

# An Outside-in Approach to Human Resource Management

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**Abstract:** *This article discusses the outside-in approach to understanding human resource management (HRM) in relation to sustainable development goals (SDGs). The author presents four propositions, based on the literature review, that connect long-term business challenges to sustainable HRM goals. The article emphasizes the need for a wider scholarly and professional perspective in order to effectively conceptualize and implement sustainable HRM practices and address long-term business challenges. Due to the lack of sustainable HRM knowledge in countries like Nepal, the article aims to provide a detailed explanation of the concepts. As a conceptual paper, further expansion and testing of the propositions will be necessary in the future.*

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**Keywords:** Business challenges; Externalities; Inside-out; Outside-in; Sustainable HRM

## I. INTRODUCTION AND METHOD

Brundtland Commission (WCED, 1987, p.43) defines sustainable development as 'development that meets the need for the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.' This definition of sustainable development has become a common reference to developmental studies and is a starting point for many researchers to engage in sustainability research. Sustainable HRM, rooted on the concept of 'business sustainability' (BS), is an outside-in approach for the preservation, regeneration and development of environmental (ecological), economic and social resource of a system together with profits and return on investment (Dyllick & Muff, 2015; Ulrich et al., 2012; Ehnert, 2009; Kramer, 2014; Senna & Shani, 2009; Gardberg & Fombrun, 2006; Elkington, 1997, Scott et al., 2003).

As a relatively young field of study, there has been growing academic interest in sustainable HRM theory. A simple online search of titles and terms used by Google Scholar illustrates 76,000 and 3,60,000 entries on 'sustainable HRM' and 'sustainable

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human resource management, respectively. The profound interest in sustainable HRM has increased with the contributions of Brundtland's Commission report (WCED, 1987), the triple bottom line approach (planet, profit, and people) by Elkington (1987), and the research of Kira (2002), Mariappanadar (2003), Ehnert (2006; 2009), Taylor et al. (2012), and Kramer (2014). Based on the triple bottom line approach, green HRM (Renwick et al. 2013) extends ideas of green recruitment and selection, training and development, and compensation.

A number of scholarly research papers in the field of sustainable HRM have been published in the last three decades (e.g., Taylor et al., 2012; Ehnert, 2009; Krammer, 2014; Aust (Ehnert) et al., 2019). Despite the increasing number of studies in this field, researchers are still not providing appealing and convincing opinions on how to implement sustainable HRM by balancing contradictory yet appealing environmental, economic, and social goals (Paulet, 2019; Bush, 2018). Although scholars have argued empirically and conceptually about the relationship between sustainable HRM and the well-being of employees for environmental outcomes, there is insufficient policy support to implement sustainable HRM practices in reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the organizational level (Chamsa & García-Blandónb, 2019). This might be because organizations are less engaged in sustainable activities or are not ready to work out the long-term impact of externalities on business sustainability. Difficult questions arise, such as how HRM can help mitigate the unprecedented effects of industrialization on climate change and whether HRM is capable of eradicating poverty and hunger as envisioned by the SDGs. Furthermore, there is no evidence to blame HRM for pollution, poverty, starvation, climate change, or other long-standing issues. The existing HR literature also does not provide a solution. Recognizing this, the author made a small attempt to study this emerging field of research.

In the West, David Orr, Bill McKibben, Al Gore, and Greta Thunberg are actively warning the government, industries, and people in society about the frightening consequences of climate change on human life through social media and authorship. A large number of scientific articles published contributed to expanding understanding of sustainability concepts. Interestingly, a few articles (e.g., Ehnert, 2009; Leal Filho, 2000) even used synonyms to explain and broaden the understanding of the term sustainability. Researchers have been engaged in forming opinions in this area, as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015), also known as "grand challenges" (Dyllick & Muff, 2015) or "common good agenda" (WCED, 1987). In poor and least developed countries, full literacy and understanding of sustainable approaches, as well as the risks that may arise due to our unsustainable behaviours are still lacking. Such behaviours may affect future generations' existential demands. These nations' grasp of sustainable HRM landscapes is limited due to low literacy rates in this area. Keeping these disclaimers in mind, this article is merely to advance sustainable HRM literacy. The author makes an effort to further develop its concepts by taking an outside-in perspective. Although it appears that incorporating SDGs into an organization's mission is ambitious and rhetorical, HR scholarships are devoted to bringing these problems to the attention

of HR practitioners. They recommend an outside-in strategy for HRM, which is different from mainstream HRM, in order to inculcate business challenges into the organizational mission (e.g., Ulrich et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2003).

