International Journal of Environmental Sciences
ISSN: 2229-7359
Vol. 11 No. 24s, 2025
https://theaspd.com/index.php

The Rise Of Environmental Wellbeing: HRM's Evolving Role In Sustainable Workspaces And Mental Health

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Abstract
Organizations are increasingly challenged to reduce their ecological footprint while protecting employee mental health, yet rigorous models that unite these priorities remain scarce. This study addresses that gap by integrating environmental sustainability and psychological well-being within a single, empirically tested framework. Using a mixed-methods, cross-sectional design, we combined survey data from 312 employees across technology, healthcare, finance, and manufacturing sectors with in-depth interviews of 17 HR and sustainability leaders. Quantitative analyses showed that environmental well-being and Green Human Resource Management (HRM) practices each significantly predicted employee mental health, jointly explaining 31 % of the variance ($R^2 = 0.31$, $p < .001$), with environmental well-being emerging as the stronger predictor. Qualitative themes, policy integration and commitment, organizational challenges, and employee engagement strategies illuminated mechanisms by which supportive physical environments and eco-conscious HR policies reinforce one another to enhance psychological resilience. Grounded in the Job Demands–Resources model and Sustainable HRM theory, the study provides robust evidence that sustainable workspace design and green HR strategies are mutually reinforcing resources rather than parallel initiatives. The integrated conceptual model offers actionable guidance for managers and policymakers, demonstrating that ecological stewardship and employee well-being can operate as synergistic drivers of organizational performance and workforce vitality.

Keywords: *Environmental Sustainability, Human Resource Management, Job Demands–Resources Model, Organizational Wellbeing, Workplace Design*

INTRODUCTION

Companies in all industries are being pressured to reduce their environmental impact and, at the same time, protect the psychological well-being of their employees (Martinez-Falco et al., 2024). In work, environmental well-being can be defined as the planning and continuous maintenance of physical and cultural environments that conserve the natural resources and promote the health, resilience, and productivity of employees (Kowalski and Loretto, 2017). Going way beyond surface-level design appeal, environmental health is a holistic system wherein sustainable workspace features, including high levels of daylight, high-quality indoor air, biophilic design, and energy efficiency, have a direct positive correlation with employee performance (Garcia, 2025). Meanwhile, the increasing levels of stress, burnout, and mental health conditions in the workplace point to the necessity to introduce ecological and psychological sustainability (Jensen and van der Voordt, 2020). This overlap of priorities has pushed the idea of environmental well-being beyond the margins of many organizations to the center of the strategy of organizations that would like to be competitive, socially responsible, and appealing to the most talented employees of the twenty-first century (Madero-Gomez et al., 2023).

In this dynamic environment, Human Resource Management (HRM) has shifted its role from a mostly administrative imperative to a central organizing force of organizational sustainability and workforce wellbeing. Modern HRM not only regulates recruitment, performance appraisal, and adherence to policies, but also takes an active part in shaping the environmental and psychosocial parameters within which the employees work (Elufioye et al., 2024). The use of green practices in HRM, such as the sustainability-based recruitment standards, performance measurement that considers ecological and health concerns, flexible work solutions, and the office design that promotes wellness, demonstrates how HR practitioners can integrate environmental and health goals into their daily practice (Singh, 2025). By working in close collaboration with the architects, facilities managers, and the specialists of occupational health, the HR leaders transform the corporate sustainability commitments into tangible employee experiences that enhance the satisfaction, engagement, and retention, as well as improve the public image of an organization (Adekoya, 2022).

