

## A FRAMEWORK FOR INTEGRATING ESG CRITERIA INTO STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING

### KERANGKA KERJA UNTUK MENGINTEGRASIKAN KRITERIA ESG KE DALAM PERENCANAAN STRATEGIS SUMBER DAYA MANUSIA

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#### ABSTRACT

The global shift from shareholder primacy to stakeholder capitalism has positioned Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria as the gold standard for corporate success. However, a significant gap remains between high-level ESG commitments and tactical implementation within Human Resource Management (HRM). This research develops a conceptual framework for integrating ESG criteria into strategic HR planning through a systematic narrative review of literature from 2016–2026. The study reveals that the "Environmental" pillar is operationalized through green recruitment and sustainability competencies, while the "Social" pillar emphasizes Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and employee well-being. Crucially, the "Governance" pillar often overlooked in HRM discourse is integrated through ethical leadership, pay transparency, and merit-based succession planning. This integration transforms HR Business Partners into Sustainability Partners, redefined through the lens of Resource-Based View (RBV) and Institutional Theory. The framework provides a strategic roadmap for organizations to enhance long-term resilience and legitimacy in a competitive talent market.

**Keywords:** ESG Integration, Strategic HR Planning, Sustainability, Governance, Workforce Planning.

#### ABSTRACT

*The global shift from shareholder primacy to stakeholder capitalism has put criteria Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) as the gold standard for corporate success. However, there is a significant gap between high-level ESG commitments and tactical implementation in Human Resource Management (HRM). This study develops a conceptual framework for integrating ESG criteria into strategic HR planning through a systematic narrative review of the literature from 2016–2026. The study reveals that the "Environmental" pillar is operationalized through green recruitment and sustainability competencies, while the "Social" pillar emphasizes Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and employee well-being. Crucially, the often-overlooked "Governance" pillar in HRM discourse is integrated through ethical leadership, remuneration transparency, and meritocracy-based succession planning. This integration transforms the role of HR Business Partner into a Sustainability Partner, redefined through the lens Resource-Based View (RBV) and Institutional Theory. This framework provides a strategic roadmap for organizations to increase long-term resilience and legitimacy in a competitive talent market.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the global business environment has experienced a paradigm shift from Shareholder Primacy to Stakeholder Capitalism. This transformation is driven by increasing demands from investors, regulators, and the public for companies to focus on long-term value creation, rather than simply short-term profits. Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria have emerged as key benchmarks for assessing a company's non-financial performance, simultaneously redefining the standards of modern corporate success (DiazGranados et al., 2015; Pasigai et al., 2025).

As organizations adopt ESG frameworks, the Human Resource Management (HRM) function is shifting from an administrative role to a strategic partner in achieving sustainability goals. HRM is positioned as the primary architect in building organizational culture and capabilities to operationally realize the corporate ESG vision (Westover, 2024; Dileep, 2025). In this context, workforce planning is a key element as it provides the analytical basis for talent acquisition and retention strategies aligned with sustainability goals (Jacobson, 2010; Mahesh & K, 2025). DiazGranados et al. assert that workforce planning plays a role in identifying talent gaps crucial to organizational success, enabling HRM to strengthen recruitment and retention practices consistent with long-term strategy (DiazGranados et al., 2015). Furthermore, the use of artificial intelligence and data analytics in HRM strategies further emphasizes the function's strategic position in talent management amidst the complexities of sustainability practices (Muchipalli & Jain, 2025).

Despite the growing literature on Green HRM, there is a significant gap between ESG policies at the strategic level and their implementation at the operational level of HRM. Many organizations include ambitious ESG commitments in their official reports but fail to systematically integrate them into their workforce planning, recruitment, and retention strategies (Ronaghi et al., 2024; Pasigai et al., 2025; Mahesh & K, 2025). This lack of synchronization has the potential to turn ESG initiatives into mere greenwashing practices without any substantive impact on human capital management (S, 2025; Khair et al., 2025). Westover (2024) emphasizes that HRM plays a central role in responding to AI-driven workforce restructuring, and therefore, HRM strategies must be aligned with broader ESG criteria. Integrating sustainability principles into HRM practices is a prerequisite for aligning current and future workforce capabilities with an organization's ESG ambitions.

