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Triple Bottom Line in Sustainable Human Resource Management: A Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The integration of sustainability principles into human resource management has gained increasing scholarly attention, yet comprehensive frameworks addressing economic, social, and environmental dimensions simultaneously remain insufficiently developed. Whilst previous research has examined socially responsible HRM, green HRM, and sustainable work systems independently, the fragmented nature of these investigations limits understanding of how organisations can operationalise triple bottom line principles through strategic human resource management. This study employs a bibliometric analysis and systematic literature review to explore the incorporation of triple bottom line concepts into sustainable human resource management scholarship. Bibliometric data were collected from the Scopus database covering publications between 2015 and 2025, analysed using VOSviewer and Bibliometrix package in R to map intellectual structures, publication trends, and thematic evolution. The findings reveal substantial growth in sustainable HRM and green HRM research over the past decade, with three dominant typologies identified: socially responsible HRM, green HRM, and triple bottom line HRM. However, persistent challenges include conceptual fragmentation, inside-out economic orientations, and geographical imbalances in research contributions. The study contributes empirically by documenting intellectual evolution of triple bottom line research in sustainable HRM and conceptually by synthesising how economic viability, social equity, and environmental responsibility are progressively operationalised within human resource management domains.

Keywords: *Bibliometric Analysis, Green HRM, Human Resource Management, Sustainability, Triple Bottom Line*

INTRODUCTION

The integration of sustainability into organisational management has emerged as a critical phenomenon, increasingly capturing scholarly and practitioner attention as a consequence of heightened institutional and stakeholder pressures. These forces compel substantial transformations in organisational commitment to sustainability as part of their pursuit of social legitimacy and long-term viability (Awonaike & Atan, 2025; Kartiko et al., 2024). Governmental regulations and policy interventions, while essential for promoting environmental and social responsibility, have generated considerable debate regarding their potential short-term financial implications and competitive positioning of organisations (Wilkinson et al., 2001; Zhou et al., 2022). Recent empirical evidence demonstrates that stakeholder pressures, encompassing regulatory, shareholder, customer, and community demands, significantly influence corporate adoption of environmental, social, and governance strategies to achieve sustainable performance outcomes (Gurler et al., 2025; Wahyuningrum et al., 2023).

The conceptualisation of sustainability has been examined through multiple theoretical lenses, each contributing distinct perspectives to the discourse. The Resource-Based View (RBV) framework incorporates sustainability into strategic business analysis, emphasising the maintenance of competitive advantage through economic and market considerations. From an ecological perspective, sustainability addresses the environmental impacts of institutional activities and operations (Barney, 1991; Ehnert, 2009). However, the seminal definition provided by the World Commission on Environment and Development offers a comprehensive conceptualisation aligned with the present study, characterising sustainable development as meeting present needs without compromising the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own requirements (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Building upon this foundational understanding, Elkington (1998) articulated three fundamental principles underpinning sustainable development, collectively termed the Triple Bottom Line: environmental integrity, social equity, and economic prosperity. Environmental integrity refers to the finite regeneration capacity of ecosystems and the imperative to preserve natural capital. Social equity encompasses stakeholder rights to equitable resource access, transparent relationship-building, and fair distribution of value creation. Economic prosperity pertains to quality of life enhancement achieved through productive organisational capacity and responsible wealth generation. Contemporary organisations increasingly acknowledge the interconnectedness of these three dimensions, recognising that sustainable business practices simultaneously address environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic performance (Kartiko et al., 2024; Sabino et al., 2024).

The recognition that financial metrics alone provide insufficient explanation for long-term organisational success has prompted corporate managers and directors to reframe sustainability management not merely as a survival imperative but as a strategic orientation facilitating positive outcomes and stakeholder value creation (Laszlo & Zhexembayeva, 2017). Contemporary scholarship demonstrates that organisations integrating environmental, social, and governance considerations into strategic operations achieve enhanced triple bottom line performance through improved digitalization capabilities, green innovation, and stakeholder engagement (Gurler et al., 2025; Kartiko et al., 2024). However, a persistent weakness in sustainability analysis concerns the conceptual articulation of its linkage to human resources, particularly strategic human resource management (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; Ehnert, 2009).