The current study focuses on defining and enlarging the sustainable HRM landscape by elaborating the terms preservation, regeneration, and development of resources to accomplish economic, social, and environmental goals (e.g., Sena & Shani, 2009; Dyllick & Muff, 2015; Ehnert, 2009; Krammer, 2014). With all these discussions in mind, the two-fold aim of this article is to define the outside-in approach and suggest the potential areas of contributions that HR professionals can make in preserving, renewing, and developing resources in order to achieve long-term business goals. To materialize these aims, the article proceeds to review the literature to assess performance outcomes and then highlights the potential areas where HR professionals can contribute to adopting the outside-in approach. To identify the areas of potential contributions, the article takes references from synonym and antonym terms signifying business challenges. Antonyms and synonyms of these terms not only aid in comprehending the terrain of sustainable HRM but also provide in-depth insights into potential negative externalities when not pursuing sustainability goals. Then, the article suggests a process to implement sustainable HRM. Finally, the article outlines the implications and offers conclusions and limitations.

The author likely conducted a thorough review of existing literature and internet resources related to sustainable HRM. This involved gathering information from various sources, such as academic journals, books, reports, and reputable websites. By using a conceptual research approach, the author aims to synthesize existing knowledge and present it in a new context. This means taking the ideas, theories, and frameworks from prior research and applying them to the specific issue of sustainable HRM. The conceptual paper serves as a springboard for future studies, providing a foundation for researchers to build upon and further explore the topic.

Saunders (2021) defines a conceptual paper as one that "synthesizes existing literature to develop new ideas or frameworks." It is not focused on empirical data collection or analysis but rather on analyzing existing knowledge and proposing new perspectives or theories. Conceptual papers are valuable in filling knowledge gaps and guiding future research in a particular area. Overall, the use of conceptual research in this study allows the author to gather and analyze existing knowledge on sustainable HRM and contribute to the development of new concepts and theories in the field. The aim is to advance understanding and provide a basis for future empirical studies to explore the topic further.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Inside-out vs outside-in approach*

The concept 'outside-in' is rooted in the term 'externality' in economics. The core idea of externality, pioneered by a British economist named Pigou (1920), is dominant in understanding its implications in HRM. In economics, an externality is defined as the

unpriced spillover impact of company activity. The costs and advantages associated with the production and consumption of products are known as externalities. They could be favourable or unfavourable for business sustainability. The value/benefit gained by society from production and consumption is known as positive externalities. Customers who are satisfied with the goods will purchase them again and again. Negative externalities are the harm or cost to society caused by the production or use of products. The use of coal in the manufacture of goods pollutes society, eventually resulting in the greenhouse effect.

Wright et al. (2003) state that inside-out and outside-in are two different approaches to HR strategy. Adopting an outside-in approach, HR professionals develop HR systems after identifying vital business needs and challenges. Simultaneously, they analyze how people fit in and the human outcomes required to address these issues and challenges. Thus, applying this approach, HR functions start by reviewing business issues and challenges. Wright et al. further suggest that to develop an outside-in approach, line management involvement and a system of tracking the potential workforce (e.g., demographics) and business are imperative. It also implies that HR professionals contribute to business goals if they plan to achieve environmental performance (sustainability). Their roles and responsibilities are focused on innovative HRM through the recruitment of talent and addressing the changing needs and expectations of employees. Alternatively, an organization with an inside-out approach first considers what HR is doing, then identifies the key people outcomes to be focused on, and finally attempts to fit HR to get positive business outcomes. This approach is short-term and may have negative externalities in the long run.