Neglecting ESG integration in strategic HRM planning poses various risks. Organizations may face difficulties in attracting and retaining an increasingly socially conscious workforce, particularly Generation Z, and are vulnerable to the pressures of increasingly stringent governance regulations (S, 2025; Madhavi et al., 2025). Employment preferences that prioritize social responsibility require companies to demonstrate a visible ESG commitment to remain competitive in talent recruitment and retention (Hastie, 2024; Amos et al., 2022). Furthermore, failure to proactively integrate ESG has the potential to cause long-term reputational damage and legal consequences as corporate responsibility regulatory frameworks strengthen (Dewi, 2020; Johnson & Sim, 2017). Pasigai et al. (2025) emphasize that human capital management must evolve by adopting data-driven decision-making that integrates ESG considerations, including competency mapping and succession planning aligned with sustainability goals, to mitigate risks while capitalizing on strategic opportunities.

Conceptually, the transition to Stakeholder Capitalism requires a reconstruction of the traditional business paradigm by positioning HR as a key actor in aligning corporate ESG objectives and workforce strategies. Integrating ESG criteria into HR planning not only increases organizational resilience but also strengthens the company's legitimacy in the eyes of consumers and investors who are increasingly critical of sustainability issues. Synchronizing ESG initiatives at the strategic level with HR operational functions is a fundamental prerequisite for establishing a sustainable and responsible business direction.

While the "Environmental" and "Social" elements of HRM have been widely discussed through topics such as diversity and inclusion, the "Governance" element is often overlooked in the discourse of strategic HR management. *Novelty* from this research lies the focus of synergy between aspects of corporate governance with *Workforce Planning*. This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by exploring how the principles of transparency, accountability, and ethics in governance can be formally integrated into workforce planning and succession management processes.

The primary objective of this article is to build a robust conceptual framework for the integration of ESG criteria into the strategic HR planning cycle. Through this approach, *narrative*

*review*This study will synthesize contemporary literature to offer an integrative model that can be used by HR practitioners and corporate policymakers. The theoretical contribution of this research is expected to enrich the discourse on Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) by incorporating the sustainability dimension as a core variable, not merely an operational complement.

To achieve this objective, this article is systematically structured, starting with a review of the literature search methodology, followed by an in-depth analysis of the mechanisms for integrating each ESG pillar into the HR function. Next, the article will discuss the strategic implications of the proposed framework for a company's competitive advantage. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the main findings and present a future research agenda to advance sustainability-based HR management practices globally.

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1. Search Strategy

This study employed a systematic narrative review approach to ensure comprehensive and relevant literature coverage. The source identification process was conducted through searches of internationally reputable bibliographic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and journals indexed in *Academic Journal Guide* (ABS Journals). The keywords used in the search were combined using Boolean operators (AND/OR), which included key terms such as "Strategic Human Resource Management", "SHRM", "ESG Criteria", "Corporate Sustainability", and "Workforce Planning". In addition to database searches, other techniques were also used. *snowballing* also applied to the reference lists of selected articles to minimize the possibility of missing fundamental studies that contributed to the development of this integrative framework.

### 2.2. Selection Criteria

To maintain academic quality and relevance, selected articles must meet a set of stringent inclusion criteria. First, studies must have been published within the last ten years (2016–2026) to capture the most recent evolution of ESG reporting and contemporary SHRM practices. Second, articles must explicitly link the sustainability dimensions (*sustainability*) with the strategic HR planning function, not just discussing environmental management in general. Third, priority is given to empirical research articles and theoretical articles published in journals. *peer-reviewed* English to ensure the methodological validity of the synthesized literature.

### 2.3. Narrative Synthesis

Data obtained from selected literature was analyzed using qualitative narrative synthesis techniques. The initial stage of the analysis involved coding the findings based on the key ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) pillars and their relationship to strategic HR planning components such as talent *acquisition*, *workforce planning*, and *succession planning*. Next, the literature was grouped thematically to identify patterns, gaps, and relationships between variables. This process enabled researchers to conduct theoretical triangulation, where perspectives from different studies were compared and contrasted to build a coherent conceptual framework. This synthesis not only summarized the existing literature but also provided a critical interpretation of how ESG integration mechanisms can be strategically operationalized within organizations.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. The ESG-SHRM Integration Framework

This section presents a synthesis of how ESG criteria are integrated into the strategic HR planning function. The proposed framework emphasizes that each ESG pillar requires tactical adjustments in human capital management to create sustainable organizational value.