The predominant body of research examining sustainability through the human resource management (HRM) lens has concentrated on identifying 'best practices' for organisational economic sustainability from a financial perspective. Initial investigations into High Performance Work Systems (HPWS), High Commitment Systems, and innovation-oriented or flexibility-focused systems emphasised their contributions to financial performance (Huselid, 1995; Jiang et al., 2012). Contemporary research demonstrates that HPWS enhance both individual and organisational performance through multiple mechanisms, including improved employee commitment, adaptive capability, and knowledge management quality (Jatoi et al., 2023). Recent longitudinal studies reveal that HPWS influence employee performance through differential effects on happiness and health well-being, wherein happiness improves while health well-being may decrease, collectively leading to enhanced performance outcomes (Hauff et al., 2022).

Subsequently, scholarly attention has expanded to examine how HRM systems enhance social sustainability by fostering employee well-being and health through Sustainable Work Systems. Contemporary organisations increasingly prioritise workplace well-being initiatives that address physical, emotional, social, and financial health dimensions, recognising employees as fundamental to organisational success (Qamar et al., 2024). Empirical evidence demonstrates that sustainable HRM practices, including mental health support programmes, flexible work arrangements, and inclusive environments, significantly contribute to employee engagement, productivity, and overall satisfaction while simultaneously supporting environmental sustainability objectives (Qamar et al., 2024). Research indicates that organisations integrating sustainability principles with health and safety management systems create environments that are 30 to 40 percent more resource-efficient while simultaneously improving employee well-being and organisational resilience (Lu et al., 2023).

Concurrently, a substantial research stream has emerged examining HRM systems that facilitate environmental outcomes, generating considerable scholarly interest in Green HRM. Recent empirical evidence demonstrates that Green HRM

practices significantly enhance environmental sustainability through multiple mechanisms, including green innovation, organisational culture transformation, employee environmental behaviours, and green technological adoption (Ahakwa et al., 2021; Dewanti et al., 2025; Gurler et al., 2025). Studies conducted across diverse geographical contexts reveal that Green HRM contributes to corporate sustainability performance through the cultivation of green organisational cultures and environmentally responsible employee behaviours (Aftab et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2024). Furthermore, research demonstrates that stakeholder pressures, particularly from government, shareholders, and customers, significantly influence green technological innovation and sustainability disclosure, with these relationships mediated by organisational innovation capabilities and moderated by corporate culture (Gurler et al., 2025; Song et al., 2020).

Despite these advances, the most significant limitation and research gap evident in extant literature is the predominantly fragmented approach to studying HRM in organisational sustainability. Previous investigations have not systematically identified comprehensive strategic human resource management models or integrated HRM systems explicitly oriented towards holistic sustainability outcomes encompassing the Triple Bottom Line dimension (Singh et al., 2025; Soekotjo et al., 2025). Contemporary scholarship increasingly emphasises the necessity for multidimensional frameworks that integrate Green HRM practices, ethical leadership, digital resilience, employee well-being, and stakeholder engagement to advance sustainable development goals (Herlina & Iskandar, 2025; Khairi et al., 2025). Moreover, recent reviews highlight that whilst individual dimensions of sustainable HRM have received considerable attention, the interconnections and synergies among economic, social, and environmental HRM practices remain insufficiently explored (Liang & Li, 2025).

This study seeks to address these conceptual and empirical gaps by contributing to the literature on sustainable human resource management from the comprehensive Triple Bottom Line perspective, encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Through systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis methodologies, this research aims to synthesise existing knowledge, identify emergent themes and theoretical frameworks, map intellectual structures within the field, and propose directions for future scholarly inquiry. By adopting this integrative approach, the study aspires to advance theoretical understanding and provide practical insights for organisations seeking to implement sustainable HRM systems that simultaneously address economic viability, social equity, and environmental integrity. Such comprehensive frameworks are increasingly critical as organisations navigate complex stakeholder demands, regulatory pressures, and societal expectations for sustainable business practices in the contemporary global context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualising Sustainable Human Resource Management

Employees constitute key stakeholders in the formation and development of organisational human and social capital, serving as fundamental sources of knowledge and support for the development and implementation of sustainable HRM initiatives. In volatile labour markets, the imperative to transition from consumption-oriented to development-oriented approaches to human resources has become increasingly important for enhancing employee retention (Aust et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2025).