There is a considerable and continuously expanding interdisciplinary literature that highlights the relationship between mental health and environmental factors (Watt, 2025). Environmental psychology and occupational health research always prove that natural light, indoor greenery, ergonomics, and good ventilation lower cortisol concentration, enhance cognitive skills, and reduce absenteeism (Dmitry and Dmitry, 2021). On the other hand, work conditions with low air quality, high noise levels, or sterile interiors are associated with fatigue, anxiety, and low job satisfaction (Gaspar et al., 2023). To supplement these physical factors, HR-based initiatives, including flexible working hours, mindfulness courses, and formal mental-health counseling, also help to reduce psychosocial stress factors and make employees more resilient (Mohamad and Abiddin, 2024). Working together, a sustainable physical environment and supportive HR policies form a reinforcing cycle of wellbeing: employees become more vital and productive, and the benefits, in turn, justify further investment in environmentally-friendly practices (Kamboj & A, 2024).

These developments notwithstanding, there are still major gaps in knowledge. Environmental management or corporate social responsibility is usually studied independently in sustainability research, but risk reduction and safety adherence are usually the focus of occupational health research. There is little research that incorporates ecological workspace design, HRM strategy, and employee mental health into a single analytical platform. This discontinuity impairs the development of theory and restricts the knowledge of how HRM can both achieve ecological and psychological goals. In addition, the fact that there is little use of proven theoretical lenses, especially the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model that explains how job and environmental resources mitigate stress and create engagement, has not fully explored critical mechanisms. In the absence of such integration, the field does not have holistic models that illustrate dynamic interaction between sustainable workspace design, HRM practices, and the mental well-being of employees.

This research is a direct response to these gaps since it investigates the development of environmental well-being and mental health in sustainable workspaces through HRM practices. The study has two main goals: first, to find out what HR policies and practices contribute to creating environmentally sustainable and health-promoting workplaces, and second, to determine how eco-friendly HR practices are connected to the objective employee mental-health results. The overarching research questions that will be used to answer this question are as follows: How do the HRM strategies integrate the environmental and psychological well-being goals in modern organizations? and What is the quantifiable effect of sustainable workspace design and green HRM policies on the mental state of employees and the overall organizational performance? This research will rely on the knowledge of the JD-R model and the novelty of the Sustainable HRM theory to come up with a comprehensive overview of the emerging role of HRM in designing workplaces that are resilient, low-carbon, and mentally supportive.

Objectives of the study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine how Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies foster environmental well-being through sustainable workspace design and eco-conscious organizational policies.
2. To evaluate the relationship between environmentally sustainable work environments and measurable employee mental health outcomes, including stress reduction, engagement, and overall well-being.
3. To develop an integrated framework grounded in the Job Demands–Resources model and Sustainable HRM theory that connects HRM practices, environmental sustainability, and mental health for application in diverse organizational contexts.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The design adopted in this study was a mixed-methods cross-sectional study aimed at exploring the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in promoting environmental well-being and employee mental health. The survey of the employees was used to collect quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews with the HR professionals were used to obtain qualitative information. The combination and comparison of the two kinds of data collected concurrently were possible.

Sampling and Participants

Organizational Invitations and Selection

The target population entailed the organizations having a minimum of 250 employees and having reported sustainability or green HR efforts publicly. Professional networks and publicly available sustainability directories

were used to identify eligible organizations to achieve a diversity of sectors in technology, healthcare, finance, and light manufacturing.

The recruitment was done in two phases. To begin with, formal invitation emails and a formal letter of participation were dispatched to HR directors or top managers on the purpose of the study, the procedures, and confidentiality assurances. The HR department sent a second email invitation (endorsed by the research team) to employees who were to be included in the survey after the organization gave its approval. In the case of the qualitative strand, invitations to potential interviewees, HR managers, or sustainability officers were sent to them personally, either via email or phone, after their organizations had accepted to be involved.

Employee Survey

The questionnaire was aimed at about 300 workers. This value was a result of a power analysis of multiple regression with a medium effect size ($f2 = 0.15$), a 0.05 level of significance, and a statistical power of 0.80. Approximately 500 employees in participating organizations were invited to answer the invitation, considering an estimated response rate of 60 %. Only qualified participants were selected, and their experience in their organization was at least six months, to familiarize themselves with the practices at work. Proportional representation of the various departments and job levels was ensured through stratified random sampling.