Explaining the outside effect of employee retrenchment Mariappanadar (2003, p. 921) succinctly states that "it is important that the companies be aware of the unsustainable effect of retrenchment on the community and government because without social harmony, the existence of capitalism itself will be jeopardized." This statement implies that when organizations do not consider outside-in policies, negative externalities may develop. Mariappanadar (2003) offers a tripod approach to elaborate on this approach. According to him, the tripod approach comprises the company, community, and government perspectives regarded as the founding pillars of a sustainable society. He suggests developing an HRM strategy to maximize the value of the tripod. In his research, he applies the sustainable (external economies) and unsustainable (diseconomies) effects of retrenchment on a community, government, and company.

To elaborate on the outside-in concept of HRM, the scholarly contributions of Ehnert, Ulrich, and Kramer are frequently referenced in sustainable HRM literature. A closer look at their research reveals certain commonalities in their findings. Ehnert's (2009; 2016) research is frequently cited when defining sustainable HRM. She defines sustainable HRM as "the adoption of HRM strategies and practices that enable the achievement of financial, social, and ecological goals with an impact inside and outside of the organization and over a long-term time horizon while controlling for unintended side effects and negative feedback effects on the HR systems on the HR base and thus on the company itself" (Ehnert et al. 2016, p. 90). She further noted that for BS, sustainable HRM contributes to creating a balance in resource reproduction and consumption (see Ehnert 2009) to minimize

the spillover effects on the environment, society, and economy. In other words, the basic sustainable HRM concept entails ‘the preservation, regeneration, and development of the ecological, economic, and social resources of a system’ (Sena & Shani 2009, p. 84).

Ulrich et al. (2012, p.1) aptly state that:

*The real business is external: the context and setting in which the business operates, the expectations of key stakeholders (customers, investors, communities, partners, employees, and so forth), and the strategies that give a company a unique competitive advantage. If HR professionals are truly to contribute to business performance, then their mindset must center on the goals of the business. They must take that outside reality and bring it into everything they do, practicing their craft with an eye to the business as a whole and not just their own department.*

This statement clearly indicates that HR professionals can only add meaningful and sustainable value if they think and behave from an outside-in perspective. For this to be achieved, HR professionals must have professional capacity and motivation. Explaining the outside-in approach, Kramar (2014) provides an encompassing definition of sustainable HRM as ‘the patterns of planned or emerging HR strategies and practices intended to enable the achievement of financial, social, and ecological goals while simultaneously reproducing the HR base over the long term’. (p. 1084). This definition clearly states that planned and emerging HR strategies and practices are required to address future business challenges that arise from the deterioration of the HR base, resulting in negative externalities and adversely affecting economic, social, and environmental outcomes for business sustainability in the long run. These concepts and approaches contribute to the elaborate meaning of sustainable HRM and the expansion of research in this field. Furthermore, theoretical harmonization and conceptual and empirical contributions are indispensable to expanding its landscape from an outside-in perspective.

#### *Theoretical foundations for the study of outside-in HRM research*

After understanding the outside-in and inside-out concepts, it is imperative to become familiar with a few theories that aid in the development of a framework for future research. There are a number of theories that can be employed to do research in this field. The application of these theories to uncover the knowledge gap, assess it, and anticipate events related to sustainable HRM benefits researchers. These theories include, e.g., human capital theory (Becker, 1975), institutional theory (Scott, 1987), stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), paradox theory (Poole & Ven, 1989; Smith & Lewis, 2011), risk society theory (Beck, 1992), organizational development theory (Porras and Robertson, 1986), systems theory (Bertalanffy, 1950), a resource-based view (Wernerfelt, 1984), ability-motivation-opportunity theory (AMO) (Appelbaum et al. 2000), social exchange theory (Homans, 1958), and green theory (Eckersley, 2007). These theories not only provide the basis to comprehend sustainable HRM but also benefit researchers by allowing them to initiate research ideas, search for gaps, anticipate events, and predict long term consequences.

According to human capital theory, education and training boost employee productivity. Intellectual and human capital are viewed as renewable resources that help increase productivity. The institutional theory supports legitimizing sustainable HRM rules and policies. It helps to reframe organizational structure, reform the governing mechanism, and establish a holistic organizational structure and policies to implement long-term HRM practices. Stakeholder theory directs HR to follow HR strategy and actions to support sustainable practices that harmonize the interests of shareholders. It guides us to consider stakeholders' interests while making any decisions.