Sustainable HRM represents an extension of strategic HRM, presenting a novel approach to people management that responds to changes at societal, labour market, and employment relations levels (Ren et al., 2021; Stankevičiūtė & Savanevičienė, 2018). Whilst strategic HRM primarily focuses on organisational performance in economic terms, sustainable HRM adopts a broader perspective encompassing social human, environmental, and financial outcomes (Davidescu et al., 2020). Sustainability emphasises resource regeneration, development, and renewal rather than mere exploitation.

From a sustainability perspective, HRM functions as a survival strategy enabling organisations to create systems wherein employees possess the intention to work for the organisation, the capability to perform tasks appropriately, and the opportunity to pursue enhanced health, reduced stress, and improved work-life balance (Ehnert et al., 2016). Sustainable HRM integrates insights from diverse disciplines, including corporate sustainability, social responsibility, and sustainable work systems, whilst respecting established strategic management concepts from the private sector (Davidescu et al., 2020; Ehnert et al., 2016; Poon & Law, 2022).

Types of Strategic Human Resource Management

Over recent decades, strategic human resource management (SHRM) has garnered substantial attention from scholars and practitioners owing to its anticipated benefits for organisations, stakeholders, and the external environment (Singh et al., 2025). Several distinct types of SHRM have been identified in the literature, distinguished by their emphasis on different internal and external outcomes (Aust et al., 2020; Kramar, 2014).

The first type is socially responsible HRM, which focuses on human and social purposes and contributes to sustainable organisational development. Comprising socially responsible behaviours, policies, and practices, this SHRM approach aims to create social value by enhancing organisational social reputation whilst increasing awareness of business impacts on internal and external stakeholders (Ehnert et al., 2016; Shen & Benson, 2016). Recent empirical evidence demonstrates that socially responsible HRM significantly influences employee outcomes through perceived external prestige and human resource attributions (Zhao et al., 2024). However, the underlying objective of HRM activities frequently

remains economic, as they are deployed to minimise negative organisational impacts, reduce business risks, enhance reputation and attractiveness for human talent, and thereby increase profitability and shareholder value (Dyllick & Muff, 2016). Consequently, socially responsible HRM remains fundamentally oriented towards economic objectives (Inamdar et al., 2024).

The second type is green HRM, which emphasises economic and environmental outcomes through the promotion of environmentally friendly policies and practices. Green HRM aims to create ecological value by promoting practices such as green recruitment through virtual interviews, environmental awareness training, and green rewards including incentives for carpooling and electronic filing, which collectively generate enhanced efficiencies, reduced costs, increased employee engagement, and diminished carbon footprints (Al-Shammari et al., 2022; Renwick et al., 2013). Recent empirical investigations demonstrate that green HRM practices significantly enhance environmental performance through green innovation, organisational culture transformation, and employee environmental behaviours (Aftab et al., 2023; Raza et al., 2025). Similar to socially responsible HRM, green HRM fundamentally serves economic purposes, with organisations frequently adopting environmental practices in response to pressures from regulatory bodies and consumer stakeholders (Ren et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2025).

The third type is triple bottom line HRM, which aims to facilitate organisational achievement of simultaneous economic, social, and environmental objectives, termed win-win-win situations or the triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit (Ehnert et al., 2016). This approach emphasises the interconnected economic, social, and environmental purposes of organisational activities, deploying HRM competencies to contribute to corporate sustainability whilst sustainably performing HRM functions (Aust et al., 2020). Sustainable HRM within the triple bottom line framework is defined as the adoption of HRM strategies, policies, and practices that enable the achievement of financial, social, and ecological goals, with impacts both inside and outside the organisation and across long-term time horizons (Ehnert et al., 2016).

Whilst these three types of SHRM demonstrate different focal areas, critical analyses reveal that they predominantly operate from inside-out perspectives wherein organisational adaptation to sustainability requirements remains fundamentally oriented towards economic objectives (Cooke, 2024; Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Singh et al., 2025). From this perspective, organisations adapt economic gain purposes to accommodate external pressures for enhanced social and ecological responsibilities. Consequently, organisations adopt SHRM practices primarily to minimise economic risks associated with people management and maximise shareholder value through enhanced organisational reputation and individual task performance (Aust et al., 2020; Shen & Benson, 2016). Essentially, all three types of SHRM remain focused on the economic purpose of organisations,

with organisations adopting such HRM practices primarily for business reasons (Kramar, 2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design integrating bibliometric analysis and systematic literature review to explore the incorporation of Triple Bottom Line (TBL) principles into Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM) (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Creswell & Poth, 2024). The qualitative orientation emphasises interpretation and contextual understanding of sustainability dimensions in HRM, whilst the bibliometric component provides a structured quantitative lens to trace intellectual development and scholarly patterns within the field. Combining both methods enables comprehensive understanding by quantifying patterns and interpreting underlying meanings in TBL-oriented SHRM research.

Bibliometric data were collected from the Scopus database, selected for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals and robust analytical features. The search strategy employed Boolean operators: "*sustainable human resource management*," "*green human resource management*," "*triple bottom line*," "*economic*," "*social*," and "*environmental*". The search was restricted to English-language journal articles and review papers published between 2015 and 2025. Following data export in CSV and RIS formats, data cleaning was conducted to remove duplicates and unrelated records, ensuring dataset validity.

Bibliometric analysis was performed using VOSviewer and the Bibliometrix package in R. Performance analysis examined publication trends, prolific authors, influential journals, and geographical distribution of research outputs. Science mapping explored relationships among authors, keywords, and citations through network visualisations, including co-authorship networks, co-citation networks, and keyword co-occurrence analysis. These analyses generated an objective map of the intellectual and conceptual landscape of TBL in SHRM.

Following the bibliometric phase, the most relevant and frequently cited articles were examined through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved familiarising with the literature corpus, generating initial codes, and organising codes into broader themes representing economic, social, and environmental sustainability dimensions in HRM. Themes including green HR practices, employee well-being, sustainable performance, and corporate responsibility were identified and refined to construct an integrative conceptual framework illustrating how TBL principles are embedded in HRM theories and practices.

In this design, bibliometric analysis functions as a diagnostic stage quantitatively mapping the field, whilst qualitative analysis serves as a sense-making stage interpreting patterns to extract theoretical meaning. This integrated approach enables the study to contribute empirically by charting intellectual

evolution of TBL-SHRM research and conceptually by developing synthesised understanding of how economic viability, social equity, and environmental responsibility are operationalised within the human resource management domain.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sustainable human resource management (SHRM) represents a strategic, integrative approach that aligns HR practices with sustainability objectives, embedding ecological, social, and economic dimensions into organisational functioning. This approach leverages traditional HRM functions, including recruitment, training, and performance management, whilst intersecting them with sustainability imperatives such as environmental stewardship, diversity and inclusion, and stakeholder engagement. Empirical evidence indicates that effective SHRM practices enhance employee engagement, green behaviour, and organisational resilience through mediated psychological mechanisms. However, implementation faces persistent challenges including strategic tensions, resource constraints, and contextual variations, particularly in developing economies. The principal findings are presented as follows:

Table 1 Themes and Key Insights

Theme	Key Insights
Integrative Frameworks	SHRM integrates triple bottom line, AMO, paradox perspectives, and blends ecological/social dimensions
Organizational & Employee Outcomes	SHRM enhances sustainability performance via employee engagement, green behavior, and resilience
Challenges & Enablers	Strategic tensions, resource constraints, and stakeholder demands; cognitive framing and decision tools help
Geographical/Sectoral Gaps	Research is Western-centric; developing countries and social sustainability underexplored
Methodological Innovations	Use of DEMATEL, ISM-AHP, PLS-SEM, fsQCA to analyze complex SHRM relationships

Source: Author's Analysis

Sustainable human resource management has emerged as a pivotal paradigm in contemporary organisations, reflecting the increasing imperative to align human resource practices with broader sustainability objectives. SHRM transcends traditional HRM by embedding ecological, social, and economic dimensions into organisational core functions, thereby supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fostering long-term organisational resilience. This section synthesises theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, and practical

insights to provide comprehensive understanding of SHRM, its integrative frameworks, outcomes, challenges, and future research directions.