Interviews

To address the qualitative aspect, purposive sampling was used to sample 15-20 HR managers or sustainability officers. This range was selected, as the known evidence demonstrates that the saturation of themes in the narrow circles of professionals is usually obtained within this interval.

Data Collection

Survey

An online questionnaire measured three key areas:

1. **Environmental Wellbeing** using the *Sustainable Workplace Environment Scale* (12 items, 5-point Likert).
2. **Employee Mental Health** using the *WHO-5 Well-Being Index* and the *Perceived Stress Scale* (10 items).
3. **Green HRM Practices** using the *Green HRM Scale* (8 items).

The survey also recorded demographic information such as age, gender, job level, and organizational tenure. The survey remained open for four weeks, with two reminder emails sent to encourage participation.

Interviews

Semi-structured 45-60-minute interviews were performed using secure video conferencing. The interview guide covered sustainability-related HR policies, employee mental health supporting programs, and a practical issue of uniting the two areas. All interviews were transcribed word-for-word with the consent of the participants and audio-recorded.

Document Review

In the case where it was possible, organizational sustainability reports and HR policy documents were gathered to offer a background and help with the triangulation of results.

Data Analysis

Quantitative

Microsoft Excel was used to clean and analyze survey data. Demographic variables and scale scores were summarized using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies). Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of each scale and was calculated using Excel formula functions. The data was analysed with multiple regression to determine the relationship between green HRM practices, environmental well-being, and mental-health outcomes using the Data Analysis ToolPak of Excel.

Qualitative

They took thematic analysis on interview transcripts after Braun and Clarke's six-phase familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting procedure. The transcripts were coded by two independent researchers, and any points of disagreement were discussed to improve the reliability.

Integration

The results of the survey, interviews, and the review of the documents have been compared and combined in the process of interpretation to present a holistic view of the HRM practices that facilitated the environmental well-being as well as mental health.

Patient Consent

Every participant was given an information sheet, and informed consent was obtained. The research survey was anonymous, the interviewees were given pseudonyms, and all electronic files were kept on encrypted password-protected drives for a five-year storage term as per the institutional policy.

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RESULTS

Participant Characteristics

The survey was completed by 312 employees who are representatives of 10 organizations in the field of technology, healthcare, finance, and light manufacturing. The average age of the participants was 36.8 years (SD = 8.4), and 54 percent and 46 percent consisted of female and male respondents, respectively. Mean tenure in the organization was 7.2 years (SD = 4.1).

Moreover, 17 HR managers and sustainability officers were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. There were HR Directors, HR Business Partners, and Sustainability Managers, and the four industries were represented (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants

Variable	n	%	Mean (SD)
Total participants	312	100	36.8 (8.4) years
Age (years)	312	100	36.8 (8.4)
Gender			
Female	169	54.0	–
Male	143	46.0	–
Organizational tenure (years)	312	100	7.2 (4.1)
Industry sector			
Technology	82	26.3	–
Healthcare	78	25.0	–
Finance	77	24.7	–
Manufacturing	75	24.0	–

Reliability of Scales

All scales demonstrated good internal consistency. The Environmental Wellbeing Scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, the WHO-5 Well-Being Index was 0.82, the Perceived Stress Scale was 0.79, and the Green HRM Scale was 0.85. These values exceeded the recommended 0.70 threshold (Table 2).

Table 2. Reliability of Measurement Scales

Scale	Items	Cronbach's α
Environmental Wellbeing Scale	12	0.87
WHO-5 Well-Being Index	5	0.82
Perceived Stress Scale	10	0.79
Green HRM Scale	8	0.85

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics of the key variables. The average score of the Environmental Wellbeing was 3.62 (SD = 0.74), which reflected a moderate agreement with the positive workplace environmental conditions. The average score of the Green HRM practices was 3.48 (SD = 0.68), indicating that the employees rated the sustainability integration in HR policies as moderate. The overall mean of the WHO-5 Well-Being Index was 14.9 (SD = 4.2), which corresponds to the mid-range of psychological well-being. The scores of Environmental Wellbeing were distributed in the middle range, as illustrated in Figure 1.