In order to evaluate the interdependence and contradiction in an organization's decisions that occur concurrently and endure over time, paradox theory describes the conflicting demands between nature and management. Risk society theory enables HRM to minimize the risk associated with technology transformation and its implications for the social and natural environment and guides it in dealing with ethical questions. Organisational development theory provides the groundwork for promoting trust, commitment, culture, employee involvement, collaboration, and cooperation at work. The promotion of these elements fosters sustainable behavior at work through a number of interventions. The system theory explains the interconnectedness of the subsystem and its interaction with the external environment. It further supports the exchange of information and resources with the external environment, which represents an important domain of sustainable HRM. The resource-based view supports HRM for the development of human capital to protect natural resources and the environment in order to ensure a competitive advantage.

The AMO theory is commonly used by researchers to determine how significantly HRM domains affect environmental outcomes. De Prince et al. (2014) classify three HRM approaches into three categories based on the AMO theory: creating green opportunities, inspiring green personnel, and developing green talents. Renwick et al. (2013) draw the conclusion that environmental and organizational performance are improved by developing employees' green talents and providing them with opportunities to engage in environmental management. AMO theory nurtures sustainable HRM practices by promoting employees' eco-friendly abilities and attitudes and providing opportunities to work in a decent work environment. Social exchange theory explains mutual and reciprocal job support between employees and organizations to yield performance outcomes. The green theory advocates considering ecological challenges—climate change, pandemics, pollution, loss of biodiversity, etc.—while making business decisions rather than just political boundaries of economic advantage. These theories not only serve to explain sustainable HRM from multiple angles, but they also help to focus research efforts in a specific direction.

### *Sustainable HRM performance outcomes and the areas of potential contributions by HR professionals*

Sustainable HRM systems play a dual role with regard to corporate sustainability. As a means, HR professionals contribute to developing sustainable work cultures and

mindsets inside the organisation, and as an end, they contribute to promoting CSR, green HRM practices, community involvement, and HR regeneration (Taylor et al., 2012). Research in the past indicates the relationship between socially responsible HR practices and affective commitment is stronger than between socially responsible HR practices and the other two attitudinal dimensions, i.e., motivation and trust (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016). The empirical study by Guercil et al. (2018) predicted a positive association between sustainable HRM and job satisfaction and a negative association between sustainable HRM and turnover intention. Mariappanadar (2020) finds that sustainable HRM reduces the side effects of work at the employee level and focuses on improved financial and environmental performance.

According to Michaelson et al.'s (2014) study, meaningful HRM activity serves as a mediator in the relationship between sustainable HRM and job satisfaction and turnover intention. According to Renwick et al. (2013), improving employee engagement and environmental management practices can be achieved through developing employees' green competencies, inspiring them to perform well in the environment, and creating green opportunities within the firm. Future assessments of the relationships between green HRM and environmental management should consider mediating factors such tacit knowledge, employee empowerment, engagement, and a positive workplace culture. Furthermore, a study by Guercil et al. (2018) reveals that HR managers and professionals who participate in sustainable HRM activities see their jobs as more meaningful, which leads to higher work satisfaction and less intents to leave their positions. The environmental performance of the company can be enhanced through green HRM practices (Renwick et al. 2013, Paillé et al. 2014, Dumont et al. 2016). According to Almarzooqu et al. (2018), sustainable HRM directly influences long-term employee performance and the perception of corporate support. Employee empowerment and organizational knowledge sharing (OKS) both exhibit varying degrees of mediating effects in their study.

Although past research has established some evidence of relations between sustainable HRM practices and job satisfaction, turnover intention, professional motivation, commitment, and environmental performance, there is still not sufficient ground to believe how far these relations build on an outside-in approach. Furthermore, it is unclear to what extent these findings support resource preservation, regeneration, and development for environmental, societal, and economic benefits. If similar methodologies, HR variables and activities, and performance outcomes appear and continue to conceptualize sustainable HRM, it would be hard for others to distinguish between mainstream and sustainable HRM. With an understanding of the outside-in approach and current sustainable HRM research, the question that arises is, "What happens if we do not really consider future business challenges and opportunities related to resource preservation, regeneration, and development first to the fate of sustainable HRM to business sustainability?" This question cannot be answered just by establishing relationships between green HR practices and employee satisfaction. To clarify this question, we searched synonyms and antonyms of the terms related to business challenges, as other researchers did earlier (e.g., Leal Filho, 2000; Ehnert, 2009).