Defining Sustainable Human Resource Management

SHRM is conceptualised as a strategic, systemic approach that integrates core HRM functions, encompassing recruitment, selection, training, performance management, and compensation, with sustainability imperatives. This approach emphasises the triple bottom line framework incorporating economic, social, and environmental dimensions, the AMO (Ability-Motivation-Opportunity) model, and paradox perspectives to address tensions arising from competing stakeholder demands. SHRM incorporates ecological sustainability through Green HRM practices, social inclusivity through diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, and common good HRM principles, positioning HR managers as pivotal actors in advancing organisational sustainability agendas.

Triple Bottom Line and Sustainable Human Resource Management

Contemporary SHRM frameworks consistently integrate economic, social, and environmental objectives, transcending profit maximisation to encompass employee well-being and ecological stewardship. The triple bottom line (TBL) framework, originally conceptualised by Elkington (1998), posits that organisational success should be evaluated not solely through economic performance but equally through social and environmental outcomes. Sustainable HRM operationalises this philosophy by embedding sustainability values and practices into HR policies, processes, and organisational culture, thereby balancing profitability, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship. The convergence of TBL and sustainable HRM is increasingly recognised as critical for long-term organisational resilience, stakeholder trust, and societal well-being, particularly as global challenges including climate change, inequality, and resource scarcity intensify.

Integrated management practices that combine lean, green, and social management approaches demonstrate enhanced TBL performance, with HRM serving as a pivotal enabler for embedding sustainability values throughout organisational systems. Effective integration of TBL principles within HRM necessitates holistic approaches that align HR policies with sustainability objectives, supported by comprehensive training programmes, participatory processes, and strategic involvement across all organisational levels.

Table 2 Triple Bottom Line Dimensions in Sustainable HRM

TBL Dimension	Key Focus	Implications for Sustainable HRM
Economic	Productivity, profitability, employment stability	Strategic HRM contributes to improved organisational productivity, enhanced profitability, and greater employment stability. HR practices support long-term economic performance by aligning human capital strategies with organisational goals.
Social	Employee well-being, ethics, skills, organizational trust	Sustainable HRM enhances employee well-being, promotes ethical decision-making, and supports continuous skill development. HRM acts as a mediator between organisational trust and positive employee outcomes, such as commitment, engagement, and reduced turnover.
Environmental	Green HRM, environmental awareness, innovation, eco-behavior	Green HRM practices foster environmental awareness, encourage innovation, and promote eco-friendly behaviours among employees. These practices support organisations in contributing to environmental sustainability and aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Source: Author's Analysis

Recent years have witnessed substantial growth in research addressing sustainable human resource management and green human resource management. The VOSviewer analysis presented in Figure 1 demonstrates that Sustainable HRM and Green HRM have experienced significant acceleration over the past decade, driven by intensifying global concerns regarding social equity, environmental protection, and long-term organisational resilience. Sustainable HRM emerged as a response to the limitations inherent in traditional HRM approaches, which emphasised primarily economic performance and short-term productivity outcomes. Contemporary scholars contend that organisations must balance economic objectives with ethical responsibilities and social well-being to ensure long-term viability (Ehnert, 2009). This paradigm shift reflects broader transformations towards corporate sustainability, wherein human resource systems are designed to support socially responsible, equitable, and future-oriented people management practices (Kramar, 2014).

Parallel to this development, Green HRM has emerged as a distinct yet interconnected field emphasising the integration of ecological principles into HR practices. The escalating urgency of climate change, stringent environmental regulations, and global sustainability agendas, particularly the UN Sustainable

Development Goals, have encouraged organisations to adopt HR strategies that promote environmental stewardship (Renwick et al., 2013). Green HRM practices, encompassing green recruitment, environmental training, and eco-performance appraisal systems, aim to cultivate pro-environmental behaviours among employees whilst embedding environmental responsibility into organisational culture (Jackson et al., 2011).

