

Human Resource Management and Sustainable Tourism Development in Bangladesh: A Study on Sylhet

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ABSTRACT- Purpose: The aims of this study are: (i) to illustrate the existing characteristics of human resource management in the tourism industry of Bangladesh; (ii) to identify the difficulties encountered by employees and employers in managing human resources; (iii) to investigate the possible contribution of human resource management in attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through sustainable tourism development in Bangladesh; and (iv) to establish policies and suggestions for stakeholders. **Methodology:** The research utilizes a qualitative methodology, collecting data via Key Informant Interviews (KII) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with important tourist stakeholders. Five key informant interviews with specialists in tourist management, human resources, local governance, industry analysis, and sustainable development informed the construction of an open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire was then employed for twenty additional in-depth interviews with leaders in tourism, human resources professionals, government officials, and representatives from non-governmental organizations. The data were thematically evaluated and cross-verified using triangulation to assure reliability. **Findings:** The diverse nature of the workforce, poor salary, Recruitment Difficulties, Training and Development, Skill Gaps, Employee Retention, Adapting HR Practices, Global Trends, Low wages and skill shortages, Work hours and shift patterns, Limited career promotion options, high levels of employee turnover, Adapting to the principles of sustainable development, absence of strategic HR programs, reluctance of concerned authorities and lack of awareness about sustainable practices among stakeholders. Potential improvements to the current scenario and leveraging effective human resource management practices as tools for achieving SDGs through sustainable tourism have also been identified. **Practical Implications:** The results of this research may be used in the development of further policies. To mitigate the difficulties, one might implement measures to increase the organizational capacity in human resources and foster effective cooperation among tourist stakeholders. Utilizing evidence-based decision-making and implementing adaptable management techniques will greatly benefit the overall management of human resources and the sustainable growth of tourism in Bangladesh. **Limitations:** This research relies on qualitative data obtained from a small sample of participants. Expanding the sample size and including quantitative data would provide a more comprehensive perspective. In addition, examining the conditions in other industries in Bangladesh might reveal several aspects of human resource management and the promotion of sustainable tourism.

Keywords: SDGs, Human Resource Management, Sustainable Tourism, Bangladesh.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human Resources Management (HRM) is crucial in promoting sustainable tourism development by integrating workforce strategies with environmental, economic, and social sustainability objectives. Integrating HRM into sustainable tourism is crucial for cultivating a workforce that is not just competent and productive but also ecologically aware and socially accountable. HRM in sustainable tourism prioritizes the cultivation of human capital via ongoing training and education, resulting in improved skills and awareness among

workers in sustainable activities. Implementing eco-friendly operations and developing a culture of sustainability inside tourist firms is essential for this strategy. Training programs that prioritize sustainability may result in enhanced service quality and increased customer happiness, both of which are crucial for the enduring prosperity of tourist enterprises. In addition, HRM strategies in sustainable tourism include the process of hiring and retaining workers who are dedicated to upholding sustainability principles. This involves establishing career positions that expressly focus on addressing sustainability concerns and possibilities in the tourist industry.

To effectively manage resources, eliminate waste, and limit their environmental impact, tourist firms should cultivate a staff that is in line with sustainability goals. Furthermore, HRM plays a role in fostering sustainable tourism via the promotion of worker diversity and inclusion. A heterogeneous workforce may contribute a multitude of viewpoints and inventive resolutions to sustainability obstacles, augmenting the flexibility and durability of tourist enterprises in a swiftly evolving milieu. This variety also exemplifies the worldwide

scope of tourism, whereby comprehending and accommodating varied client requirements is vital.

Nevertheless, the fusion of HRM and sustainable tourism is not exempt from difficulties. Short-term company goals and long-term sustainability objectives may not always coincide, necessitating strategic interventions in human resource management to properly balance these priorities. Moreover, the effectiveness of HRM in advancing sustainable tourism relies on the dedication of senior executives and the provision of resources to bolster sustainability efforts. Ultimately, HRM plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism development *via* the cultivation of a proficient, dedicated, and inclusive workforce that contributes to the preservation of the environment, the advancement of the economy, and the promotion of social well-being. By integrating HRM practices with sustainability objectives, tourist enterprises may improve their competitive advantage and have a beneficial impact on the communities and surroundings in which they operate.