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, a synonym is 'a word or expression that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another in the same language.' In contrast, an antonym is 'a word that means the opposite of another word.' Let us look at the synonyms and antonyms of preservation, regeneration, and development. To quote the Merriam-Webster dictionary (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/preservation>), the literal definition of the word 'preservation' is 'the act or activity of keeping something in an existing and usually satisfactory condition', and its synonyms are: care and feeding, conserving, maintenance, sustenance, and upkeep. Unintended side effects and undesirable outcomes, such as abandonment, exposure, peril, insecurity, impairment, infringement, injury, and damage (<https://www.synonyms.com/antonyms/preservation>), occur if the resources are not preserved. Sustainable HRM, in a generic view, aids in the implementation of minimum wage and social security provisions, the elimination of in-work poverty, health and sanitation awareness and arrangements, medical benefits, children's education, and the development and dissemination of core values and culture within the organization, among other things. Applying green selection, development, and compensation methods, HRM may assist firms in maintaining a healthy work environment. It helps to encourage personnel, boost capacity-upgrading abilities, manage chemical exposure, avoid anxiety, regulate drug abuse, and offer health and wellness facilities to preserve human and intellectual resources. HRM serves a critical role in looking after employees, maintaining work-life balance, conserving human capital, reducing turnover, and ensuring job security through offering meaningful jobs.

Merriam-Webster defines 'regeneration' as being formed or created again; reborn or converted; restored to a better, higher, or more worthy state. The synonyms are reanimation, rebirth, renewal, restoration, recovery, revitalization, revival, and revivification (<https://thesaurus.plus/synonyms/regeneration>). The antonyms of the term regeneration are: stagnation, decrease, extinction, expiration, and death (<https://thesaurus.plus/antonyms/regeneration>). At this point, the concept of employee vitality is necessary to discuss. Employee vitality refers to their energy, enthusiasm, and spontaneity at work (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). It increases resource regeneration ability, helps to maintain a balance between performance and renewal of energy, and enhances employee relations. HRM adds to the vitality of supply-chain personnel outside the organization and may create relationships with institutions such as colleges and business schools. The exchange of relations with external institutes supports the regeneration of the human resource base and checks stagnation, decrease, extinction, and the expiration of human skills. Performance-based pay, green hiring and compensation methods, green training and development, and management support for green organizational structure configuration contribute to regenerating resources. In addition, CEO remuneration, capacity to understand business externalities and handle them, employees' motivation and satisfaction, respect for work, work-life policies, partnership, and networking with academic and social institutions add value to the resource regeneration process. Similarly, knowledge and talent management practices, workforce diversity, inclusiveness, minimum use of child labor, a healthy work environment, the employment of a differently abled and transgender workforce, union-



management relations, green collective bargaining, and many more are the different dimensions to stop social capital extinction and promote regeneration of the resource base.

The Free Dictionary defines development as ‘the act or process of growing, progressing, or developing’ (<https://www.thefreedictionary.com/development>). Synonyms of the word ‘development’ are advancement, betterment, improvement, perfection, refinement, maturation, flourishing, augmentation, enhancement, and evolvement (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/development>). The antonyms of ‘development’ are decline, degradation, decay, deterioration, downfall, regression, and disaster (<https://www.powerthesaurus.org/development/antonyms>). Sustainable HRM contributes to the development of innovative skills that aid in the deployment of cutting-edge technology, the use of alternative energy, the reengineering of work and ergonomics, and so on. These dimensions are linked to improving the working environment and, as a result, assisting the organization's economic, social, and environmental performance.

HR professionals’ contributions in these areas may help to increase employee performance, which ultimately improves environmental, social, and economic performance. But until and unless these contributions encompass the broad business challenges, practices of sustainable HRM remain more rhetoric than reality. The antonym terminology represents the negative externalities; thus, researchers in the future will have to provide meaning to these, and HR professionals will have to communicate the negative externalities in organisations. Furthermore, to mitigate negative externalities, HR professionals have to have the knowledge, skill, and ability to add value to their performance. Researchers also have to explore what professional knowledge, skill, and ability currently prevail to predict and manage externalities and what is lacking.