The proliferation of both Sustainable HRM and Green HRM is further substantiated by empirical evidence demonstrating that sustainability-oriented HR practices contribute to enhanced employee engagement, improved organisational reputation, and sustained competitive advantage (Jabbour & Santos, 2008). Organisations increasingly recognise that human capital constitutes a critical determinant for achieving sustainability outcomes, thereby positioning HRM as a strategic driver of environmental and social performance rather than a purely administrative function (Kramar, 2014).

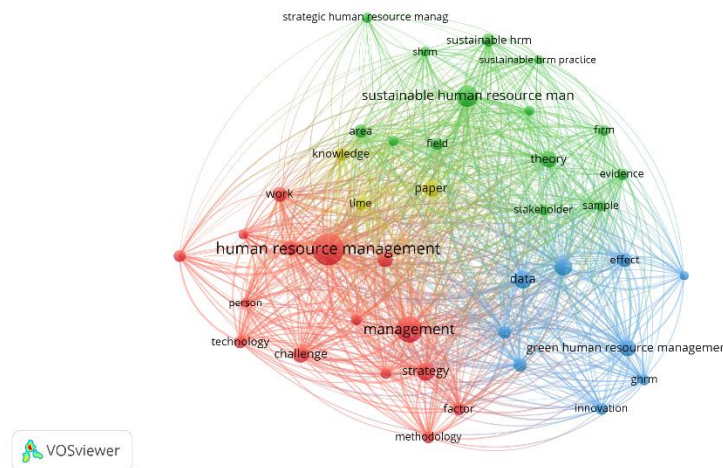


Figure 1 VOSviewer Results for Sustainable Human Resource Management

Source: Author's Analysis

Concurrently, scholarly interest in triple bottom line concepts has remained substantial over recent years, attributed to its comprehensive nature encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions. The literature encompasses diverse applications beyond HRM, including triple bottom line frameworks in accounting, sustainable operations in the airline industry, and various sectoral contexts. The VOSviewer analysis presented in Figure 2 reveals that triple bottom line and sustainability concepts have demonstrated strong association over the past decade. The visualisation illustrates that triple bottom line frameworks significantly influence environmental performance and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

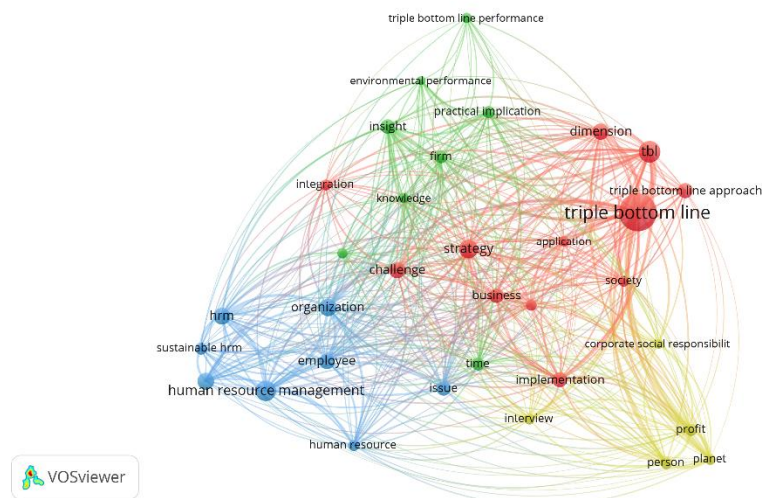


Figure 2 VOSviewer Results for Triple Bottom Line in Sustainable Human Resource Management