Efficient human resource management may amplify employee involvement and dedication to sustainable practices, which is vital for the enduring triumph of tourist efforts. For example, Mushtaq and Akhtar (2024) emphasize the importance of HRM in advancing sustainable tourism. They argue that by matching employee goals with corporate sustainability objectives, HRM ensures that workers are motivated and prepared to execute sustainable practices. Human Resource Management (HRM) is essential for attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by using sustainable development strategies, especially in a developing nation such as Bangladesh. Aligning HRM strategies with sustainable development efforts may have a substantial impact on the economic, social, and environmental aspects of the SDGs.

Firstly, HRM may improve the ability of a firm to adopt sustainable practices by promoting a culture of sustainability among employees. This entails implementing training and development initiatives that provide staff with the essential expertise and understanding to actively participate in sustainable practices. For example, HRM may enhance consciousness and comprehension of sustainability concerns, motivating workers to embrace environmentally friendly practices in their day-to-day activities. Furthermore, HRM has the capacity to promote the synchronization of corporate objectives with the SDGs *via* the incorporation of sustainability principles into performance management systems. This involves establishing sustainability-related goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) that inspire workers to contribute to the organization's sustainability objectives.

Through this approach, HRM guarantees that sustainability is integrated as a fundamental element of the corporate strategy, therefore facilitating advancements towards the SDGs. Within the context of Bangladesh, HRM can effectively tackle unique difficulties such as the reduction of poverty, promotion of gender equality, and improvement of working conditions, all of which are essential elements of the SDGs. For instance, implementing HRM strategies that support equitable labor practices and provide equal opportunities may effectively

mitigate disparities and enhance the well-being of employees, thereby fostering social sustainability. In addition, HRM may promote environmental sustainability by adopting green HRM practices, including the reduction of resource consumption and waste, the promotion of recycling, and the encouragement of sustainable commuting choices. Implementing these practices not only decreases the negative impact that enterprises have on the environment, but also improves their standing and competitiveness in the global market. Nevertheless, the effective amalgamation of HRM and sustainable development in Bangladesh necessitates surmounting obstacles such as few resources, insufficient knowledge, and reluctance to embrace change. Hence, it is essential for policymakers and business leaders to cooperate in establishing favorable structures and motivations that promote the adoption of sustainable HRM practices by firms. Ultimately, HRM can play a crucial role in helping Bangladesh make substantial progress towards attaining the SDGs. This may be accomplished by integrating sustainability into the corporate culture, aligning HRM practices with sustainable development objectives, and tackling socio-economic issues. This comprehensive strategy not only facilitates the attainment of the SDGs but also strengthens the organization's ability to withstand challenges and achieve long-term success.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective implementation of human resource management strategies in the tourist industry is essential for improving organizational performance and fostering employee happiness. Internationally, several human resource management approaches are widely used, such as recruiting and selection, training and development, performance management, and employee engagement initiatives. These techniques are designed to tackle the specific difficulties faced by the tourist sector, such as frequent staff turnover and the need for a highly qualified workforce capable of providing great customer service (S. Kumar et al., 2024). Training and development are prioritized in the worldwide environment to guarantee that personnel have the requisite skills and expertise to fulfill the ever-changing needs of the tourist industry. In Bangladesh, HRM practices in the tourist industry demonstrate a combination of worldwide patterns and adjustments made to suit the local context. The recruitment and selection procedures are customized to attract people who possess the appropriate skill sets and cultural compatibility for the sector. Training programs are becoming more focused on enhancing both technical and soft skills, acknowledging the need to provide exceptional customer service in the tourist industry (Milon et al., 2022). In Bangladesh, performance management often includes the implementation of frequent feedback and assessment systems, which aim to inspire staff and enhance service delivery (Azad et al., 2022). Nevertheless, there are still obstacles to overcome, such as insufficient resources for extensive training programs and the need for more strategic human resource management strategies to tackle the issue of high employee turnover rates. The use of technology in HRM procedures is also gaining momentum, with the utilization of digital technologies to simplify recruiting and improve employee engagement (Azad et al., 2022b). HR managers and