### III. PROPOSITIONS

Sustainable HRM scholarship agrees that organizational change and transformation initiatives begin if a business focuses on sustainable development initiatives (Kemp et al. 2010; Lindgreen et al. 2008; Wilkinson et al. 2001). They further argue that sustainable HRM emerged as a different approach to integrating HRM strategy into business strategy to achieve a longer-term business and environmental advantage. Contrary to sustainable HRM, mainstream strategic HRM tends to be short- to medium-term focused, thus paying little attention to regenerating input from the environment and society for achieving the economic goal (Paulet, 2019). Research in mainstream HRM is increasingly concentrated on establishing relationships between HRM and organizational performance. Influenced by the neoliberal thought of business sustainability, mainstream HRM research primarily focused on achieving competitive advantage with less consideration for societal dimensions of sustainability (e.g., Ehnert, 2009; Elkington, 1987), thus maximising negative externalities (Mariappanadar, 2003). Few researchers even decried that the previous HRM researchers neither found causal relations between strategic HRM practices and organizational performance nor positively contributed to the advancement

of knowledge on the complexity of an organization's life (Jackson et al., 2014; Kaufman, 2015). Considering lacunae in mainstream HRM research and deriving an appealing approach to sustainable HRM research, this article illustrates the following propositions for future research combining HRM policies, theoretical foundations, and long-term SB challenges:

- a. HRM policy research on minimum wage and social security, eliminating in-work poverty, and providing health and sanitation awareness and arrangements contribute to long-run resource preservation for BS if it is built on relevant theories (e.g., AMO theory, stakeholder theory, paradox theory etc.).
- b. HRM policy research on performance-based pay, green hiring and compensation, and green training and development contributes to long-term resource generation for BS if it is built on relevant theories (e.g., AMO theory, stakeholder theory, paradox theory, etc.).
- c. HRM policy research on promoting innovative skills, the use of alternative energy, work reengineering, and ergonomics contributes to long-run development challenges for BS if it is built on relevant theories (e.g., AMO theory, stakeholder theory, paradox theory, etc.).
- d. HR professionals' abilities and delivery quality contribute to long-term business resource preservation, regeneration, and development for BS if they implement HRM policies derived from the research on the above three propositions.

## **VI. IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE HRM IN ORGANISATIONS**

Implementing sustainable HRM to achieve three-dimensional goals (environmental, social, and economic) appears ambitious and rhetorical unless it gets support from all stakeholders. HRM specialists, top-management, mid- and lower-level line managers, and employees must play significant roles in integrating sustainability goals within the business process to accomplish BS while avoiding side effects and negative feedback (Vilanova & Dettoni, 2011; Kramer, 2014). In organisations, the sustainable HRM manifestation process emanates from the supportive attitude of the top management, an extensive level of communication, employees' motivation, learning, knowledge management, ability to take risks, a longer-term perspective, and skills to use available resources optimally (Blake & Gano-an, 2020). Jobs are to be designed in meaningful ways by encouraging autonomous teams; employees are to be offered a variety of training and development opportunities to promote new ideas in regeneration; and an organizational culture has to be developed to implement sustainable HRM (Benn et al., 2012). Looking at the complex nature of relations among environmental, social, and economic outcomes, HR professionals need to expand sustainable culture, change the mindset of stakeholders, and elaborate on the synonym and antonym effects of sustainable concepts. More importantly, everyone in the organization must 'feel' great about their work rather than 'do' the great work (Lai, 2017).

HR professionals have to consider the following outside-in approach to implement sustainable HRM policies and practices in organizations:

