



Strategic Human Resources Development as a Catalyst for Performance Optimization

Ade Maharani*, Yulia Hanoselina

Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

Email : rianmaharani0603@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v4i5.1239>

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Strategy, Performance Improvement, Human Resources

*Corresponding Author

This study explores strategies to enhance human resource (HR) performance at the Water Resources and Construction Development Agency (SDABK) of West Sumatra Province, in response to declining employee numbers, unmet performance targets, and low public satisfaction. Guided by Noe et al.'s (2024) framework—covering goal-setting, feedback, work environment, recognition, and continuous development—the research adopts a qualitative, descriptive approach using interviews, documentation, and triangulation for data validation. Findings reveal that while the agency has successfully fostered a supportive work environment and implemented recognition systems, key areas such as clear goal-setting, constructive feedback, and ongoing training remain underdeveloped. Challenges include organizational resistance to change, limited budgets, reduced technical staff, and external factors like natural disasters. These obstacles reflect deeper structural, technical, and cultural issues. The study underscores the importance of strategic HR management in improving public sector performance. By addressing existing gaps, the SDABK has the potential to enhance service quality and contribute more effectively to regional infrastructure development.

Article History:

Received: June 2025; Revised: July 2025; Accepted: August 2025

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Maharani, A., Hanoselina, Y. (2025). Strategic Human Resources Development as a Catalyst for Performance Optimization. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 4(4), 1921-1932.

INTRODUCTION

Human resources (HR) remain one of the most critical assets in both public and private organizations, as they directly influence operational effectiveness, service delivery, and institutional sustainability. In the public sector, the performance of civil servants determines the quality of services received by the community, particularly in strategic sectors such as infrastructure, health, and education. According to Juwita (2019), the success of public service institutions depends largely on the quality, competence, and motivation of their workforce. However, the optimization of HR performance in government institutions often

encounters systemic challenges, including bureaucratic rigidity, outdated recruitment systems, and limited investment in employee development. These issues not only hinder internal efficiency but also erode public trust in state institutions. Given that government organizations play a central role in development and service delivery, efforts to improve HR performance are not merely an internal priority, but a societal necessity. Therefore, addressing the performance of civil servants becomes a crucial agenda for enhancing public welfare, promoting good governance, and achieving sustainable development goals in Indonesia and beyond.

Despite their strategic role, many government agencies in Indonesia still struggle to achieve optimal HR performance. This has far-reaching implications, particularly for sectors responsible for basic services and infrastructure. The challenge is not merely the availability of human capital, but also the quality, alignment, and utilization of existing personnel. For instance, in agencies tasked with infrastructure development, inefficient HR management can lead to delays, cost overruns, and poor-quality outcomes, affecting millions of lives. Imam Mulyana (2010) emphasized that poor performance in the public sector often results from misaligned strategies, inadequate supervision, and lack of employee motivation. These systemic inefficiencies weaken the government's capacity to respond to pressing issues such as disaster mitigation, infrastructure maintenance, and public service delivery. Without significant improvements in HR performance, public dissatisfaction may increase, further reducing citizen engagement and weakening state legitimacy. Therefore, understanding and addressing the root causes of underperformance among public sector employees, especially in infrastructure-oriented departments, is a critical step toward improving governance, transparency, and service effectiveness in the long term.

One clear example of this issue is evident in the Department of Water Resources and Construction Development (SDABK) of West Sumatra Province. As a strategic agency responsible for regional infrastructure and water resource management, SDABK plays a vital role in the development and maintenance of irrigation systems, construction services, and disaster response initiatives. Yet, recent reports highlight significant gaps between performance targets and actual achievements. According to the 2024 Government Agency Performance Report (LKjIP), one key performance indicator—irrigation system functionality—only reached 69.98%, falling short of its 73.48% target. In addition, public satisfaction levels remain low, with only 43.9% of respondents reporting satisfaction and just 7.1% indicating high satisfaction (Balitbang West Sumatra, 2024). These figures place SDABK 23rd among provincial government agencies, highlighting a serious need for performance enhancement. The agency also faces a declining workforce, dropping from 201 civil servants in 2015 to only 92 in 2024, primarily

due to unbalanced staff transfers and lack of technical recruitment. These trends reflect structural weaknesses in HR planning and management that urgently require systematic solutions.

A growing body of literature has attempted to address performance issues in the public sector by focusing on internal organizational factors. For example, Oktavia and Fernos (2023) emphasized that organizational culture and work environment have a direct influence on employee performance. Meanwhile, Fahlevi et al. (2024) identified job satisfaction and work achievement as core determinants of performance in public institutions. These studies contribute to our understanding of the micro-level dynamics that shape individual and team performance. Abdullah (2024) added another dimension by pointing out that a mismatch between technical competencies and task assignments significantly hampers output in government agencies. These insights affirm that performance is shaped not only by individual ability but also by structural and systemic factors, including work design, resource allocation, and leadership practices. While these studies offer a solid theoretical foundation, they often generalize findings across institutions without contextualizing them in specific organizational settings, limiting their applicability to agencies with unique challenges such as SDABK.