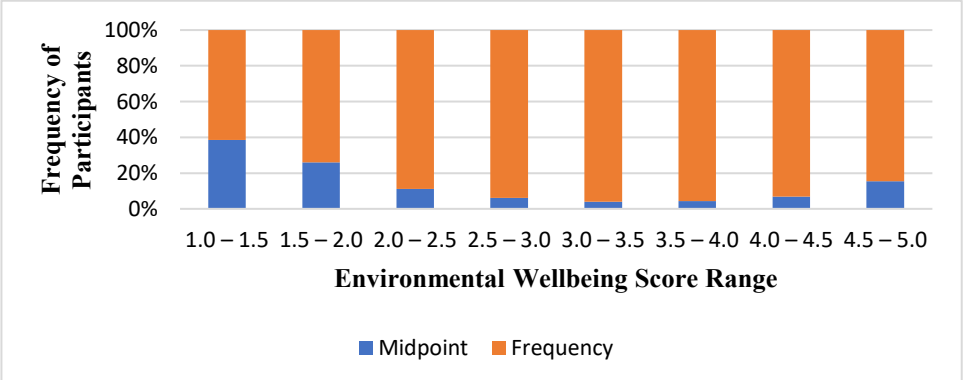

Figure 1. Distribution of Environmental Wellbeing scores on a 1–5 Likert scale

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Relationships among Variables

Pearson correlations indicated the presence of positive relationships between all the key constructs. Employee Mental Health (r = 0.42, p = 0.001) and Green HRM practices (r = 0.47, p = 0.001) had a positive relationship with Environmental Wellbeing. The Green HRM practices were also correlated with Employee Mental Health (r = 0.39, p <.001) (Table 4).

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3
1. Environmental Wellbeing		0.47***	0.42***
2. Green HRM Practices	0.47***		0.39***
3. Employee Mental Health	0.42***	0.39***	

$^{**}p < .001$.

In line with the correlational results, Environmental Wellbeing was positively associated with Employee Mental Health (r = 0.42, p < .001; see Figure 2).

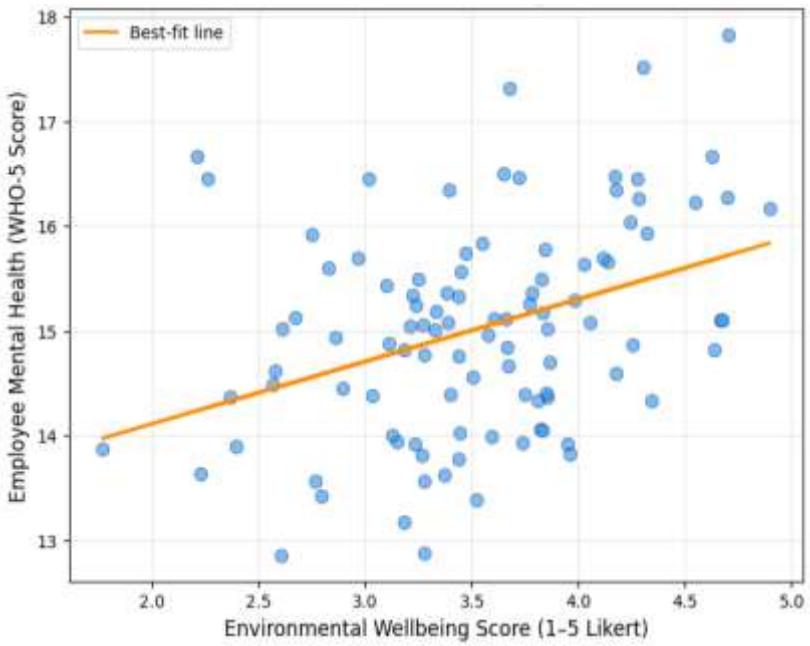

Figure 2. Scatterplot of Environmental Wellbeing and Employee Mental Health

Regression Analysis

The multiple regression analysis revealed that both the Environmental Wellbeing and the Green HRM practices had a significant prediction on Employee Mental Health. The two predictors combined accounted for 31 percent of the variance in the scores of wellbeing (R2 = 0.31, F(2, 309) = 69.1, p < 001). The stronger predictor was the Environmental Wellbeing (b = 0.35, p < .001), followed by Green HRM practices (b = 0.29, p < .001) (Table 5).