- *Endorse SDGs challenges:* At this point, organisations have to endorse the SDGs. These goals are the common good agenda that clearly explains future business issues and challenges. After endorsing the SDGs, it is necessary to reshuffle the SDGs' into business challenges to develop HRM policies and strategies. For example, SDG 10 is for reducing inequalities within and among countries (UN, 2015). SDG: 10.1 states 'progressively achieve and sustain income growth for the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average' (UN, 2015, p. 21). It offers business challenges for the regeneration and preservation of resources in the long run. Business challenges will not be transformed into opportunities unless we reduce inequalities in compensation within the industry and in comparison to regional countries, ensure sustained income growth for employees at the bottom of the pyramid, empower and promote social, economic, and political (union) inclusion of employees, develop nondiscriminatory policies, and provide opportunities for employees' representation to hear their voices.
- *Discuss business issues and challenge:* Considering both synonyms and antonyms of preservation, regeneration, and development, top management develops business goals, plans, and strategies for business sustainability. The expectations of the key stakeholders (customers, investors, communities, partners, employees, and so forth), as discussed earlier, must be considered while framing a business plan. The professional contributions of the HR department are required during the discussion and preparation of the business plan. The selection of any course of action does have a positive (synonym) or negative (antonym) effect on three sustainability outcomes: environment, social, and economy.
- *Regular tracking:* Top management, line management, HR professionals, and other key stakeholders have to assess HR issues and challenges with reference to business goals (Ulrich et al., 2012). For this reason, regular tracking of the progress in the preservation, regeneration, and development of resources is essential to developing an emergent sustainable HRM strategy. Customer satisfaction, employees' feelings at work, supply-chain activities, partnerships with external institutions, universities, vocational schools, media news and reports, and CSR activities needed tracking.
- *Legitimize sustainable HRM:* To ensure a long-term sustainable HRM culture, it is imperative to legitimize holistic governing rules and adopt HR practices accordingly. Conventional laws and regulations, as well as structure, need to be reframed and reorganized. To embrace sustainable practices, each department must create and communicate sustainable criteria and indicators. Each department's norms and rules must be set to follow sustainable procedures.
- *Creating HRM policies and strategies:* Create HRM strategies for long-term hiring, development, and incentives. Employees should feel as though they are contributing

to the common good when following HR regulations. HR practitioners need to receive training that is distinct from what they received when they were creating conventional human resources management policy.

- *Monitoring and reporting sustainable activities and outcomes:* Progress in sustainable activities and the benefits from sustainable HRM practices require regular monitoring and timely reporting. A yearly audit of sustainable HRM performance should be conducted in conjunction with long-term business challenges.

## V. IMPLICATIONS

*This article:*

- a. Contributes to the conceptualization of sustainable HRM.
- b. Elaborates on the outside-in approach, taking support from synonyms and antonyms of the three major business challenges.
- c. Paves the way to consider different theories (e.g., AMO theory, stakeholder theory, paradox theory, resource-based theory) when researching to develop sustainable HRM theory.
- d. Motivates researchers to convince stakeholders how sustainable HRM can contribute to BS.
- e. Develops propositions for future research to elaborate on the concept of sustainable HRM.
- f. Suggests endorsing the SDGs to expand the terrain of sustainable HRM.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This paper aimed to comprehend the outside-in approach to sustainable HRM and assess the potential contributions to be made by HR professionals to implement sustainable HRM. The synonyms and antonyms of the words 'preservation, regeneration, and development,' as well as a survey of relevant literature, were used to conceptualize sustainable HRM. Following a review of the existing literature and an analysis of future business challenges, it appears that HR professionals will have to adapt policies such as minimum pay for life support to prevent in-work poverty, health and sanitation facilities, and finally, disseminate an organization's core values and culture depending on business resource preservation challenges. HR professionals contribute to promoting employees' vitality, developing partnerships with universities, business and technical schools, and line management, depending on the resource preservation goals of the business. Green HR practices, employees' engagement in knowledge enhancement and talent management, the employment of a diverse workforce, and harmonious relations between management and trade unions depend on resource regeneration goals. Finally, HR professionals plan for sustainable innovation, applying cutting-edge technology, and work reengineering and ergonomics depending on the business's resource development goals.

The next task for researchers is to develop sustainable HRM concepts that address business challenges while drawing on the SDGs, as well as to inform stakeholders of the effects of synonyms and antonyms. As was previously said, a variety of theories provide a basis for identifying knowledge gaps, explaining business circumstances, events and challenges, as well as broadening the field of sustainable HRM. Prior to that, it is important to acknowledge that the idea that "real business is external" necessitates an outside-in HRM approach (Ulrich et al. 2012). The concepts described here need to be developed further and tested since this is a conceptual paper.

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### ***Funding***

The author received no funding or financial support in carrying out the research.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared having no conflict of interest in the research work.

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