Moreover, recent research directly related to SDABK, such as the works of Rianti (2024) and Mulyani (2024), has focused on psychosocial factors like workload, work-life balance, and quality of work life. While these studies shed light on important individual-level variables affecting employee performance, they stop short of formulating concrete, strategic solutions to enhance organizational outcomes. More importantly, they rarely address the broader institutional constraints—such as staff shortages, budget limitations, or resistance to change—that are crucial for a comprehensive HR performance strategy. This gap highlights the need for research that not only identifies factors influencing performance but also proposes actionable strategies grounded in real-world organizational contexts. Without this, policy recommendations risk becoming superficial or unimplementable. Thus, a deeper, more integrated approach is required—one that considers both internal behavioral dynamics and external structural constraints, particularly within agencies like SDABK that are central to regional development and highly vulnerable to external shocks, such as natural disasters or fiscal limitations.

What sets this research apart is its focus on strategic HR performance improvement in a high-impact, resource-constrained government agency. Unlike previous studies, which often treat HR performance as an isolated function, this study integrates HR development with broader institutional performance metrics. Drawing from the theoretical framework of Noe et al. (2024), which

emphasizes clear goal-setting, feedback, conducive environments, recognition, and continuous development, the study provides a structured evaluation of HR strategies and their actual implementation within SDABK. The originality lies in linking theory with practical application—analyzing not only what should be done but also what is currently being done and where gaps exist. Moreover, the study contextualizes these gaps within real organizational barriers such as declining staff numbers, budget cuts, and cultural resistance to change. This allows for more grounded recommendations that reflect institutional realities. By doing so, the research contributes to both theoretical advancement in public sector HRM and practical policy improvements aimed at enhancing service delivery and sustainable development at the regional level.

This research is driven by the core question: How can the SDABK of West Sumatra Province strategically improve its human resource performance amid internal and external constraints? The answer to this question requires a nuanced understanding of both the strategies currently employed and the barriers that hinder their effectiveness. Based on preliminary analysis, the research posits that while some performance strategies have been implemented—such as creating a supportive work environment and offering recognition—key pillars like clear goal-setting, constructive feedback, and ongoing training remain weak. These deficiencies are likely rooted in structural, technical, and cultural obstacles that limit the department's ability to translate policy into practice. Therefore, the study argues that a targeted, context-sensitive strategy is essential for optimizing HR performance and, by extension, improving the agency's overall effectiveness. This research not only aims to fill a critical knowledge gap but also seeks to offer actionable insights for local government leaders, HR practitioners, and policymakers striving to enhance public service quality under constrained conditions.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design, as the objective was to explore and describe the strategies implemented to improve the performance of human resources (HR) at the Department of Water Resources and Construction Development (SDABK) of West Sumatra Province. The qualitative descriptive approach was selected because it enables the researcher to capture in-depth insights regarding the actual conditions of HR management, challenges faced, and strategies undertaken without manipulating the natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2014). This approach also allows for a comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics, particularly in public institutions where social, structural, and policy factors are closely intertwined (Moleong, 2012).

The population in this study consisted of all employees of the SDABK West Sumatra Province. However, given the scope and the research objectives, the study

focused on specific individuals who were considered to have direct knowledge and involvement in the management and performance of human resources. Therefore, a purposive sampling technique was employed, which allowed the selection of informants based on their relevance, expertise, and experience related to the research topic (Syatori, 2024). The informants included key officials such as the Head of SDABK, the Head of Subdivision of General Affairs, the Functional Planner, the Secretary of the Department, and staff members who were directly engaged in HR-related tasks. The selection of these informants was expected to provide comprehensive data regarding strategic planning, policy implementation, and operational challenges in HR performance improvement.

Data collection was carried out through several techniques to ensure validity and richness of the information. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected informants to explore their perspectives on HR performance strategies, organizational challenges, and recommendations for improvement. Interviews followed a semi-structured format, enabling the researcher to adapt questions according to the flow of discussion while still maintaining alignment with the research objectives. Second, observation was conducted within the SDABK office environment to identify contextual factors such as work culture, facilities, and employee interactions that could influence performance. Third, document analysis was performed by reviewing organizational documents such as the Strategic Plan (Renstra) 2021–2026, Performance Reports (LKjIP), Staffing Data (Bezetting), and relevant government regulations. These documents were crucial in providing secondary data to validate and complement findings obtained through interviews and observation.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, this study employed triangulation techniques, including source triangulation and method triangulation (Kasiyan et al., 2015). Source triangulation was conducted by cross-checking information from multiple informants within the SDABK and external related agencies such as the Regional Human Resources Development Agency (BPSDM) of West Sumatra Province, which is responsible for HR development at the regional level. Method triangulation was applied by combining interviews, observations, and document analysis to validate the consistency of the data obtained from different techniques. This process was crucial in reducing bias and ensuring that the findings accurately reflected the real conditions of HR performance within the department.