Table 5. Multiple Regression Predicting Employee Mental Health

Predictor Variable	Standardized β	t	p
Environmental Wellbeing	0.35	6.9	< .001
Green HRM Practices	0.29	5.6	< .001
Model Statistics			
R^2	0.31	-	-
F (2, 309)	69.1	-	< .001

Dependent variable = Employee Mental Health (WHO-5 score)

The standardized regression coefficients (b) of two predictors of Employee Mental Health are provided in Figure 3. Environmental Wellbeing (b = 0.35, p <.001) was found to be more predictive than Green HRM Practices (b = 0.29, p <.001). A combination of these predictors amounted to an explanation of 31 percent of the employee mental health (R2 = 0.31, F(2, 309) = 69.1, p < .001).

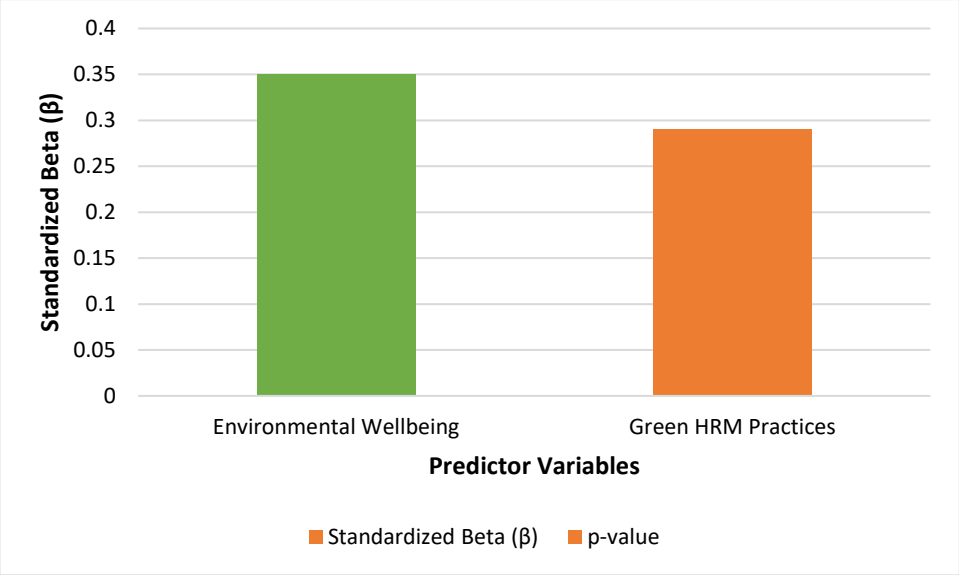

Figure 3. Standardized Beta Coefficients Predicting Employee Mental Health

Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of interview data generated three main themes:

1. **Policy Integration and Commitment** – Organizations with explicit HR-led sustainability programs reported stronger alignment between environmental initiatives and employee well-being.

"Sustainability is not just about energy efficiency; it's also about creating a healthy workplace where employees feel valued." (HR Director, Healthcare)

2. **Organizational Challenges** – Participants highlighted barriers such as budget constraints and limited senior leadership buy-in.

"It's easier to push for recycling bins than for redesigning office spaces for natural light." (HR Manager, Finance)

3. **Employee Engagement Strategies** – Initiatives like eco-volunteering and wellbeing workshops were cited as effective in improving both environmental and mental health outcomes.

"Our staff really connect with green volunteering projects, and this boosts morale alongside environmental awareness." (Sustainability Officer, Technology).

