

# FORUM

Invited article

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## CONTRIBUTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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Human resource management (HRM) can promote a “sustainability mindset” (Ehnert & Harry, 2012) and contribute to facing the challenges imposed by the difficult management of the economic, social, and environmental spheres. However, there is still a lack of human resources to promote changes for sustainability in organizations (Singh, Olugu, Musa & Mahat, 2018). Thus, in this forum of the *RAE-Revista de Administração de Empresas (Journal of Business Management)*, we invited colleagues to explore the role of green practices in HRM (Jerónimo, Henriques, Lacerda, Silva & Vieira, 2020) and to analyse how HRM contributes to sustainability-oriented performance (Muñoz-Pascual, Galende & Curado, 2020).

The connection between HRM and sustainability invites us to reflect on how HRM practices support organizations in achieving sustainability goals. We believe that this forum was an opportunity for discussion that contributes to the implementation of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

Research on employee well-being and inclusion (Barrena-Martínez, López-Fernández & Romero-Fernández, 2019) addresses human resource policies and practices that are naturally multi-stakeholder sensitive and inclusive. Human resource practices contribute to the sustainable careers of employees, so it is particularly interesting to study how to reshape jobs and improve sustainable employability (Ybema, Vuuren & Dam, 2020), while respecting local cultures.

Given the digital transformation that fosters more sustainable organizations (Seele & Lock, 2017) and the search for a change in leadership (Wart, Roman & Pierce, 2016), it is equally relevant

to reflect on the role of e-leadership and sustainability (Inel, 2019). Considering the technological basis of the working from home situation, we question whether the post-COVID-19 pandemic reality will establish a new logic for HRM that redesigns work to maintain commitment.

Colleagues responded positively, and we were delighted to receive many manuscripts for consideration. The forum brought together the best nine articles, reflecting an acceptance rate of around 30%. We thank all the authors who submitted their work, particularly those who went through several rounds of review until their articles were accepted. It was a hard choice, but we had the precious help of a large group of reviewers from different parts of the world. We are grateful to all of them for the privilege they have given us in getting familiar with the submitted works and accompanying the generous review processes that have further increased the scientific and methodological solidity of the research published in this forum.

This forum brought together very interesting studies with different methodological approaches: theoretical, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. The topics varied and covered the relationship between sustainable practices in the organizations and the commitment of the organizations' human resources, as well as sustainability and their careers. The topics covered also identified aspects that influence the “green” performance of human resources. We also have a description of the contribution of socially responsible management practices to organizational performance in several dimensions and the strength of organizational values for the implementation of the circular economy and encouragement of sustainability. The articles selected also clarified the “thieves of time,” or elements that jeopardize sustainability delaying work-related, and what affects the quality of sustainability.

## Main conclusions of the forum

Corporate social responsibility influences organizational commitment as addressed in the article by Giselle Cavalcante Queiroz, Mônica Cavalcanti Sá de Abreu, Sílvia Maria Dias Pedro Rebouças, just as sustainable HRM practices seem to have the same influence on the results of Denise Genari e Janaina Macke. Thus, organizational sustainability options influence employees' commitment, which is a finding that supports the relationship between sustainability and human resource commitment.

Career sustainability (continuity, learning, and balance) contributes to individual prosperity as presented by Camila Vieira Müller and Angela Beatriz Busato Scheffer, just as training and green engagement influence the individual green performance of human resources on the research by Valter Luís Barbieri Colombo, Anderson Betti Frare, Ilse Maria Beuren, resulting in a positive relationship between human resources metrics and ESG indicators, as shown in Melissa Velasco Schleich's study. This evidence demonstrates the close relationship between human resource development and sustainability.

Employees understand management practices aligned with corporate social responsibility as positively impacting the perception a) of health and safety in the workplace; and b) that the

organization interacts and is committed to the community as reported by Jucelia Appio Frizon, Teresa Eugénio, Ana Sílvia Falcão. We also have examples of the importance of soft skills for the transition to the circular economy and the relevance of HRM for sustainability in the article by Luisa Lavagnini Barboza, Ana Carolina Bertassini, Mateus Cecilio Gerolamo, Aldo Roberto Ometto. This evidence shows how people's behavior is related to organizations' sustainability.

However, there are threats to sustainability; soldiering, for instance, was pointed out as a “thief of time,” jeopardizing sustainability, increasing stress, and decreasing job satisfaction in the study by Pilar Mosquera, Maria Eduarda Soares, Paula Dordio and Leonor Atayde e Melo. On the other hand, external reporting of sustainability practices is not uniform; we learned that the quality of occupational health and safety reports is influenced by three determinants: a) the geographical origin of the organizations, b) the certification of the occupational health and safety management system, and c) the existence of an external certification in the reports. Reports produced in Northern Europe present a higher quality as supported by the work of Catarina Alves and Maria da Conceição Ramos.

From the published works, we are compelled to conclude that human resource management practices play a fundamental role in the change toward a more sustainable organizational life. In addition, there is a multilevel analysis for these two topics that must be further explored if we want to enrich the understanding of these phenomena. Finally, we are aware of our potential to contribute more, and this was just the start of the journey.

This issue is completed by Isabel Proença's reflection, “Sustainability and the role of HRM,” in the section Perspectives, and the Essay “The role of human resources for the sustainability of SMEs: What the literature says and what we can expect for the future” by Mário Franco and Margarida Rodrigues. These two contributions related to the forum's theme complement the collaboration with the *RAE* in the best way.

Finally, we would like to thank *RAE* for the opportunity to contribute. It was a pleasure to follow the process of putting together this forum, and we hope that this issue of *RAE* will contribute to the scientific excellence the journal promotes in academia.

## Special thanks

We would like to thank Professor Maria José Tonelli, former Editor-in-Chief of *RAE*, for her positive and enthusiastic reception of the idea of the forum, born in a meeting at ISEG, in Lisbon, in the pre-pandemic reality when meetings ended with a hug.

We also thank Professor Jorge Carneiro, current Editor-in-Chief of *RAE*, for accompanying the entire process, continuing an already initiated project that he inherited when he took over the position. Thank you for your trust.

Finally, we thank the entire editorial team at *RAE*, in particular Denise Francisco Cândido, for the tireless support and prompt responses to every question.

We wish you good health and a pleasant read.

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## AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Carla Curado, Lucía Muñoz-Pascual, Mirian Oliveira, Paulo Lopes Henriques, and Helena Mateus Jerónimo worked on the conceptualization and theoretical-methodological approach, on the theoretical review, on the writing and final writing of the text.