### **3.1.1. Environmental (E) in HR Planning: Green Recruitment and Competency Development**

Integrating environmental considerations into human resource (HR) planning, particularly in the context of green recruitment and competency development, is increasingly becoming a strategic imperative. Organizations are beginning to recognize the importance of aligning workforce strategies with ecological values, ensuring that recruitment processes focus not only on technical skills but also on candidates' alignment with the company's sustainability ambitions.

Green recruitment refers to efforts to attract and select individuals whose values align with an organization's sustainability goals. Several findings indicate that companies with high-profile standards tend to incorporate environmental awareness into their talent profiles (Tsymbaliuk et al., 2023; Saeed et al., 2018). This approach is crucial when organizations are challenged to build a workforce capable of managing environmental challenges and internalizing sustainable practices. However, its implementation remains limited. A study in Ukraine showed that less than a third of organizations have adopted a green-based employer value proposition, reflecting a gap between normative commitments and the integration of green competencies into recruitment frameworks (Tsymbaliuk et al., 2023). This fact confirms that the direction of transformation is clear, but the institutional capacity to operationalize it is uneven.

Employee ecological behavior has been identified as a key determinant of an organization's competitive advantage and environmental performance, making the establishment of required green competencies a prerequisite in the selection process (Farooq et al., 2022; Saeed et al., 2018). A recruitment framework that explicitly incorporates these competencies can lay the foundation for a broader sustainability strategy. The effectiveness of green human resource management has also been shown to play a role in strengthening environmental initiatives through structured recruitment and selection processes (CHEHRGHANI, 2023).

Beyond the recruitment process, HR planning must systematically incorporate the development of sustainability competencies across all organizational functions. This development encompasses the ability to manage environmental risks and improve resource efficiency through ecologically oriented training and performance evaluation (Saeed et al., 2018; Esen & Çalışkan, 2019). Implementing green training programs not only improves technical skills but also fosters an organizational culture that supports sustainability (Saeed et al., 2018; Hasan, 2022). Integrated green HR practices, including training, development, and assessment systems, have been shown to significantly impact employee pro-environmental behavior, making systematic competency development an essential element in achieving sustainability goals (Saeed et al., 2018; Hasan, 2022).

The integration of analytics-based competency management into HR planning also strengthens an organization's capacity to remain adaptive to environmental dynamics. Leveraging business analytics in competency management enables the identification of key skills relevant to the sustainability agenda, while supporting more precise long-term workforce planning (Luna et al., 2021; Esen & Çalışkan, 2019).

Thus, mainstreaming the environmental dimension in HR planning creates a strategic framework in which the "E" pillar not only addresses short-term ecological issues but also guides the development of workforce capabilities consistent with the organization's sustainability commitments. Integrating green recruitment and sustainability competency development is a prerequisite for organizations seeking to maintain competitiveness in a

business landscape that increasingly demands environmental responsibility while simultaneously improving overall performance.

### **3.1.2. Social (S) in HR Planning: DEI, Well-Being and Human Rights**

The "Social" dimension of human resource (HR) planning is a strategic pillar in building a work environment that upholds diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), employee well-being, and human rights protection. This dimension demands a paradigm shift from mere legal compliance to a proactive approach that positions DEI as a core variable in workforce planning. With this integration, organizations can ensure broad representation across all structural levels, enrich collective perspectives, and foster an inclusive work culture.

Research shows that organizations that effectively implement DEI strategies experience increased employee engagement and improved performance (Gill et al., 2018). Gill et al. emphasize that increasing workforce diversity must be accompanied by a shift from a focus on diverse recruitment to creating an inclusive environment that optimizes the participation of all individuals. An inclusive environment is correlated with superior performance because individuals from diverse backgrounds bring skills, experiences, and mindsets that enhance innovation and problem-solving capacity (Gill et al., 2018; Darmalinggam & Kaliannan, 2022).