Table 6 presents representative quotes illustrating policy integration and commitment, organizational challenges, and employee engagement strategies.

Table 6. Themes and Representative Quotes

Theme	Representative Quote
Policy Integration and Commitment	"Sustainability is not just about energy efficiency; it's also about creating a healthy workplace where employees feel valued." – HR Director, Healthcare.
Organizational Challenges	"It's easier to push for recycling bins than for redesigning office spaces for natural light." – HR Manager, Finance.
Employee Engagement Strategies	"Our staff really connect with green volunteering projects, and this boosts morale alongside environmental awareness." – Sustainability Officer, Technology.

Themes were derived through thematic analysis of HR manager and sustainability officer interviews.

DISCUSSION

This was a mixed-methods research study that investigated the relationship between Green Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and conducive environmental conditions and employee mental health in modern organizations (Dyageti and Kiran, 2025). Combining both quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews, the study will give a holistic perspective on the joint contribution of sustainable HR policies and physical workplace conditions to stimulating psychological well-being (Watt, 2025). According to the findings, the environmental well-being is emphasized as the strategic organizational resource and a predeterminer of the mental health of employees (Dumitriu et al., 2025). Quantitative results found that the well-being of the environment and Green HRM practices also played a significant role in the prediction of employee mental

health, and the two factors explained 31 % of the variation in the well-being scores (R2 = 0.31). The environmental well-being became the more powerful predictor (b = 0.35, p <.001), which emphasizes the role of physical and sensory workplace factors like natural light, air quality, acoustic comfort, and biophilic design in facilitating psychological health (Bressane & de Castro, 2024). The findings are in line with the previous studies in environmental psychology and occupational health, which proved that exposure to natural factors and high-quality indoor settings alleviates stress and improves cognitive performance (Richards, 2022).

Mental health was also strongly and independently related to green HRM practices (b = 0.29, p < 001). This result builds on the current body of literature by demonstrating that HR practices that focus on sustainability, environmentally friendly hiring, green performance factors, and involvement of employees in green activities can have a direct positive impact on psychological well-being (Joshi and Bhrambhatt, 2024). This type of practice is likely to have material and symbolic impact: it enhances physical conditions and indicates that the organization is concerned about the well-being of its employees, thus increasing trust and engagement and a sense of purpose (Rathee, 2025). This is further elaborated by qualitative results. The Policy Integration and Commitment theme proves that the introduction of sustainability into the HR strategy sends an identical message interconnecting ecological stewardship and human wellbeing (Amjad et al., 2025). Organizational Challenges reveal structural constraints like budgets and a lack of leadership buy-in that may restrict the extent of green initiatives, even where the value of green initiatives has been widely acknowledged (Rathee, 2025). Employee Engagement Strategies emphasize the fact that participatory activities, such as eco-volunteering, wellness workshops, and joint green projects, increase morale and social cohesion, as well as environmental awareness (Cunningham, 2023). These stories support the results of the survey, showing how official policies and informal interaction form a self-reinforcing ecosystem of ecological and psychological health.

By theorizing environmental well-being and Green HRM practices as organizational resources that moderate job demands and facilitate engagement, the study contributes to the current state of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Sustainable HRM theory (Singh, 2025). The concept of framing physical environment and HR policy in one analytical framework does not separate ecological sustainability and psychological sustainability as two agendas (Issac, 2024). The integrated conceptual model demonstrates a route at the intersection of HRM practices and favorable environmental factors that will lead to increased employee mental health. Implications Practical implications are implied. The HR leaders must set environmental well-being as a central strategic issue, and incorporate it in the recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and rewards (Johnson et al., 2020). The HR and facilities management, in conjunction with the sustainability officers, should work together to ensure the physical workspace design is aligned with the HR policies. Empowering employees, e.g., green committees or eco-volunteering initiatives, enhances the psychological impact, as they create a sense of agency and purpose (Kowalski and Loretto, 2017). It is essential to enlist top management support to counter the budgetary and organizational challenges and achieve long-term investment in the environmental well-being programs.

