

## The Role of Sustainable Human Resource Management and Organizational Excellence in Saudi Arabia: Evidence from King Khalid University

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### Abstract

*The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of Sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) in Organizational Excellence (OE) among universities' academic and administrative staff in Saudi Arabia. Due to the lack of studies of sustainable HRM in universities, this study selected the King Khalid University (KKU) as a case study. Moreover, the quantitative approach is being applied to lead the methods of this study. So, the data collect based on online self-administrated questionnaire. Then, the data was analysis using the Structural Equation modeling (ESM) technique (Smart-PLS 4.0) and SPSS 20.0 as well. The results indicated that there is a positive relationship between sustainable HRM and OE in Saudi Arabian universities. that means, when the policymakers investing more in sustainable HRM, they would be getting advance level of excellency in their universities and overall of employees' performance. Ultimately, the implications and future trajectories were discussed.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Human Resource Management, Organizational Excellence.

### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, the business environment faced dramatic changes especially post pandemic era. Due to that challenges, universities are striving for having improvement, survival, and success, which lead them to sustainable develop, enhance, and adjust their strategies and products throughout utilize renewable educational tools and resources (Mbaidin 2024). Thus, the new trends of tertiary educational institutions management are to utilization of knowledge, science, and resources for achieving success, continuity (Al-Jedaiah and Albdareen 2020), and organizational excellence (Arbab and Mahdi Abaker 2018), what universities should pay attention to. Undoubtedly, the organizational excellence as a concept is widely discussed and implemented over word organizations (Nenadál, Vykydal, and Waloszek 2018) and its effect on stakeholders. In contrast, in academic institutions (i.e., universities) the stakeholders are different and also the universities' orientation is different because its considered as non-profitable

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organizations. These stakeholders, which include students, faculty, staff, parents of students, future employers, government, govern boards...etc. (Ruben and Gigliotti 2019), that will make the task of universities' leaders to achieve the excellence at work is more challengeable due to the various faculties, colleges, departments, divisions, and units. In order to achieve the organizational excellence there are basics need to be met that; a) establishing goals, b) monitoring the extent to which these goals are being met, and c) using the resulting information to plan and execute improvements (Ruben and Gigliotti 2019). These steps are important for any organization to achieve the excellence, because the organizational excellence is described as a state of creative management and exceptional performance that involves the execution of various organizational processes such as production, marketing, and finance (Aldalimy, Al-Sharifi, and Bannay 2019; Arbab and Mahdi Abaker 2018).

Moreover, the empirical finding showed the significance of organizational excellence in enhancing and promoting the educational institutions' efficiency, effectiveness, and overall mechanisms, which this positive effect of organizational excellence is play an important role on the quality of the education provided and contributes to the ongoing success of universities (Mbaidin 2024). Although the popularity of organizational excellence implementation in worldwide organizations. However, the situation is Saudi Arabia is might be different or uncovered in literature very much, so the gap of knowledge related to implementation of organizational excellence is not much documented more specifically among the institution of tertiary education. Literature showed that, OE has been investigated in universities especially in Arabic universities such as King Khalid University (Al Yami and Bin Wared 2019) in KSA, Arab American University Palestine (Dawabsheh, Hussein, and Jermsttiparsert 2019) in Palestine, Jadara University (Mohammad Qawasmeh, Darqal, and Farid Qawasmeh 2013) in Jordan, and public universities in UAE (Mbaidin 2024). However, all these studies predicted the OE with other variables rather than SHRM such as organizational culture, quality of work-life, E-learning, and TQM (Dawabsheh et al. 2019; Mbaidin 2024; Mohammad Qawasmeh et al. 2013; Al Yami and Bin Wared 2019). Therefore, according to our best of knowledge there are lack of research that investigating the relationship between SHRM and OE in general and more specifically in Arabian universities.

Therefore, the focus of this study is to highlight the organizational excellence in university of King Khalid in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) as one of the most prominent universities in KSA and how that organizational excellence can be driven by the sustainable human resource management (SHRM).

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Organizational excellence (OE)**

In the current era of technology, quality, and digitalization, and challenges that came into existence post-pandemic, the fostering of OE is become a must for all the organizations especially in universities. Interestingly, the scholars provided various argumentations about the opinions of OE concept. For example, M. Webster (2016) says that "organizational excellence is delivering, and sustaining the delivery of, outstanding value to all key stakeholders" as cited by (Nenadál et al. 2018). And D. M. Bailey wrote: "The excellence is a cultural journey" (Bailey 2014). Furthermore, Harrington (2005) argued that OE is referred to the investment of organizations in critical opportunities led by effective strategic planning, commitment to a common vision, clear purpose, adequate resources, diligence and effective performance (Harrington 2005). This is because is matching with the goal of any business organization is working to achieve success and sustainability in future (Arbab and Mahdi Abaker 2018). Empirical evidence showed that organizational excellence is a set of strategies and practices, not just an ultimate objective to achieve medals and prizes such as achieving sustainability performance through

innovation (Akanmu et al. 2023; Akanmu and Mohamad 2021). So, organizations should engage in developing strategies that resulted in increasing production. However, some scholars argued that variation of implementation of OE is affected by cultural and environmental aspects (Nenadál et al. 2018).

On the hand, in the case of universities OE provide assistance in the better management of operations and resources, attracting exceptional students and faculty, and it promotes outstanding leadership, an efficient workforce, and a culture of excellence, leading to high performance, creativity, and innovation (Al Yami and Bin Wared 2019). It also promotes the adoption of best practices and tools for quality measurement, self-assessment, and continuous improvement (Aldalimy et al. 2019). It encompasses the principles, standards, and methods that facilitate long-term success. As a vital aspect of administrative development, organizational excellence necessitates the enhancement of employee skills and capabilities within educational institutions (Mbaidin 2024; Al Yami and Bin Wared 2019). Therefore, to achieve excellence that leads to desired performance, there are many variables have effect on OE. One of these variables are SHRM which is significantly found has a major role to play in enhancing the OE in universities. in literature, we found that OE has been studied from diverse perspectives, some studies applied OE as an dependent variable of organizational performance, mediator between quality management and sustainable performance, and as outcome of different independents variables (Akanmu et al. 2023; Aldalimy et al. 2019; Bailey 2014; Bloom and Reenen 2013; Kopelman 2022; Saleh Al-Dhaafri, Zien Bin Yusoff, and Kaid Al-Swidi 2014; Al Yami and Bin Wared 2019). Therefore, the main objective of this study is to investigated the role of SHRM on OE in KSA universities.

## 2.2 Sustainable human resource management (HRM) and OE

Stoner (1996) said that “the term sustainability was first issued in 1987 in the World Commission on Environmental and Development report”. The concept is more related to environmental, economic and social terms regarding future generations. There are three dimensions which reflect the concept of sustainability are: social, economic and environmental. Three sustainability concepts called the triple bottom line are also interpreted as profit, planet and human (Aedi and Herawan 2019). Recently, the term of sustainability is become an interesting issue and widely researched over worldwide. The concept of sustainability is not only developing at the macro level but now also has penetrated at the micro level of the organization (Aedi and Herawan 2019) and also is needed in profitable and non-profitable organization. Now, organizations and academic institutions have begun to realize the importance of this ongoing process (Aedi and Herawan 2019; Mohiuddin et al. 2022). Sustainability is broadly defined as meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability is the ability of a system to maintain the level of production formed by nature in the long term (Aedi and Herawan 2019). Due to that interest, we found that sustainability as a terms is used interchangeably in different forms and with connected with various variables such as performance, development, education, HRD, HRM, and many more (Aedi and Herawan 2019; Duvnjak and Kohont 2021; Mohiuddin et al. 2022). However, this study focused on sustainability with HRM which is considered as one term called “sustainable HRM.”

Sustainable HRM is concerned for managing the people working in an profitable or non-profitable organizations with a life-long view of the business goals and objectives (Aro-Gordon and Mohamed Al-Raeesi 2022). The HR department is usually responsible for tacking care about the employees’ recruitment plan, training sessions, evaluating employees’ job performance, organizing rewards, compensation management, promotions, and benefits for other people-oriented activities (Aro-Gordon and Mohamed Al-Raeesi 2022; Aro-Gordon, Yaqoob, and Al-Raeesi 2021). Sustainable HRM is defined as “a cross-functional task.” Theoretically this approach emerges from the sustainability of literature, from the Characteristics and from the SHRM literature. Researchers assume

that companies, employees, and communities are responsible for ongoing activities (Aedi and Herawan 2019). Furthermore, according to Cohen, Taylor and Müller-Camen p.1, sustainable HRM is also defined as “using the tools of HR to create a workforce that has the trust, values, skills and motivation to achieve a profitable triple bottom line.” (Duvnjak and Kohont 2021). However, the evidence showed that there is less agreement in the literature regarding a clear definition of HRM sustainability and the lack of emphasis on this issue (Mohiuddin et al. 2022). According to Duvnjak and Kohont (2021), who argued that “sustainable HRM creates the skills, motivation, values and trust to achieve a triple bottom line and at the same time ensures the long-term health and sustainability of both the organization’s internal and external stakeholders, with policies that reflect equity, development and well-being and help support environmentally friendly practices” (Duvnjak and Kohont 2021). This shows the importance of sustainable HRM in predicting positive organizational outcomes such as organizational performance and OE. On the other hand, previous empirical findings revealed that sustainable HRM has a positive impact on OE and organizational performance in companies and profitable organizations in general (Aedi and Herawan 2019; Al-Jedaiah and Albdareen 2020; Duvnjak and Kohont 2021; Taha, Abd-elmoniem, and Abu-zaid 2023). However, there is a lack of studies investigated the relationship between sustainable HRM and OE in academia especially in Arabian universities. therefore, and based on the evidence driven from the profitable organizational side, we hypothesize that; sustainable HRM has a positive relationship with OE in KSA.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Participants**

