted obstacle to corporate decision-making (Xu et al., 2018). This obstacle arises from the conflict of interest that exists among decision makers within the institution. All stakeholders, including human resources managers, department heads, and organizational leaders, bring different perspectives that stem from their own roles and experiences in the decision-making process. Incorporating diversity has the potential to lead to conflicts when integrating sustainability dimensions into human resources practices (Pearce & Wegge, 2015).

Analytical approaches in decision-making help avoid conflicts and achieve a harmonious balance between ethical, environmental, and social responsibility objectives. By combining perspectives of decision makers and utilizing empirical data, these approaches enable evidence-based decision-making and

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