Source: Author's Analysis

The bibliometric analysis reveals that triple bottom line frameworks have maintained substantial scholarly attention across diverse disciplinary contexts, reflecting their broad applicability beyond human resource management. Whilst the TBL concept has been extensively applied in accounting, operations management, and various industry-specific contexts, its integration with sustainable HRM represents a critical evolution in understanding how organisations operationalise sustainability through people management practices. The co-occurrence patterns demonstrate that TBL principles significantly influence both environmental performance outcomes and corporate social responsibility initiatives, establishing HRM as a strategic lever for achieving comprehensive sustainability objectives rather than isolated environmental or social goals. (Pooja & Bhavani, 2025)

The findings derived from this bibliometric analysis both corroborate and extend previous research on sustainable HRM and the triple bottom line framework. The exponential growth in SHRM and Green HRM publications observed in this study aligns with recent bibliometric investigations documenting increasing scholarly interest in sustainability-oriented HRM practices. Specifically, the identification of publication peaks corresponds with global sustainability milestones and regulatory pressures documented in prior studies, suggesting that institutional forces significantly shape research trajectories within this domain (Awonaike & Atan, 2025; Kartiko et al., 2024).

The integrated triple bottom line framework presented in Table 2 extends foundational work discussed in the Introduction and Literature Review sections. Whilst earlier research by Ehnert et al. (2016) and Kramar (2014) conceptualised three distinct types of SHRM, namely socially responsible HRM, green HRM, and triple bottom line HRM, the present findings provide empirical evidence

demonstrating how these dimensions manifest in contemporary organisational practices. The bibliometric clustering analysis reveals that economic, social, and environmental dimensions are increasingly studied in combination rather than isolation, supporting arguments that organisations must adopt holistic sustainability approaches rather than fragmented initiatives (Aust et al., 2020; Cooke, 2024; Singh et al., 2025). This finding addresses the research gap identified in the Introduction regarding the lack of comprehensive strategic HRM models oriented towards holistic sustainability outcomes.

Furthermore, the VOSviewer results demonstrate thematic evolution that both supports and extends theoretical propositions outlined in the Literature Review. The co-occurrence analysis reveals that sustainable HRM has progressively incorporated concepts including green innovation, employee well-being, and stakeholder engagement, validating recent empirical findings by Dewanti et al. (2025) and Gurler et al. (2025) regarding the multidimensional nature of sustainable HRM practices. The prominence of green HRM in the bibliometric maps corroborates assertions by Aftab et al. (2023) and Raza et al. (2025) that environmental sustainability has become a central concern in contemporary HRM scholarship. The increasing integration of Green HRM practices with employee well-being initiatives, as reflected in the keyword co-occurrence patterns, extends earlier discussions regarding Sustainable Work Systems and workplace happiness (Liang & Li, 2025; Qamar et al., 2024).

However, the findings also reveal critical gaps that contradict optimistic assumptions prevalent in earlier literature. The persistent inside-out perspective identified in the Literature Review, wherein organisations adopt SHRM primarily for economic reasons rather than intrinsic sustainability commitments, is reinforced by the bibliometric evidence showing limited research on outside-in approaches that prioritise societal and environmental needs over organisational interests (Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Inamdar et al., 2024). This observation suggests that despite increased scholarly attention, fundamental tensions between economic objectives and genuine sustainability commitments remain underexplored. The dominance of business-case rationales for adopting sustainable HRM practices, as evidenced in the thematic clustering, contradicts normative expectations that organisations should pursue sustainability for intrinsic ethical reasons.

The temporal analysis of publication trends extends previous longitudinal studies by demonstrating that whilst research volume has increased substantially, conceptual fragmentation persists. The identification of distinct clusters for socially responsible HRM, green HRM, and triple bottom line HRM in the bibliometric maps supports earlier critiques by Soekotjo et al. (2025) that comprehensive, integrated frameworks remain insufficiently developed. This finding contradicts assumptions that increasing research volume automatically translates to conceptual integration and theoretical advancement, highlighting the necessity for more deliberate efforts to synthesise disparate research streams.