The strengths of the study are in its mixed-methods design that allowed triangulating survey and interview data, and a fairly large and sector-diverse sample that increases the external validity. The reliability of quantitative findings is supported by high internal consistency in all the scales (Cronbach's alpha = 0.79-0.87). Nevertheless, constraints should be of concern. The cross-sectional nature does not allow drawing causal conclusions; longitudinal studies are required to define the relation in time and the possibility of the two-way influence between HRM practices, environmental wellbeing, and mental health. Although the survey included important variables, more specific results, like objective indoor air quality or a direct observation of policy implementation, can be used to enhance subsequent analysis. Furthermore, since the organizations involved already had sustainability programs, the findings might not apply to those firms that had underdeveloped green programs.

The effects of environmental well-being programs on the long-term effects should be investigated in the future to find out whether a positive effect on sustainable HR practices results in long-term mental-health benefits and better performance of the organization. The mediation of these relations by local norms and national policies could be explained through comparative studies in varied cultural and regulatory environments. Stronger causal evidence and applicable recommendations would be given by intervention studies like controlled trials of certain green HR policies or modifications in workplace design. The data show that the environmental well-being and Green HRM practices are complementary sources of the mental health of employees. Combining the best possible physical workspaces with new HR policies enables organizations to develop work environments that are environmentally friendly and safe in terms of psychology. These data point to the fact that in the age of increasing mental-health issues and pressing ecological concerns, environmental stewardship and employee welfare should be regarded as two inseparable components of the organizational strategy.

CONCLUSION

The work has a special and substantive value since it combines both environmental sustainability and employee mental health in one empirically tested framework. It shows that the quality of the environment at the workplace and the Green HRM practices are not only parallel efforts, but complementary resources that directly contribute to psychological well-being. Through the application of the Job Demands-Resources model in the framework of the Sustainable HRM theory, the study demonstrates how the presence of favorable physical environments, including natural lighting, air quality, and acoustic comfort, along with environmentally conscious HR policies, explains a large percentage of differences in employee mental health. The sample size (sector-diverse), intensive quantitative and qualitative research design, offers the empirical material that is quite rare to find, namely, sustainable HR strategies are able to enhance both ecological stewardship and workforce resilience. Notably, the conceptual model is integrated, thus providing managers and policymakers with a distinct channel through which they can instill environmental priorities in the main HR operations. By re-conceptualizing environmental well-being as a strategic driver and not a peripheral program, this paper pits sustainable HRM as critical to the progress of organizational performance and employee thriving amidst the increasing ecological and psychological pressures.

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Appendix (Questionnaire)

1. Environmental Wellbeing

Response options for each item:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Example Item	Purpose
"My workspace receives sufficient natural light."	Assess biophilic/lighting factors
"The air quality in my work area is good throughout the day."	Ventilation/air quality
"Noise levels in my work environment are comfortable for focused work."	Acoustic comfort
"My organization actively maintains clean, healthy indoor spaces."	Hygiene/maintenance
"I have access to green or natural elements (plants, outdoor views) in or near my workspace."	Contact with nature

2. Employee Mental Health (Perceived Wellbeing)

These complement a validated scale like the WHO-5 but can provide extra workplace context.

Response options:

1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Often 5 = Always

Example Item	Purpose
"I feel calm and relaxed during my workday."	Stress perception
"I can concentrate on tasks without feeling overwhelmed."	Cognitive strain
"I have enough energy to complete my work effectively."	Fatigue/engagement
"My workplace supports my mental wellbeing."	Organizational support

3. Green HRM Practices

Response options:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Example Item	Purpose
"My organization includes environmental sustainability in employee training programs."	Training emphasis
"Environmental performance is considered in employee appraisals."	Performance management
"Recruitment and selection favor candidates with sustainability awareness."	Hiring practices
"The company encourages staff participation in eco-friendly initiatives (e.g., recycling drives, energy saving)."	Employee engagement
"Management communicates clear environmental goals and policies."	Policy communication