workers in the tourist business face distinct problems, mainly because of the company's ever-changing nature, seasonal fluctuations, and the varied requirements of its workforce. A significant obstacle encountered by HR managers in the tourism sector is the substantial rate of employee attrition, often caused by the industry's seasonal characteristics and the predominance of temporary employment agreements. This volatility might result in a deficiency in staff dedication and diminished service quality (Kakaroukas et al., 2024). Furthermore, HR managers have challenges in maintaining a proficient staff since the business heavily depends on part-time and seasonal employees, making training and development endeavors more complex (Turan, 2024). Another notable obstacle is the effective handling of cultural diversity among employees. The tourist business often hires personnel from many cultural backgrounds, which may result in communication obstacles and disputes if not well addressed (Hou, 2023). Human resources managers must employ efficient diversity management techniques to cultivate an inclusive work environment and bolster team cohesiveness (Khassawneh & Hashmi, 2023). To tackle these problems, HR managers must prioritize work-life balance efforts and employee support programs (Tanveer et al., 2023). To tackle these issues, prior research has proposed several ways. Implementing comprehensive training programs may enhance employee abilities and decrease turnover by boosting work satisfaction and providing career growth opportunities (Aguilar et al., 2022). In addition, implementing adaptable work schedules and providing attractive remuneration packages may effectively recruit and retain skilled individuals, even within a sector that has significant fluctuations in demand throughout the year (Kendricks, 2024). Efficient strategies for managing diversity, including training in cultural sensitivity and implementing inclusive policies, have been suggested as effective ways to effectively handle a workforce consisting of individuals from different cultures. Moreover, by implementing stress management programs and cultivating a work environment that is supportive, organizations may effectively reduce the negative impact of job stress and enhance employee job satisfaction. This method not only advantages workers but also improves client experiences, as contented staff are more inclined to provide superior service. According to the literature, Sylhet has significant potential but encounters many obstacles that impede its progress in comparison to other locations. A major obstacle in the tourist industry of Sylhet is the insufficient infrastructure and amenities, a problem that is widespread in several parts of Bangladesh but is more prominent in Sylhet owing to its geographical and logistical limitations (Saad et al., 2024). This encompasses inadequate transportation infrastructure and lodging amenities, which hinder the region's capacity to attract and cater to visitors efficiently. Sylhet has distinct HRM concerns that are quite exceptional in comparison to other areas. The study emphasizes a deficiency of proficient workforce in the tourist industry, which has an impact on the standard of service and the contentment of customers (A. Akter & Raseduzzaman, 2024d). The situation is worsened by the absence of specialized training programs designed for the specific requirements of the tourist sector in Sylhet, resulting in a deficiency in the skills and competencies of the workers. Furthermore, the research indicates that there is a need for

additional strategic human resource management strategies to improve employee engagement and retention in the tourist industry in Sylhet. This encompasses the implementation of enhanced recruiting methods, provision of competitive salary, and creation of avenues for professional progression, which are less common in Sylhet compared to more developed areas like Bangladesh Dhaka or Chittagong. Sylhet's tourist business is now in the developmental stage as compared to other places. However, there is enough potential for expansion provided the existing issues are effectively handled. Stakeholders highlight the significance of Human Resource Management in supporting sustainable tourism via the improvement of employee skills and the cultivation of a sustainability-oriented culture inside enterprises. This includes educational programs that specifically target sustainable behaviors and the development of skills that are in line with environmental objectives. Stakeholders see HRM to efficiently utilize resources and improve the economic viability of tourist businesses, which is known as economic sustainability. Implementing efficient human resource management HRM strategies may result in heightened levels of productivity and profitability, which are crucial for maintaining the viability of tourist enterprises over an extended period. The emphasis on economics is often counterbalanced by the need to preserve environmental sustainability and provide social fairness (Rakitovac & Urošević, 2023). Nevertheless, there are still obstacles to overcome to harmonize HRM practices with sustainable tourism objectives. Several parties have raised concerns over the possibility of conflict arising between short-term economic ambitions and long-term environmental aspirations. Ultimately, the research indicates that effectively merging HRM and sustainable tourism requires cooperation amongst many stakeholders, such as government agencies, tourist operators, and local communities. This cooperative approach may enable the exchange of exemplary methods and the formulation of strategies that promote sustainable tourism endeavors (Colasante et al., 2024). To summarize, the viewpoints of stakeholders on HRM and sustainable tourism development emphasize the need for inclusive policies that include economic, social, and environmental goals.