Moreover, the geographical distribution of publications revealed in the bibliometric analysis highlights significant disparities in research contributions across regions, with developed economies dominating scholarly output whilst developing contexts remain underrepresented. This observation extends concerns raised in the Introduction regarding contextual factors that shape sustainable HRM implementation, suggesting that theoretical frameworks developed primarily in Western contexts may possess limited applicability to diverse institutional environments. Recent studies by Poon and Law (2022) and Singh et al. (2025) emphasise the necessity for context-sensitive approaches, a perspective strongly supported by the present bibliometric findings. The underrepresentation of research from developing economies contradicts claims of universal applicability and underscores the importance of examining how institutional contexts, cultural values, and resource availability influence sustainable HRM adoption and effectiveness.

The analysis also reveals emerging themes that were nascent during earlier research periods but have gained substantial prominence recently. The integration of digital technologies with sustainable HRM practices, the emphasis on employee mental health and well-being within sustainability frameworks, and the incorporation of stakeholder perspectives beyond shareholders represent novel directions that extend traditional triple bottom line conceptualisations. These findings align with recent calls by Herlina and Iskandar (2025) and Khairi et al. (2025) for multidimensional frameworks that integrate technological, psychological, and stakeholder dimensions. The emergence of digital resilience and AI-enabled HRM systems within the sustainability discourse, as evidenced in recent publications, suggests that technological transformation is becoming inseparable from sustainability initiatives.

In synthesis, this extensive bibliometric investigation of triple bottom line research in sustainable HRM underscores the imperative for balanced and integrated approaches that harmoniously combine economic, social, and environmental objectives. Key insights emphasise the pivotal influence of leadership at multiple organisational levels, the transformative potential of digital technologies, and the necessity for refined measurement instruments that capture holistic impacts across sustainability dimensions. Despite the foundational contributions of the TBL framework, identified limitations have prompted the emergence of alternative models that more adequately address social sustainability complexities and context-specific challenges, thereby opening substantive avenues for future research and practical innovation. The present findings contribute empirically by systematically documenting the intellectual evolution of TBL-SHRM research through quantitative bibliometric methods and conceptually by synthesising how economic viability, social equity, and environmental responsibility are progressively being operationalised within the human resource

management domain, whilst simultaneously identifying persistent research gaps and articulating promising directions for future scholarly inquiry.

CONCLUSION

This bibliometric analysis and systematic literature review demonstrates that sustainable human resource management has evolved rapidly as a strategic paradigm integrating traditional HRM practices with sustainability imperatives across ecological, social, and economic dimensions. The findings reveal substantial growth in SHRM and Green HRM scholarship over the past decade, driven by intensifying global concerns regarding environmental protection, social equity, and organisational resilience. The triple bottom line framework has proven instrumental in operationalising sustainability within HRM, encompassing economic productivity, social well-being, and environmental stewardship. The bibliometric mapping identified three dominant SHRM typologies: socially responsible HRM, green HRM, and triple bottom line HRM, each contributing distinctively to sustainability outcomes whilst predominantly maintaining inside-out perspectives oriented towards economic objectives.

However, significant challenges persist, including strategic tensions between competing sustainability dimensions, resource constraints limiting SHRM implementation, and geographical imbalances in research contributions. The analysis reveals conceptual fragmentation wherein economic, social, and environmental dimensions are frequently examined in isolation rather than through integrated frameworks. The underrepresentation of research from developing economies highlights the necessity for context-sensitive approaches that account for diverse institutional environments. Additionally, whilst the triple bottom line framework provides foundational conceptualisation, emerging evidence suggests limitations in adequately capturing social sustainability complexities and context-specific challenges.

Future research should prioritise several critical directions. First, longitudinal studies examining temporal dynamics of SHRM initiatives and their long-term consequences are essential. Second, researchers should develop comprehensive measurement instruments capturing holistic impacts across triple bottom line dimensions beyond traditional performance metrics. Third, investigation of outside-in approaches prioritising societal and environmental needs would address gaps regarding genuine sustainability commitments. Fourth, cross-cultural comparative studies examining SHRM implementation across diverse institutional contexts, particularly in developing economies, would enhance generalisability. Fifth, exploration of digital technologies' transformative role in enabling sustainable HRM practices represents a promising avenue. Finally, interdisciplinary research integrating insights from environmental science, sociology, psychology, and management studies would enrich understanding of complex interrelationships

among economic viability, social equity, and environmental responsibility within human resource management domains.

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