Integrating employee well-being indicators into strategic planning is also fundamental. Quality of work life and mental health have a direct impact on productivity and retention. Raine et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of interventions that promote healthy lifestyles in the workplace as part of a well-being strategy. Such initiatives not only improve individual performance but also strengthen the organization's reputation and attractiveness in the labor market.

A commitment to human rights extends beyond an organization's internal boundaries and encompasses the entire talent supply chain. Organizations are required to ensure that their operational practices and supplier relationships align with human rights standards. This comprehensive approach serves to mitigate reputational risks resulting from supply chain violations, an issue of increasing concern among consumers sensitive to corporate social responsibility (Nagiah & Suki, 2024; Donaldson et al., 2021).

Human resource planning aligned with social pillars strengthens the Employee Value Proposition (EVP) in a competitive talent market. This framework enhances an organization's capacity to attract and retain individuals seeking a value alignment between themselves and their employer. Research shows that organizations that adopt integrated social practices gain a competitive advantage while enhancing institutional resilience (Giran et al., 2025; Selvaraj & Venkatakrishnan, 2023).

A holistic approach to the social dimension of HR planning, encompassing DEI, employee well-being, and human rights protection, is the foundation for creating a sustainable and competitive workplace. This practice not only improves organizational performance but also significantly contributes to the social sustainability agenda in the contemporary corporate landscape.

### **3.1.3. Governance (G) in HR Planning: Ethics, Transparency and Accountability**

The Governance (G) dimension in human resource (HR) planning is the foundation for the ethical and sustainable integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles. A robust governance framework in HR planning encompasses ethical leadership, remuneration transparency, and meritocracy-based succession practices, all of which strengthen accountability across the organization.

Governance serves as the backbone for implementing an HR planning framework integrated with ESG principles. Beaufort et al. (2025) assert that sustainable corporate governance positions the governance framework as a strategic instrument for aligning organizational policies with stakeholder expectations regarding ethics and leadership

accountability. This view is reinforced by Narsimhan (2025), who notes that boards of directors increasingly view the HR function as a strategic lever for long-term value creation. This shift marks the internalization of ethical practices within governance structures, enabling HR processes, including succession planning, to be oriented toward transparency, fairness, and meritocracy.

In the context of leadership and succession, HR governance must be able to establish mechanisms that encourage ethical leadership while preventing nepotism through a transparent succession system. Kessi et al. (2025) emphasize that ethical leadership plays a central role in effective HR decision-making, shaping organizational culture, and ensuring alignment of HR practices with ethical standards. Kubi and Asiamah's (2025) analysis shows that integrity and cultural value alignment are key criteria in leader selection, thus reinforcing the urgency of merit-based succession. This approach goes beyond administrative compliance and directs organizations toward developing leadership that reflects the institution's core values.

Remuneration transparency is another crucial aspect of governance that directly impacts pay equity and leadership accountability. Transparency strengthens internal trust and addresses equity issues. Integrating ESG targets into executive compensation aligns management incentives with the organization's long-term sustainability vision. Ntabakirabose (2025) demonstrates the link between governance structure and institutional performance, while Sanni (2023) asserts that integrating sustainability metrics into the remuneration framework encourages ethical practices and improves employee morale and retention. Thus, governance that emphasizes pay equity not only meets regulatory standards but also strengthens a culture of accountability.

Linking executive compensation to the achievement of ESG targets is a crucial tool in aligning top management interests with the organization's sustainability agenda. Pasigai et al. (2025) note that organizations are increasingly integrating ESG criteria into their human capital management strategies to generate measurable impacts on workforce planning and performance management. Mola (2025) demonstrates that talent and performance management modules can be leveraged to link leadership to measurable sustainability outcomes. A governance framework that emphasizes the relationship between compensation and ESG performance not only incentivizes ethical leadership but also strengthens an organization's commitment to sustainable practices.