3. RESEARCH GAPS

This study aims to address a significant research gap in the subject of human resource management and sustainable tourism development, particularly in the unique setting of Sylhet, Bangladesh. While there is a substantial amount of literature on HRM and sustainable tourism as separate fields, there is a distinct lack of research that explicitly links these two topics, particularly in impoverished nations like Bangladesh. This study aims to investigate how human resource management (HRM) practices might directly help address the knowledge gap by assessing the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals via sustainable tourism operations. Moreover, the unique socio-cultural and economic conditions of Sylhet have been overlooked in previous studies, emphasizing the need for a study that concentrates on analyzing the area specifically, which is the objective of this study. Moreover, there is a significant lack of understanding about the role of HRM in facilitating

stakeholder collaboration and engagement in sustainability projects within the tourism sector.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a qualitative research methodology to explore the correlation between human resource management and the sustainable development of tourism in Sylhet, Bangladesh. A qualitative method enables an investigation into the experiences, perspectives, and insights of various stakeholders engaged in the tourist sector.

4.1. Data Collection

The major data source included twenty stakeholders who were then chosen for in-depth, semi-structured interviews done *via*

phone or video conversations due to their geographic dispersion. The interviews adhered to a structured procedure that included open-ended questions to encourage honest talks about important human resources (HR) concerns, difficulties, sustainable tourism, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), priorities, and suggested solutions. Conversations might naturally develop depending on the distinct experiences and areas of focus of the participants. The interviews had a duration of roughly 25-40 minutes and were recorded with consent for subsequent transcription and analysis. This facilitated more in-depth investigation of significant subjects as they arose, while decreasing the need for taking notes.

Interview No.	Interview Type	Stakeholder Type	Designation of Respondent	Years of Experience	Sector/Field	Interview Duration
1	KII	Tourist Management	Tourist Management Expert	15 years	Tourism	25-40 minutes
2	KII	Human Resources	Human Resources Specialist	12 years	HR	25-40 minutes
3	KII	Local Government	Local Government Official	9 years	Government	25-40 minutes
4	KII	Industry Analyst	Industry Analyst	20 years	Analysis	25-40 minutes
5	KII	Sustainable Development	Sustainable Development Specialist	18 years	Sustainable Development	25-40 minutes
6	IDI	Tourist Sector	Tourism Sector Leader	5 years	Tourism	25-40 minutes
7	IDI	Human Resources Expert	Human Resources Manager	7 years	HR	25-40 minutes
8	IDI	Government Official	Government Policy Maker	6 years	Government	25-40 minutes
9	IDI	NGO Representative	NGO Program Director	8 years	NGO	25-40 minutes
10	IDI	Tourist Management	Tourism Development Consultant	5 years	Tourism	25-40 minutes
11	IDI	Local Business Owner	Community Engagement Coordinator	7 years	Business	25-40 minutes
12	IDI	Community Leader	Environmental Sustainability Advocate	9 years	Community Development	25-40 minutes
13	IDI	Tourism Analyst	Cultural Heritage Expert	10 years	Analysis	25-40 minutes
14	IDI	Environmental Expert	Local Business Owner	4 years	Environment	25-40 minutes
15	IDI	Tourism Consultant	Economic Development Officer	6 years	Consulting	25-40 minutes
16	IDI	Local NGO Worker	Hospitality Manager	12 years	NGO	25-40 minutes
17	IDI	HR Specialist	Tourism Marketing Specialist	11 years	HR	25-40 minutes
18	IDI	Academic Researcher	Local Government Representative	5 years	Academia	25-40 minutes
19	IDI	Local Entrepreneur	Civic Engagement Facilitator	6 years	Business	25-40 minutes

20	IDI	Policy Maker	Sustainable Tourism Researcher	7 years	Policy	25-40 minutes
21	IDI	Cultural Heritage Expert	Visitor Experience Coordinator	4 years	Heritage	25-40 minutes
22	IDI	Sustainability Advocate	Public Relations Officer	5 years	Advocacy	25-40 minutes
23	IDI	Tour Operator	Travel Industry Analyst	8 years	Tourism	25-40 minutes
24	IDI	Local Community Member	Community Development Officer	9 years	Community	25-40 minutes
25	IDI	Environmental Analyst	Tourist Attraction Manager	5 years	Environment	25-40 minutes

4.2. Data Analysis

Conducting data assessment utilizing Braun & Clarke's (2006) technique, which focuses on inductive theme analysis. The interview transcripts were thoroughly examined to discover codes that captured features important to the study topic. The codes were compared, checked for redundancy, and organized into sensible categories. Furthermore, ensuring participant anonymity and using aggregated reporting of data effectively minimized answer bias and facilitated the expression of frank ideas. The final themes should provide a reliable qualitative representation of the main subject of this research - the urgent HRM and Sustainable Tourism challenges faced by the tourist industry in Sylhet that hinder its expansion.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1. Diverse Nature of the Workforce

The tourist business in Sylhet, the variety encompasses a range of races, skill levels, and educational backgrounds, spanning from highly proficient experts to those with less experience. The presence of diverse personnel poses problems for HRM in ensuring that suitable and efficient development opportunities are provided to all individuals.

We are an HR professional that is dedicated to addressing gender discrepancies in the workplace. Our main goal is to advocate for equal opportunities and support for both men and women, to create design a work environment working condition that is inclusive and fair for everyone (Interview NO 01, 04).

HR expert we acknowledged the difficulty of creating training programs that accommodate a diverse range of skill levels, ranging from experienced professionals to individuals with limited formal education. They also emphasized the importance of recognizing and incorporating the cultural and ethnic diversity within the workforce, highlighting the necessity for HR practices that honor and integrate various cultural perspectives (Interview NO 02, 03).

Some research implies that the varied character of the workforce in tourism poses obstacles such as inadequate pay, working conditions, discrimination, and communication concerns, (Aynalem et al., 2016; Malik et al., 2017; Joplin & Daus, 1997) while other studies stress the necessity for diversity to increase service quality and manage worldwide economic success (Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017; Lockett et al., 2023). The

HRM department should provide focused training initiatives that address different proficiency levels and cultural diversities, promoting inclusiveness and improving the overall quality of service. In addition, the promotion of diversity and inclusion activities may enhance employee engagement and retention.

5.2. Poor Salary and Low Wages

The issue of low salaries in Sylhet's tourist sector presents a substantial obstacle for human resource management and the promotion of sustainable eco-tourism. Insufficient remuneration results in diminished employee motivation, elevated staff turnover, and challenges in maintaining proficient personnel, all of which compromise the sector's capacity to provide exemplary service and promote sustainable practices.

We understand that insufficient remuneration results in diminished employee morale and increased staff turnover, hence posing difficulties in retaining highly trained personnel. The funding limitation also hampers workers' capacity to engage in further training and development, which is crucial for maintaining high-quality service and promoting sustainable tourism practices (Interview NO 05 & 08).

These studies indicate that inadequate salaries and low wages in the tourist industry result in unstable employment, limited contributions to sustainable development, and heightened risks of inequality and job insecurity. These findings emphasize the need for implementing sustainable human resource management strategies (Kronenberg & Fuchs, 2021; Baum, 2018b). By establishing equitable remuneration rules and conducting periodic wage evaluations, organizations may enhance employee contentment and retention, therefore cultivating a driven staff that upholds sustainable tourism practices.

5.3. Training Development and Skill Gaps

A significant number of workers fail to acquire the requisite skills to fulfill industry benchmarks, resulting in deficiencies in competence that may undermine the quality of service and impede the expansion of the sector. The lack of necessary skills hinders the tourist sector from completely adopting sustainable practices, since staff may not possess the required knowledge and abilities to effectively execute or promote these projects.

The absence of well-organized training programs results in a situation where many personnel are not well prepared, leading

to substantial deficiencies in skills that impede the expansion of the sector. To ensure that the staff is adequately skilled to provide high-quality service and support the growth of sustainable tourism, it is imperative that we take action to rectify these shortcomings. Their observations highlight the pressing need for focused training programs to address these disparities and improve the general proficiency of the industry (Interview NO 06, 07).

These findings indicate that it is essential to focus on training and developing sustainability, management, and communication skills to minimize skill gaps and promote innovation in HRM and sustainable eco-friendly tourism (Booyens et al., 2020; Slocum et al., 2019b). Creating extensive training programs and activities to improve staff skills and service quality, specifically designed to meet the demands of the sector, will contribute to sustainable tourist development.

5.4. Limited Career Promotion Options

The absence of well-defined avenues for professional progression results in diminished employee drive and work contentment, hence exacerbating turnover rates as employees actively pursue superior prospects elsewhere. This lack of progress not only hinders the ability to retain talented people, but also inhibits long-term dedication to the sector.

The absence of possibilities for career progression results in diminished employee motivation and elevated turnover rates, as workers often go in pursuit of more promising prospects. To ensure the industry's long-term prospects of the industry's success and promote sustainable tourism practices, it is imperative that we tackle this problem to both retain competent individuals and cultivate a dedicated staff (Interview NO 09 & 11).

These studies indicate that restricted opportunities for career advancement have a negative effect on Human Resource Management by restricting the progression of careers. This emphasizes the need of developing sustainable HRM models in tourist policy and planning (De Vos & Van Der Heijden, 2017; Anlesinya & Susomrith, 2022). It is important to establish well-defined career paths and provide professional development opportunities. This will help to increase employee motivation and retention, leading to the formation of a dedicated and highly competent workforce that can contribute to the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry.

5.5. Work Hours and Shift Patterns

The rigorous and unpredictable work patterns often seen in the tourist industry result in employee exhaustion and depletion, which may diminish productivity and job contentment. The demanding work circumstances are a contributing factor to increased employee turnover rates, posing a challenge for HR to maintain a stable and skilled staff.

The challenging and unpredictable work schedules lead to employee exhaustion and frequent staff turnover, making it challenging to keep a consistent workforce. To enhance work satisfaction and retention, which are vital for fostering the

industry's sustainable growth, it is imperative that we tackle these concerns (Interview No 10, 12).

These studies indicate that implementing flexible work hours and shift patterns may enhance both job satisfaction and organizational performance, which are essential for maintaining sustainable human resource management in the tourist industry. Sustainable human resource management (HRM) in the tourist industry. It entails acknowledging the interplay between the economic context, organizational procedures, and their impact on the surrounding environment (Baum & Mooney, 2021; Aust et al., 2020; Haeruddin et al., 2023). Implementing flexible scheduling and maintaining equitable work-life balance helps mitigate burnout, promote job satisfaction, and bolster employee retention, so fostering a sustainable workforce.

5.6. Reluctance of Authorities

This hesitancy often becomes apparent via a dearth of backing for essential legislative alterations, inadequate allocation of resources for training programs, and postponed execution of sustainable endeavors. The lack of active involvement from government hinders HR professionals and industry players in their efforts to achieve significant progress, hence limiting the potential for sustainable tourist growth in the area.

The absence of prompt assistance and dedication from authorities impedes the execution of essential policies and sustainable practices. To ensure successful and sustainable development of the HRM and sustainable tourism sectors, it is imperative that we overcome any hesitancy or resistance (Interview NO 13, 16).

These studies indicate that the hesitancy of authorities has a detrimental influence on Human Resource Management and sustainable tourism by disregarding the emphasis on the workforce, neglecting Human Resource Development policies, inadequately regulating, pushing incompatible growth, and failing to provide a conducive atmosphere for Human Resource Development (Bramwell & Lane, 2009; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2017). Facilitating enhanced cooperation between governmental entities and industry players may result in more proactive execution of policies and allocation of funds for sustainability projects.

5.7. Lack of Awareness about Sustainable Practices

A significant number of workers, along with some employers, lack comprehensive knowledge on the significance and execution of sustainable practices. The lack of understanding in this area results in lost chances to incorporate sustainability into everyday company operations, hence limiting the industry's total impact on sustainable development objectives.

Both workers and some employers lack comprehensive knowledge on sustainable procedures, hence limiting the industry's capacity to successfully incorporate these practices. The industry's inability to recognize and understand this issue hinders its ability to adopt ecologically sustainable and socially responsible practices. To improve training efforts and make sustainable tourism an integral part of the industry's operations,

it is imperative that we tackle this lack of understanding (Interview No 14, 15).

These studies emphasize the need of sustainable HRM models, emerging HR competences, and the pivotal role of HR departments in executing sustainability principles. The commitment of MSME enterprises to sustainability is driven by the framework of awareness, action, comprehensiveness, and excellence, which is influenced by employee interactions and HRM practices (Maheshwari et al., 2020; Dhiman & Dahiya, 2015; Bombiak & Marciniuk-Kluska, 2018). By establishing focused education and awareness initiatives for workers and employers, the adoption of environmentally friendly practices may be promoted, hence improving sustainability across the business.

5.8. Adapting HR Practices to Global Trends

With the changing global HR landscape, characterized by the growing emphasis on digitization, remote work, and diversity and inclusion, several local tourist enterprises find it challenging to stay up. The deficiency of adaptability hampers their capacity to allure and keep skilled individuals, particularly younger, technologically proficient personnel who anticipate contemporary human resources methodologies.

Numerous local enterprises have difficulties in adopting contemporary HR practices such as digitalization and diversity initiatives, hence constraining their capacity to recruit and retain skilled individuals. To maintain competitiveness and adhere to international standards, it is imperative that we overcome this gap, therefore promoting development and sustainability in the sector (Interview No 17 & 19).

These studies indicate that aligning HR practices with global trends has a good effect on HRM and sustainable tourism development. This is achieved by strengthening environmental performance, addressing sustainable development objectives, and improving company performance at both the organizational and individual levels (Aust et al., 2020b; Madera et al., 2017; Yusoff et al., 2018). By using contemporary HR technology and actively promoting diversity and inclusion programs, organizations may improve their competitiveness and ensure that their staff meets worldwide standards.

5.9. Improvements and leveraging HRM for SDGs

Presently, the sector has challenges in harmonizing its human resources practices with the overarching goals of sustainable development, which include advancing fair employment, diminishing disparities, and cultivating inclusive economic expansion. This lack of alignment hinders the industry's ability to make a significant contribution to substantial the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The existing HR strategies are inadequate in promoting the sector's role in sustainable development. To fully harness the potential of tourism in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is imperative that we promptly improve and use Human Resource Management (HRM). This will enable the sector to have a significant and beneficial influence on a global scale (Interview No 18, 20).

These findings indicate that using HRM for SDGs may promote advancements in sustainable HRM and corporate sustainability. However, a more comprehensive comprehension of knowledge management is necessary beneficial for the development of sustainable tourism (Hall, 2019; Smerchuar & Madhyamapurush, 2020; Madero-Gómez et al., 2023). By integrating human resources strategy with sustainability objectives and making investments in ongoing training on sustainable practices, the industry may significantly enhance its contribution to sustainable development.

5.10. Study Contribution

This study makes a significant contribution by thoroughly analyzing the human resource management practices operations in the tourism sector of Sylhet, Bangladesh. It also explores how these practices can be effectively used to accomplish Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the development of sustainable tourism. The research offers useful insights into the existing workforce concerns that impede the development and sustainability of the tourist sector, including low pay, restricted career advancement opportunities, skill shortages, and the heterogeneous composition of the workforce. The study establishes a comprehensive structure that connects Human Resource Management with sustainable tourism. It provides actionable suggestions for policymakers, industry leaders, and tourist organizations to enhance their HR practices. This research is significant because it focuses on the urgent need to link human resource management with larger sustainability goals, improve employee happiness, and encourage community involvement.

5.11. Limitations

The study's shortcomings mostly arise from its geographical scope, focusing only on Sylhet. Consequently, the generalizability of the results to other parts of Bangladesh or nations with diverse tourist dynamics may be restricted. Moreover, the study's dependence on qualitative data might add subjectivity, which could possibly impact the strength of the results made. The dynamic nature of both HRM practices and sustainable tourism implies that the results may lose relevance over time due to the emergence of new trends patterns and difficulties that have emerged. Finally, the study's breadth may not comprehensively include the intricacies of all parties engaged in tourism, especially in addressing the varied and possibly contradictory interests of local communities, government entities, and tourist enterprises.

5.12. Future Scope

The future scope of this study is extending the research to more places in Bangladesh or perhaps globally, to assess and contrast the efficacy of human resource management approaches in diverse tourism settings. Additional study might include quantitative methodologies to supplement the qualitative observations, resulting in a more thorough comprehension of the correlation between HRM and sustainable tourism development. Furthermore, with the ongoing development of the tourist sector, there is an opportunity to conduct longitudinal studies that may monitor changes over time and evaluate the lasting effects of HRM strategies in reaching Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs). Future research might investigate the impact of developing technology and digital tools on improving HRM practices in the tourist industry. Additionally, it could examine the possibility for more inclusive and participatory methods that incorporate a wider variety of stakeholders, including underprivileged populations.

6. CONCLUSION

This research highlights the significance of human resource management in advancing sustainable tourism in Sylhet, Bangladesh, despite obstacles such as inadequate pay, skill deficiencies, and insufficient stakeholder understanding of sustainability methods. Efficient HR management facilitates the attainment of SDGs by improving recruiting, training, and strategic alignment with sustainability objectives. Future initiatives should prioritize the enhancement of HR practices and stakeholder participation, while expanded research might enrich understanding and facilitate complete policy formulation.

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