The data utilized in this study were collected from staff working in the King Khalid University (KKU) located in Saudi Arabia between November and December 2023. We expected to collect data from 100 samples of university teachers by referring the sample size rule of thumb according to Kerjcie and Morgan (1970) and Cohen (1969) table of minimum samples size (Krejcie and Morgan 1970; Sekaran and Bougie 2016). So, we managed to collect 51 through google form questionnaires at the end.

#### **3.2 Measures**

The instruments of questionnaire’s items were administrated in Saudi Arabia. The technique of back to back translation (Brislin 1970) was applied to clarify the questionnaire’s items because the language of respondents is Arabic, so the questions was translated into English. While, the final draft of items after more revisions, the questionnaires had been allocated to the respondents. Whereas, the constructs’ measures were specified in details. First, sustainable HRM is measured by four (4) items adapted from Source: Brah et al. (2002) high level of Cronbach Alpha was 80%. Second, OE is measured by four (4) items adapted originally from Pinar and Girard (2008), the Cronbach Alpha was high more than 80% (Akanmu et al. 2023; Brah et al. 2002; Pinar and Girard 2008).

### **4. Data analysis and results**

The Data has been collected and cleaned in in order to be ready for final analysis. As a result, the theory of testing suggests that, we should run the descriptive analysis first for demographic data and then Cronbach’s alpha for validating the items by utilizing SPSS 23 which was ranged between 0.80 to 0.90 over all constructs’ items understudy. Meaning that, Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) exceeded 0.70 for all items which it was reached the proper threshold above 0.70 which is been suggested by Hair (2017). Then, we employed Smart-PLS version 4.0, for running the two stages analysis based on

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) (F. Hair Jr et al. 2014; Hair, Joe F. Ringle and Sarstedt 2011; Ringle, Da Silva, and Bido 2014); first, Confirmatory Factor analysis (CFA) which includes convergent and discriminant validity test for assessing the reliability and validity of constructs. Next, the second test is to run the path coefficient analysis, this mainly for hypotheses testing in order to come out with the results based on the primary data that collected from the respondents.

#### 4.1 Demographic Data

Table 1: Showing the Description of Sample

Items		Frequency	Percent%
Gender	Male	8	15.7
	Female	43	84.3
	Total	51	100.0
Age	Less Than 30	9	17.6
	From 30 - 40	9	17.6
	From 40 - 50	26	51.0
	More than 50	7	13.7
	Total	51	100.0
Education	Bachelor Degree	9	17.6
	PhD or DBA	21	41.2
	Others	21	41.2
Current Occupation	Total	51	100.0
	Manager	2	3.9
	Deputy Manager	1	2.0
	Dean of College	1	2.0
	Head of Department	3	5.9
	Academic staff	23	45.1
	Administrative	7	13.7
	Officer	5	9.8
	Others	9	17.6
	Total	51	100.0
Working Experience	Less than 5 Years	9	17.6
	5 - 10	13	25.5
	11 and more	29	56.9
	Total	51	100.0

The result of demographic data of this study includes males (n=8) 15.7% and females (n=43) 84.3% working in KKU in KSA, and their ages between less than 30 (n=9) 17.6%, between 30 to 40 (n=9) 17.6%, between 40 to 50 (n=26) 51.0%, and more than 50 (n=7) 11.7%. Moreover, in terms of education, most of the participants holding PhD or DBA (n=21) 41.2% and others' degree (n=21) 41.2%. in addition, their occupation is more

located between general manager until officers. Finally, in term of experience, most of respondents are having experience more than 11 years (n=29) 56.9%, whereas, the other are less than 10 years (see table no.1).

#### 4.2 Reliability and validity analysis

According to Hair et al. (2014) and Khan et al. (2018), the test of constructs' items reliability and validity is assessing by establishing the composite reliability and discriminant validity which consist Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), and Cronbach's Alpha (CA) (F. Hair Jr et al. 2014; Khan et al. 2018). Therefore, the Table 2 is showing the convergent reliability and discriminant validity of the measurement model which consists SHRM as an independent variable and OE as a dependent variable. The results showed that the model is consistent with threshold of validity by employing the CA was not less than 0.70 for all constructs, CR was over 0.75, AVE was over 0.5, and VIF for multi-collinearity is showing that is less than 3. Hence, based on assessment of previous tests is ensuring the establishment of constructs validity and reliability for the model understudy.

Table 2: Showing the Convergent Reliability and Discriminant Validity

Variables	CA	CR	AVE	VIF	R-square
OE	0.905	0.906	0.781	1.813	0.430
SHRM	0.876	0.877	0.731	1.906	-

Note: Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

#### 4.3 Path analysis

Path coefficient analysis is the second stage for assessing the model through testing the direct path for the relationships in the model for extracting the values such as P-values and t-values that are more important for validating the hypotheses. Accordingly, Table 3 is showing the effect of SHRM and OE. The statistical results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between SHRM and OE ( $\beta = 0.656$ ,  $SE = 0.143$   $t = 4.576$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). In other words, sustainable HRM has a positive effect on OE, this result is confirming the hypothesis that suggested by authors in the conceptual model (see, Figure2 for more details).

Therefore, the statistical results showed that the suggested hypothesis was significantly supported and met the Smart-PLS criteria except the main hypotheses. This meaning that when sustainable HRM is high the level of OE will be increased because the positive relationship between both variables.

Table 3: Showing Structural Path Model

Structural Path	Beta value	S.E.	T- value	P-value	Supported
H1: SHRM ---> OE	0.656	0.143	4.576	***	Yes

Notes: \*\*\* = 0.000, SE = standard error; T- Value = > 1.645; P- Value = < 0.05.

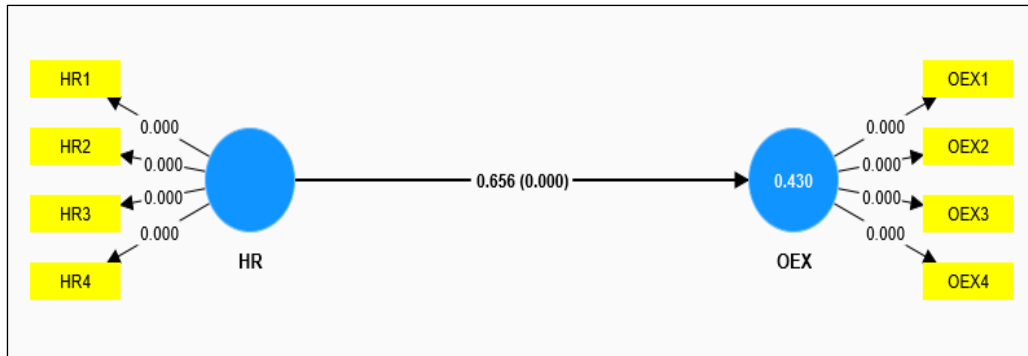


Figure 2: Structural Path Model

## 5. Discussion

The study is focused on examine the effect of sustainable HRM on OE among academic and administrative staff in higher education in Saudi Arabia and selecting the University of King Khalid as a case study. The results revealed that sustainable HRM has a positive relationship with OE. This result is support the hypothesis that proposed by authors and based on the empirical findings of prior research. Hence, this results is congruent with the many studies have shown that the positive relationship between sustainable HRM and OE (Al-Jedaiah and Albdareen 2020; Aro-Gordon and Mohamed Al-Raesi 2022; Taha et al. 2023). However, the stated studies have focused on the profitable organization point of view rather than non-profitable organizations such as universities as the current study.

On the other hands, there are some studies have utilized the OE as an outcome in universities (Mbaidin 2024; Mohammad Qawasmeh et al. 2013), but with different predictors such as TQM or E-learning, however, this study employed sustainable HRM as main predictor for OE in universities in order to shed the light on the role of sustainable HRM in the world of academia especially in Gulf countries. All in all, the results of this study is opened the door wide for upcoming studies in the field of sustainable HRM in high education in general.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this study is to investigated the relationship between sustainable HRM and OE in KKU in Saudi Arabia. This because the lack of studies dealing with this phenomenon in high educational institutions. The data was collected from the academic and administrative staff who working in KKU. Data was analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling – Smart – PLS (SEM-PLS) software. The results showed that there is a positive relationship between sustainable HRM and OE in the KKU in Saudi Arabia. This result providing new trajectories for policymakers to pay more attention to the sustainable HRM in universities which is very helpful for increasing the level of excellency of employee performance and university growth overall.

### Limitations

Like any study that have limitations. First, this study focused on the direct path of relationship between sustainable HRM and OE, however, the future studies may be adding an intervening variable such as mediation or moderation effect. Second, in term of context, this study used a case study mode and Saudi Arabia as a context. In contrast, new studies needed to show the diversity of contextual factors and cross-sectional or countries studies. Finally, this study focused on quantitative approach, however, the future studies may focus on qualitative approach or mixed-method will adding more values due to the experience and high level of education among the academic staff in universities.

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