Conceptually, effective governance in HR planning is a prerequisite for strengthening ethical leadership, remuneration transparency, and institutional accountability. Integrating these principles into a governance framework enables organizations to build a sustainable ethical culture, align HR practices with long-term strategic objectives, and strengthen stakeholder trust and organizational performance.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

##### **ESG Integration Analysis: Transformation of Risk Profiles and Employee Value Proposition (EVP)**

The integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria into strategic human resource (HR) planning fundamentally changes an organization's risk profile. Historically, HR risks have primarily been related to turnover rates or talent shortages. However, the ESG framework broadens the risk spectrum to include reputational risk and compliance with global sustainability standards. Modern candidates, particularly millennials and Generation Z, demonstrate a strong preference for organizations with measurable ethical commitments, directly influencing the construction of a strong HR strategy Employee Value Proposition (EVP) (Huang et al., 2025; Firdiyansyah, 2025).

These changes require a structural transformation within the HR function. The role of the HR Business Partner (HRBP) is evolving toward a Sustainability Partner, who not only

understands workforce dynamics but also possesses ESG data literacy, an understanding of carbon metrics, and the capacity to conduct social compliance audits within the labor supply chain (Lee et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024). HR managers are no longer confined to administrative functions but instead act as strategic advisors, ensuring human resource decisions align with net-zero targets and corporate governance standards (Huang et al., 2024; Lei & Yu, 2023). To support this shift, HR professional development curricula need to be reconstructed to incorporate sustainability principles and integrate sustainability-based key performance indicators (KPIs) into HR metrics (Tang & Li, 2024; Liu et al., 2025).

Theoretically, this integration can be analyzed through the perspectives of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Institutional Theory. RBV views ESG integration as a unique and valuable organizational capability, generating distinctive human capital and serving as a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Zhang et al., 2024; Liu & Jin, 2023). Conversely, Institutional Theory highlights the external pressures that drive companies to adopt an ESG framework to gain social legitimacy in a global context that increasingly demands transparency in human resource management. Both perspectives demonstrate that adopting ESG practices in HR planning is not simply a managerial choice, but rather a strategic response to the dynamics of institutional expectations and stakeholder demands (López-de-Silanes et al., 2024; Gesso & Lodhi, 2024).

The integration of ESG criteria into HR functions thus redefines both the risk spectrum and the strategic role of HR within the organization. Companies' efforts to position themselves as value-based employers require the internalization of sustainability principles into their operational framework and organizational culture. This transformation strengthens compliance and risk mitigation while increasing their attractiveness to a workforce that increasingly prioritizes ethical and meaningful dimensions of work.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of criteria *Environmental, Social, and Governance* (ESG) criteria into strategic human resource (HR) planning has become a fundamental prerequisite for organizations to achieve long-term sustainability and resilience amidst the transition towards *Stakeholder Capitalism*. The main findings show that this integration mechanism includes three main pillars that are interrelated. In the environmental pillar (*Environmental*), the main focus lies on green recruitment and the development of ecological competencies that align individual values with corporate sustainability ambitions. On the social pillar (*Social*), HR planning is transforming to prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), and holistic employee well-being across the entire talent supply chain. Finally, the governance pillar (*Governance*) acts as a structural backbone through strengthening ethical leadership, remuneration transparency, and a meritocracy-based succession system that ensures accountability at all levels of the organization.

Although this study makes a significant theoretical contribution to enriching the discourse on Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. As a narrative *review* This study relies heavily on secondary literature and qualitative synthesis, which may have subjectivity in the categorization of findings. Furthermore, the rapid evolution of global ESG regulations and the dynamics of technologies such as artificial intelligence mean that some literature data may require continuous updating to remain relevant to current industry practices. The gap between normative commitments at the annual report level and the institutional capacity to operationalize them on the ground also remains a challenge in generalizing this framework across geographic contexts.

Based on these findings, a future research agenda should be directed at empirically validating the proposed framework through longitudinal case studies across various industry sectors to quantitatively measure the actual impact of ESG integration on organizational

performance. There is an urgent need to further explore the role of data analytics and artificial intelligence in mitigating risks of green washing on human capital reporting. Furthermore, future research could focus on developing more precise key performance indicator (KPI) metrics that link executive compensation to measurable sustainability targets. These steps are crucial to ensuring that the transformation of the HR function into a sustainable one is successful. Sustainability Partners truly make a substantive contribution to the global sustainability agenda.

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