AOSIS

Human resource practices aligned with Sustainable Development Goals

CrossMark

Authors:
Nelesh Dhanpat[1]
Karel J. Stanz[2]

Affiliations:
[1]Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management, College of Business and Economics, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

[2]Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Nelesh Dhanpat,
neleshd@uj.ac.za

This special edition of the *South African Journal of Human Resource Management* was dedicated to exploring *Human Resource Practices Aligned with Sustainable Development Goals* (*SDGs*). There is growing academic interest in research focused on sustainability and sustainable development (Berrone et al., 2023; Grainger-Brown & Malekpour, 2019; Lozano & Barreiro-Gen, 2023; Secundo et al., 2020). A key question that emerges is how organisations can effectively engage with the SDGs and contribute to their realisation (Grainger-Brown & Malekpour, 2019). This collection sets out to highlight research that examines human resource (HR) practices, in the South African context could be aligned with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to assist in realising these goals. Established in 2015, the SDGs presents a global vision to eradicate poverty, promote environmental sustainability, ensure individual well-being, and foster peace and prosperity by 2030 through 17 goals (United Nations, 2015). As such, this edition aimed to highlight the role human resource management (HRM) plays in realising these goals within organisations.

The need for research in this area has become increasingly important. Human resource management and the SDGs are linked through the shared element of the human factor, as individuals' attitudes, behaviours directly influence social, environmental and organisational practices (Chams & García-Blandón, 2019). Several of the SDGs are directly linked to HRM, such as those promoting decent work, gender equality and reducing inequalities, while others have an indirect influence. Previous studies (e.g. Chams & García-Blandón, 2019) indicate the growing recognition of HRM's role in driving sustainable development. This collection aims to address these gaps and encourage HR professionals to integrate sustainable development into their everyday roles, through HR practices that enable employee outcomes, with a specific focus in the South African context.
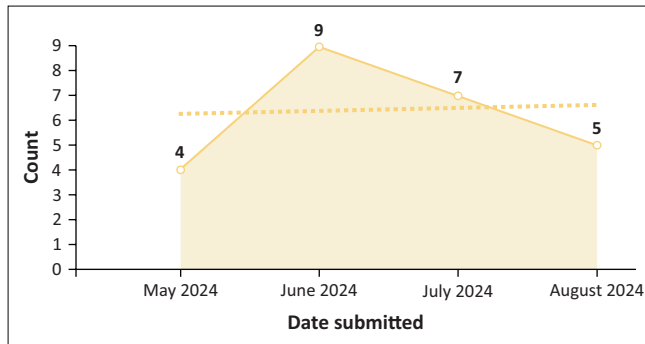
Brewster and Brookes (2024) suggest that research on SDGs being realised through HR practices will be fruitful if HR practitioners are able to make a significant contribution to society in achieving the SDGs meaningfully. As such, HR practitioners could play a significant role in embedding the SDGs into organisational frameworks. Their influence, in the workplace, could extended to shaping policies that promote gender equity, provide decent work and enhance employee well-being, while advancing social responsibility, environmental care, and providing equitable working conditions.

The call for submissions were released in May 2024. The call garnered considerable attention across various academic institutions and disciplines. Although most articles submitted originated from South Africa, other counties included Pakistan, Namibia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zimbabwe. As can be seen in Figure 1, a consistent flow of submissions was processed until August 2024 resulting in a total of 25 articles to be accessed for focus and scope.

In this special collection, a total of nine articles were accepted for publication, each contributing valuable insights aligned with specific SDGs, evident in Figure 2. Most articles accepted originated from South Africa with another being from Namibia. The articles originated from the following universities namely, University of Johannesburg, University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University, University of Fort Hare, University of KwaZulu-Natal, North-West University and University of Namibia.
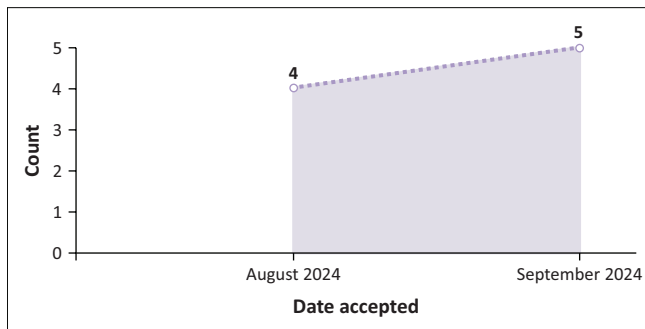
In total, nine articles in this edition provide insights linked to specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting diverse aspects of sustainable HR practices. The SDGs covered reflect a diverse range of topics, with Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being being the most frequently

Note: The manuscript is a contribution to the themed collection titled 'Human Resource Practices Aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),' under the expert guidance of guest editors Prof. Nelesh Dhanpat and Prof. Karel Stanz.

FIGURE 1: Timeline and flow of submissions.

FIGURE 2: Timeline of acceptance of submissions.

addressed, appearing as a core focus in four studies. These studies explore the mediation effect of HR expertise in the boardroom on the relationship between implementing sustainable HR practices and market value, mental well-being in the workplace, social support, organisational justice among public service employees in South Africa, factors influencing work engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic and Meaning of work for South African women during the pandemic. Additionally, Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (focused on South Africa) features two studies, placing emphasis on the transition from graduate to professional, the development of work identity, and challenges associated with toxic leadership and ethical leadership. Two studies focus on Goal 10: Reduced Equalities, advocating for effective performance management strategies for security personnel in higher education and examining how harmonisation shapes outcomes among support service labour in selected South African higher education institutions. Finally, Goal 4: Quality Education is addressed with a study on preparing graduates for the job market using a strength-based skill development approach.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that this special collection will be of interest to a wide audience. In the South African context, research on achieving the SDGs, particularly with an HR focus, remains in its early stages, if not in its infancy. Exploratory work in sustainable HRM has sought to define the sustainability phenomenon and highlight its relevance to HRM (Qamar et al., 2023). This collection of articles contributes to this growing field, offering insights into how HRM can support the realisation of the SDGs and further advancing research on sustainable HR practices.

Acknowledgements

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or that of the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

References

Berrone, P., Rousseau, H.E., Ricart, J.E., Brito, E., & Giuliodori, A. (2023). How can research contribute to the implementation of sustainable development goals? An interpretive review of SDG literature in management. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 25(2), 318–339. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12331

Brewster, C., & Brookes, M. (2024). Sustainable development goals and new approaches to HRM: Why HRM specialists will not reach the sustainable development goals and why it matters. *German Journal of Human Resource Management*, 38(2), 183–201. https://doi.org/10.1177/23970022241229037

Chams, N., & García-Blandón, J. (2019). On the importance of sustainable human resource management for the adoption of sustainable development goals. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 141, 109–122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2018.10.006

Grainger-Brown, J., & Malekpour, S. (2019). Implementing the sustainable development goals: A review of strategic tools and frameworks available to organisations. *Sustainability*, 11(5), 1381. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11051381

Lozano, R., & Barreiro-Gen, M. (2023). Organisations' contributions to sustainability. An analysis of impacts on the Sustainable Development Goals. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 32(6), 3371–3382. https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3305

Qamar, F., Afshan, G., & Rana, S.A. (2023). Sustainable HRM and well-being: Systematic review and future research agenda. *Management Review Quarterly* 2023, 1–51. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-023-00360-6

Secundo, G., Ndou, V., Del Vecchio, P., & De Pascale, G. (2020). Sustainable development, intellectual capital and technology policies: A structured literature review and future research agenda. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 153, 119917. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.119917

United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development.* Retrieved from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication