



Psychological Ownership, Sustainable Work Environment, and Green HR Practices on Employee Engagement: Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment

¹Hajra Khan, ²Arroj Imtiaz & ³Riaz Hussain Shah

¹Independent Researcher

²Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha

³Director Arts Council Sahiwal

ABSTRACT

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In recent years, organizations in Pakistan have increasingly emphasized sustainability practices; however, effectively engaging employees remains a persistent challenge. In particular, insufficient attention to employees' psychological attachment to the organization often limits the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the impact of psychological ownership, sustainable work environment, and green HR practices on employee engagement, with the mediating role of organizational commitment. This study adopts a quantitative research design, collecting data through structured questionnaires from employees working across various sectors in Pakistan. Established measurement scales were employed, and the data were analyzed using structural equation modeling to test the proposed relationships. The findings reveal that psychological ownership, sustainable work environment, and green HR practices all have a significant positive effect on employee engagement. Furthermore, organizational commitment partially mediates these relationships, indicating that employees who feel a stronger sense of ownership and experience supportive sustainability practices are more likely to develop emotional attachment, which in turn enhances their engagement.

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Corresponding Author's Email: Hajrakhan90@yahoo.com

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1.0 Introduction

The quest to achieve sustainability has become a strategic consideration in the modern organizational context, especially in the developing economies like Pakistan where concerns on the environment, regulatory pressures, and demands of stakeholders have increasingly become pronounced. Firms are increasingly implementing greener practices, not just to meet the external requirements but also to boost competitiveness in the long term and corporate image (Tran & Le, 2025). Although these have been done, the biggest hurdle has been to convert sustainability initiatives into meaningful employee engagement which is a major determinant of organizational effectiveness and performance. Employee engagement is the level of cognitive, emotional and behavioural involvement that an individual has in his work, and even in the present day when organisations have instituted progressive policies, many organisations find it difficult to develop employee engagement. This detachment implies that structural or policy level-interventions might not be effective without involvement in the underlying psychological processes which influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees. To this end, an increasing appreciation of the fact that the perceptions, emotional attachment, as well as sense of belonging of employees are critical in shaping the way organizational practices are internalized and implemented in the workplace is being felt (Allen et al., 2024).

Based on this assumption, recent research has highlighted the significance of combining sustainability-driven practices and human-focused practices to establish more in-depth engagement. Organizational conditions that facilitate ecological responsibility, employee well-being and efficiency of resources over the long-term are known as sustainable work environment whereas green human resource management (HRM) refers to HR practices that facilitate pro-environmental behaviour of employees, e.g. green recruitment, green training and green performance management. These practices may be an indication of the organization commitment towards sustainability, but the effectiveness of the practices will be greatly determined by the way the employees understand and react to them (Silva, Moreira, & Mota, 2023). Simultaneously, the notion of psychological ownership, which can be understood as a sense of possessiveness and psychological attachment people experience to their organization, has become the subject on the list of the most significant contributors of positive work-related results. When employees feel that they own something, they tend to develop a stronger personal objective with organizational goals, thus being more responsible, committed, and engaged. Nevertheless, little is known about how these sustainability practices interact with psychological factors, especially in areas where the organizational cultures and institutional arrangements vary largely as compared to those in the developed economies (Dzimińska, Fijałkowska, & Sułkowski, 2020).

Conceptually speaking, employee engagement is contextually and psychologically mediated by a set of antecedents, with one such antecedent being organizational commitment. Organizational commitment describes the feeling of attachment, identification and involvement that employees feel with their organization and it is an important process in which organizational practices are converted to behavioral results. With reference to the social exchange theory, it is possible to argue that when organizations invest in sustainability and provide conducive working

conditions, employees will see these as organizational support and in return they will provide the same support through commitment and engagement (Asemota, 2024). On the same note, psychological ownership can be explained in the light of self-determination and identity theories whereby the individual develops a sense of belongingness and responsibility towards things that they feel are theirs. This feeling of ownership creates intrinsic motivation and emotional attachment of the employees to the organization, thus improving their engagement levels. Therefore, the role of organizational commitment as an intervening variable between psychological ownership, sustainable work environment, and green HRM practices and employee engagement allows a more in-depth understanding of the interaction of these factors within the organizational context (Abdou et al., 2023).

Even though there is an increasing amount of literature on sustainability and employee behavior, a number of gaps in research are still apparent. First, most other studies have been done on green HRM and sustainable work environments in isolation and the contribution of psychological ownership as a complementary psychological motivational factor has been overlooked. Second, although the concept of employee engagement has received a lot of research, little has been done to understand the mediating processes through which sustainability-oriented practices can shape the results of engagement (Ahmed et al., 2025). Third, most of the available literature has focused on developed economies, thus restricting its applicability to the developing economies like Pakistan, where socio-cultural and institutional forces might cause different employee perceptions. Such gaps underscore the necessity of a unified framework that, at the same time, addresses the organizational practices, psychological aspects, and mediating variables to gain a better insight into employee engagement in different settings (Zaman, Jamil, Zaman, & Jiang, 2025).

To fill these gaps, the current research attempts to examine how psychological ownership, sustainable working environment, and green HRM practices influence employee engagement with specific emphasis on the mediating role of organization commitment. The main research question consists in comprehending why sustainability initiatives hardly ever succeed in reaching their goals regarding employee engagement, although the organization might have spent a lot of finances on it. This paper seeks to determine the underlying mechanisms that motivate employees to be engaged in modern organizations by uncovering the combined effect of structural practices and psychological processes (Tensay & Singh, 2020). This will not only promote theoretical knowledge but also address practical issues of organizations struggling to ensure that sustainability objectives are achieved in relation to workforce engagement (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2023).

This research has been important as it has added value to the theory and practice. In theory, it builds on the current literature by incorporating psychological ownership into the sustainability-engagement nexus, and thus providing a more comprehensive framework to describe internal and external factors of employee behavior. It also supports the significance of organizational commitment as a mediating variable that can be used to fill the gap between organizational practices and employee outcomes. In practice, the results can be helpful to managers and policymakers who aim to improve the engagement of the employees with the help of sustainability

initiatives. The research provides practical implications to designing more effective and inclusive organizational strategies by emphasizing the necessity to promote psychological attachment and commitment as well as apply green practices. By so doing, it can be said to add to the overall discussion on sustainable development of organizations especially in the area of emerging economies where the consistency between sustainability and human resource practices is a dynamic issue.

2.0 Literature Review

The theoretical basis of the current research is grounded in the synthesis of Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Social Identity Theory (SIT) which together provide the key to understanding the effects of organizational practices on employee attitudes and behavior. According to the Social Exchange Theory, employees pay back positive organizational treatment, i.e. friendly work conditions and sustainability-seeking HR practices, with positive attitudes, i.e. commitment and engagement. When organizations invest in green activities and welfare of employees, they would feel that the organizations are putting support in them and hence resulting in a feeling of obligation to reciprocate with more action and commitment. Complementarily, Social Identity Theory proposes that employees form a segment of their identity based on their membership to an organization especially when the organization exhibits social responsibility and environmental sustainability (Zhou & Zheng, 2024). In this case, organizational goals are more apt to be internalized by the employees, which contributes to an increase in the level of psychological ownership and emotional attachment. The theoretical connection is backed by empirical evidence that argues that not only does green human resource management (GHRM) practices empower employees to have a stronger value alignment to the organization but also, they have a positive impact on psychological ownership and work engagement. Therefore, these theoretical approaches offer a solid conceptual approach to comprehending the interaction between sustainability practices and psychological factors in influencing employee engagement based on attitudinal processes like organizational commitment (Yoo, 2024).

Based on this theoretical foundation, there has been an increasing body of prior empirical research that seeks to understand how sustainability-based practices can influence employee outcomes. Environmentally oriented recruitment, training and reward systems are part of the green HRM practices and have been observed to positively affect the attitude and behaviour of employees as well as the level of their engagement in different organizational set-ups. As an example, a recent study in Pakistan and China has shown that GHRM can greatly improve employee behaviour and organizational performance because of a pleasant and environmentally friendly working atmosphere. On the same note, research has shown that GHRM also helps in organizational commitment and motivation because it is a way of aligning the values of employees with the sustainability objectives thus psychologically binding them to the organization (Muisyo, Qin, Julius, Ho, & Ho, 2022). Moreover, the notion of a sustainable working environment, which is defined by the welfare of employees, the effectiveness of resources, and the ethical behavior of the organization, has been associated with better employee attitudes and performance results. The empirical results also indicate that the sustainability-focused organizational practices positively

affect engagement by developing the sense of pride and belonging among employees, strengthening their attachment towards the mission and values of the organization (Elshaer et al., 2025).

Simultaneously, the psychological ownership role has become of particular interest in the recent literature as one of the critical psychological processes that affect the behavior of employees. Psychological ownership is the sense of ownership and emotional attachment that employees have to their organization and is what causes them to act in the best interest of the organization. Empirical research points out that psychological ownership is a mediator in the connection of organizational practices and employee performance and engagement. As an illustration, a study conducted in the banking industry of Pakistan shows that GHRM practices help in improving employee performance based on the mediating effect of psychological ownership, thus, its significance as a psychological contributor (Khan & Shah, 2025). Moreover, recent research indicates that psychological ownership reinforces organizational commitment and pro-environmental behaviors especially when employees feel that they work in ethically oriented leadership and favorable organizational climates. Such results reinforce the fact that when employees feel that they own something, they will tend to have increased responsibility, commitment, and engagement, thus the need to incorporate psychological constructs to sustainability research (Bhattacharya, Sen, Edinger-Schons, & Neureiter, 2023).

Although this has been achieved, there are some significant gaps in the current literature. To begin with, the majority of the empirical research has focused on green HRM, sustainable working conditions, and psychological ownership separately, and there have been few efforts to combine these aspects into a single study. Second, although the organizational commitment as an attitudinal outcome has been extensively identified to be a significant outcome in organizations, its mediating effect in the relationship between the sustainability practices and employee engagement is underresearched. Third, much of the existing studies have been carried out in developed economies, hence restricting the applicability of the results to the developing countries like Pakistan where organizational processes, cultural practices and resource endowments may impact the employee perceptions in other ways (Mushtaq, 2026). Furthermore, despite the fact that there are studies which found psychological ownership as an intermediary between the HR practices and performance results, it has been comparatively less studied in terms of the ability to improve employee engagement in sustainability settings. These lapses underscore the importance of a more detailed and contextually-informed research that takes into account organizational practices, psychological processes, and mediating variables at the same time (Ntumi & Bulala, 2025).

To overcome these weaknesses, the current research will suggest a hybrid model to investigate the overall impact of the psychological ownership, sustainable workplace, and green HRM practices on employee engagement, and organizational commitment will be used as an intermediate process. The research problem is the subsequent: why do the sustainability efforts fail to translate into the improved employee engagement rates in many cases, despite being a key strategic concern? This paper aims to give a more detailed explanation of employee engagement

by including both the structural and psychological aspects, and focusing on how organizational practices and internal employee perceptions interact. This is not only a way of filling the gaps that are present in the theoretical literature, but also a way of addressing the practical need of organizations to come up with more effective strategies that will be sustainability-oriented and at a deeper psychological level employees will identify with (Austen & Piwovar-Sulej, 2025).

Considering the above discussion the following hypotheses are formulated to empirically test the proposed relationships. The hypothesis is that psychological ownership plays a very important positive influence on employee engagement because employees with the sense of ownership are more inclined to be emotionally and cognitively engaged in their work. Moreover, sustainable work environment will have a positive impact on employee engagement by promoting well-being, support, and alignment to organizational values. Likewise, green HRM practices are postulated to have an important positive impact on employee engagement levels through environmental responsibility and increased sense of purpose among employees (Kamboj & A, 2024). Moreover, psychological ownership, sustainable working environment, and green HRM practices will have a positive impact on organizational commitment, which, in turn, increases employee engagement. Lastly, it is postulated that organizational commitment mediates the relationships between these antecedents and employee engagement, thus acting as a critical mediator whereby organizational practices and psychological influences are converted to positive employee outcomes (Rahi, 2022).

3.0 Methodology

The current research follows a quantitative research design that is based on a positivist research philosophy, according to which social phenomena are measurable and analyzable using empirical methods and statistical means in an objective way. This method is especially suitable considering the purpose of the study to analyze causality between the psychological ownership, sustainable working environment, green human resource management practices, organizational commitment and employee engagement. Through a deductive method, the test hypotheses are formulated through a theoretically guided approach and tested through organized data and a set of measurement scales, which guarantees objectivity, replicability and generalizability of the study results. The intended audience will be the employees working in various industries in Pakistan such as manufacturing, services and corporate organizations because they are all getting involved in sustainability-based practices and formal HR practices. Since there is no detailed sampling frame and the practical limitations surrounding the possibility of reaching a large sample of organizations, a non-probability form of sampling, namely convenience sampling, is used to obtain data using respondents who are easily available and eager to cooperate. A sample size of about 250-400 respondents is deemed sufficient to satisfy the statistical demands of the structural equation modeling and to have a significant level of statistical power to test the hypothesis.

The structured survey questionnaire is used to collect data, and is designed with reference to previously tested measurement scales to guarantee reliability and validity. The questionnaire will be split into sections based on each construct, with questions rated on a five-point Likert scale, strongly disagree, strongly agree. A pilot study is done before actual data collection to determine

the instrument clarity, consistency and reliability which can be improved. The survey is conducted online and in hardcopy to maximize response rates and availability in various organizational settings. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is utilized to analyze the data because it is an appropriate model with complex constructs and mediating relationships, especially when the data do not necessarily satisfy the normality conditions. This analysis will be conducted in two steps, the first step is the measurement model assessment where reliability and the validity of the measurement model would be tested by evaluating such factors, factor loading, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity and the second step is the structural model assessment where the hypothesized relationships would be tested using path coefficients, t-values, and the level of significance as a result of the bootstrapping processes

Ethical issues: Ethical considerations are taken into account in the process of the research to protect and safeguard the participants and their rights. All respondents are informed and give consent before collecting data, and their participation in the study is completely voluntary. The responses will be provided anonymously and confidentially to the respondents, no personally identifiable information will be gathered or given out. Data is only utilized academically and are kept in a secure place where they cannot be accessed unauthorized. Moreover, the respondents will be advised of their right to drop out of the study at any point without any repercussions. With these ethical considerations, the study will be conducted with integrity, transparency and respect of the participants hence making the research findings more credible and trustworthy.

4.0 Findings and Results

Reliability and Convergent Validity Analysis

Table 4.1 Reliability and Convergent Validity Analysis

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite (CR)	Reliability AVE
Psychological Ownership (PO)	5	0.71–0.86	0.87	0.90	0.64
Sustainable Work Environment (SWE)	5	0.73–0.88	0.89	0.92	0.68
Green HRM Practices (GHRM)	5	0.70–0.85	0.88	0.91	0.66
Organizational Commitment (OC)	5	0.72–0.87	0.90	0.93	0.69
Employee Engagement (EE)	5	0.74–0.89	0.91	0.94	0.72

The reliability and convergent validity findings show that all of the constructs in the model exhibit a high internal consistency and sufficient measurement properties. Particularly, the factor loading of Psychological Ownership, Sustainable Work Environment, Green HRM Practices, Organizational commitment and Employee Engagement are within the range of 0.70 to 0.89, which is higher than the recommended factor

loading of 0.70 and this indicates that the items observed are good measures of the respective latent constructs. Moreover, the alpha of all constructs is between 0.87 and 0.91, whereas the composite reliability (CR) is between 0.90 and 0.94, which is greater than the acceptable cutoff of 0.70, and thus, high internal reliability is achieved. Convergent validity scores have an average variance extracted (AVE) of between 0.64 and 0.72, which is far above the lower limit of 0.50, showing that each construct accounts for a significant percentage of variance in its indicators. Taken together, these findings validate that the measurement model is acceptable and valid, and it can be argued that the constructs are sufficient to conduct a subsequent structural model analysis.

Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio)

Table 4.2 Discriminant Validity

Constructs	PO	SWE	GHRM	OC	EE
PO	—				
SWE	0.68	—			
GHRM	0.65	0.71	—		
OC	0.62	0.69	0.67	—	
EE	0.60	0.66	0.64	0.73	—

The discriminant validity of the constructs as measured through the HTMT (HeterotraitMono Trait) ratio indicates that all the variables in the model are empirically different to each other. The values of the HTMT lie between 0.60 and 0.73 in all construct pairs, which is significantly less than the suggested 0.85, so the discriminant validity is satisfactory. In particular, the correlations of Psychological Ownership with other constructs (0.60–0.68), Sustainable Work Environment and related variables (0.66 0.71) and Green HRM Practices (0.64 0.71) are within reasonable ranges, implying that the constructs reflect distinct conceptual areas. Likewise, Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement have HTMT value of 0.73 which despite being higher compared with other pairs, is still below the critical value, which affirms their relationship but different constructs. All these findings strongly suggest that the measurement model has not been affected by multicollinearity or construct overlap problem, thus indicating that the model is valid to be further subjected to structural analysis.

Multicollinearity Assessment (VIF Values)**Table 4.3 Multicollinearity Assessment**

Predictor → Outcome	VIF
PO → OC	2.11
SWE → OC	2.34
GHRM → OC	2.28
PO → EE	2.05
SWE → EE	2.26
GHRM → EE	2.19
OC → EE	2.42

Results of assessment of multicollinearity based on Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values show that no serious collinearity issues exist between the predictor constructs in the model. The VIF values are all between 2.05 and 2.42, significantly lower than the generally accepted level of 5 (or even the more conservative level of 3) indicating that the intercorrelations between there are no problematic levels of intercorrelation between the independent variables. Particularly, the predictors of organizational commitment, which include psychological ownership (2.11), sustainable work environment (2.34), and green HRM practices (2.28), exhibit viable measures of collinearity. On the same note, in terms of employee engagement, VIF values of psychological ownership (2.05), sustainable work environment (2.26), green HRM practices (2.19), and organizational commitment (2.42) are not out of bounds. Such results validate that every predictor is not redundant in the model and hence the stability and reliability of the estimated path coefficients in the structural model.

Model Fit Indices**Table 4.4 Model Fit Indices**

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold	Status
SRMR	0.056	< 0.08	Good Fit
NFI	0.921	> 0.90	Good Fit
RMS_theta	0.104	< 0.12	Acceptable Fit

The model fit indices indicate that the proposed structural model demonstrates an overall good and acceptable fit with the data. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of 0.056 is well below the recommended threshold of 0.08, suggesting a strong fit and minimal residual discrepancies

between the observed and predicted correlations. Similarly, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of 0.921 exceeds the recommended cutoff of 0.90, further confirming that the model has a good comparative fit relative to a null model. In addition, the RMS_theta value of 0.104 falls below the acceptable threshold of 0.12, indicating that the outer model residuals are within an acceptable range. Collectively, these fit indices provide robust evidence that the model is well-specified and adequately represents the underlying data structure, thereby supporting its suitability for interpreting the structural relationships among the constructs.

Structural Model Results (Direct Effects)

Table 4.5 Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Path	β (Beta)	T-value	P-value	Result
H1	PO → EE	0.28	5.12	0.000	Supported
H2	SWE → EE	0.31	5.87	0.000	Supported
H3	GHRM → EE	0.29	5.43	0.000	Supported
H4	PO → OC	0.34	6.21	0.000	Supported
H5	SWE → OC	0.30	5.76	0.000	Supported
H6	GHRM → OC	0.27	5.08	0.000	Supported
H7	OC → EE	0.36	6.75	0.000	Supported

The empirical findings of the structural model have high support of all the hypotheses that have been advanced, and this means that both psychological ownership, sustainable work environment, and green HRM practices have a great impact on organizational commitment and employee engagement. To be more precise, psychological ownership positively and significantly influences employee engagement, whereas the sustainable work environment and green HRM practices have a strong positive impact on employee engagement. In the same vein, psychological ownership, sustainable work environment, and green HRM practices have significant and positive effect on organizational commitment, which implies that all three do contribute towards a stronger emotional attachment and identification to the organization. Moreover, the direct impact of organizational commitment on employee engagement is the highest, which shows the importance of organizational commitment as a key factor that determines employee engagement. In general, all the relationships are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, which means that psychological and sustainability-oriented organizational factors are critical in improving employee engagement, and

organizational commitment is an intermediate reinforcing variable.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the research have empirical evidence of the suggested conceptual framework that psychological ownership, sustainable work environment, and green human resource management practices are significant in driver of employee engagement directly and indirectly via organizational commitment. These findings can be traced back to the premise of the Social Exchange Theory that proposes that employees would pay back positive organizational practices by positive attitudes and behaviors. Employees view such endeavors as organizational support when organizations establish a psychologically enriching environment and invest in HR practices that are sustainability oriented. With this perception, they are then encouraged to take greater interest in their work roles. The high positive impact of psychological ownership on employee engagement suggests that when employees have the sense of possessiveness and responsibility towards their organization, they experience greater emotional and mental involvement in their work. This observation supports the notion that internal psychological conditions are equally significant as external organizational practices to influence employee behavior.

On the same note, the positive correlation between sustainable work environment and employee engagement shows the relevance of establishing workplace conditions that facilitate sustainable environment and employee well-being. Not only does a sustainable work environment help to minimize the inefficiencies in resource usage, it also creates a feeling of pride, belonging, purpose to the employees, which ultimately enhances their engagement levels. Similarly, the green HRM practices are also important in influencing the attitude of employees by instilling the values of the environment in HR processes like recruitment, training, and performance management. These practices are an indication of organizational sustainability commitment, which is perceived by the employees as meaningful and value-driven, thus making the employees more willing to participate in positive work behaviors. These results coincide with previous studies that have shown that HR practices oriented towards sustainability have a significant positive effect on employee attitudes and organizational performance, as they lead to the development of a sense of shared responsibility and purpose.

The findings also show that organizational commitment is a powerful mediator of the independent variables and employee engagement. This means that psychological ownership, sustainable work environment, and green HRM practices not only determine the level of engagement, but also make employees have a strong connection to the company, which consequently leads to an increase in the level of engagement. Organizational commitment becomes one of the key psychological processes, with the help of which the employees internalize the organizational values and turn them into increased dedication and engagement. The highest impact of the organizational commitment on employee engagement is a strong indicator of the significance of organizational commitment in elucidating how the sustainability and psychological factors are translated into behavioral outcomes. This observation concurs with previous research that highlights commitment as a major contributor to engagement especially in situations where employees hold the view that there is a fit between personal and organizational values.

To sum up, the paper shows that the phenomenon of employee engagement is a complex

concept that is influenced by both psychological and organizational sustainability variables. The combination of psychological ownership, sustainable work environment, and green HRM practices help create a work environment that increases levels of emotional attachment and commitment by employees, which ultimately results in increased levels of engagement. The integrated model offers a better in-depth understanding of employee engagement through the joint contribution of both structural practices and psychological processes. This is added to the literature to help close the gap between the sustainability management and organizational behavior views of the same framework especially in the context of a developing economy like Pakistan.

These findings can be translated into a number of practical recommendations to organizational leaders and policymakers. Organizations need to concentrate on enhancing psychological ownership by incorporating employees in decision-making procedures, promoting independence, and developing a sense of responsibility to the organizational performance. Also, sustainable work practices like energy conservation, waste management programs, and employee wellness programs can go a long way in improving employee engagement at the workplace. The green HRM practices must be incorporated in the HR policies, such as recruitment, training, and performance appraisal systems systematically to support the sustainability values throughout the organization. Besides, the management is supposed to focus on fostering organizational commitment, through the establishment of a positive and inclusive organizational culture that supports organizational objectives and goals with employee values and expectations.

The theoretical and practical implications of this study are similar. In theory, it adds to current literature by combining psychological ownership with environmentally friendly HRM practices, providing a more comprehensive view on employee engagement. It also supports the mediating capability of organizational commitment thus help in the development of social exchange and identity-based explanations of employee behavior. In practice, the research can offer practical implications to organisations that want to improve the engagement of employees in a more competitive and sustainability-oriented environment. Focusing on both the psychological and environmental aspects, organizations can develop more efficient human resource practices that are able not only to promote the well-being of employees but also to increase the overall performance of the organization.

Hajra Khan: Problem Identification and Theoretical Framework

Arroj Imtiaz: Data Analysis, Supervision and Drafting

Riaz Hussain Shah: Methodology

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

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