The data analysis technique followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2012). In the data reduction stage, the researcher filtered, selected, and simplified the vast amount of information collected in the field to focus only on data relevant to HR performance strategies and challenges. During the data display stage, the reduced data were organized in narrative form supported by tables and figures, which facilitated a clearer interpretation of patterns and relationships. Finally, in the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher identified key findings and themes, then linked them with the research objectives and theoretical framework. Conclusions were continuously verified during the research process to ensure their validity and reliability.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account in this study. Informants were approached respectfully and were asked for their consent before participating in interviews. Their confidentiality was maintained, and the information provided was used solely for academic purposes. This ensured that the research adhered to the principles of transparency and integrity while also protecting the rights of participants.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

This study explored the strategies for improving human resource (HR) performance at the Department of Water Resources and Construction Development (SDABK) of West Sumatra Province. Data were collected through interviews with key officials and staff, direct observation, and the analysis of organizational documents, including the Strategic Plan (Renstra 2021–2026), the Government Performance Accountability Report (LKjIP 2024), staffing data (Bezetting), and survey data from the Regional Research and Development Agency (Balitbang 2024).

HR Performance Conditions

The LKjIP of 2024 indicated discrepancies between planned targets and actual realizations. For instance, the irrigation system performance index achieved 69.98%, lower than the performance agreement target of 73.48%. Similarly, the percentage of protected areas from water damage only reached 68.22% against the target of 70.03%. Furthermore, the competency of construction service personnel was far below expectations, with only 21.36% of staff certified compared to the target of 21.48%. These figures show that performance has not yet met organizational standards.

Table 1. Comparison of Medium-Term Performance Targets, Performance Agreements, and Realization (2022–2024)

Indicator	Target 2024	Realization 2024	Notes
Irrigation System Performance Index	73.48%	69.98%	Below target by 3.5%
Protected areas from water damage	70.03%	68.22%	Below target by 1.8%
Competency of construction service personnel	21.48%	21.36%	Below target by 0.12%
Public service satisfaction index	85.00	85.99	Achieved

(Source: LKjIP SDABK, 2024)

Public satisfaction with SDABK services is also relatively low. Based on Balitbang West Sumatra (2024), only 43.9% of respondents reported being satisfied and 7.1% reported being very satisfied, positioning SDABK 23rd in satisfaction ranking among 51 provincial agencies. These numbers fall short of

the agency's expectation of achieving an 80% satisfaction index.

The irrigation system index is particularly concerning, as it fell below both the performance agreement and the lowered internal target (72.44%). Interviews confirmed that natural disasters and limited budgets were major causes. A staff member stated: "On the irrigation system performance, the target in 2024 was set at 73.48%, but due to flash floods and budget constraints, the realized score was only 69.98%. This shows we are unable to reach optimal results under the current conditions." (Interview with Functional Planning Staff, May 7, 2025).

Public satisfaction with SDABK also remains below expectations. The 2024 Balitbang survey shows that 43.9% of respondents reported being "satisfied," 7.1% "very satisfied," while 15.9% were "unsatisfied" and 0.6% "very unsatisfied." Compared with other agencies, SDABK ranked 23rd in satisfaction and 11th in high satisfaction.

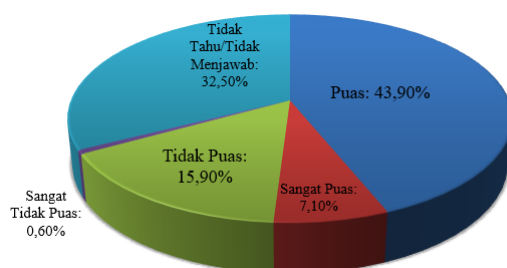


Figure 1. Public Satisfaction with SDABK (2024)

(Source: Balitbang West Sumatra, 2024)

Satisfied: 43.9%, Very satisfied: 7.1%, Unsatisfied: 15.9%, Very unsatisfied: 0.6%, No answer/Don't know: 32.5%

The Head of SDABK emphasized the importance of incremental improvement, stating: "Although the satisfaction rate of 51% (satisfied + very satisfied) can be considered acceptable, our target is 80%. The increase may not be significant, but it must be continuous. Even a 1% increase each year is crucial for us." (Interview with Acting Head of SDABK, January 31, 2025).

Staffing Conditions

The number of employees at SDABK has sharply declined over the past decade. Staffing levels have declined significantly. Figure 2 illustrates that from 2015 to 2024, the number of civil servants at SDABK decreased from 201 to 92 employees. The shortage is particularly critical among technical staff. According to Renstra data, SDABK requires 125 technical staff, 26 functional staff, and 73 non-technical staff, while the existing numbers are only 43, 9, and 41 respectively.

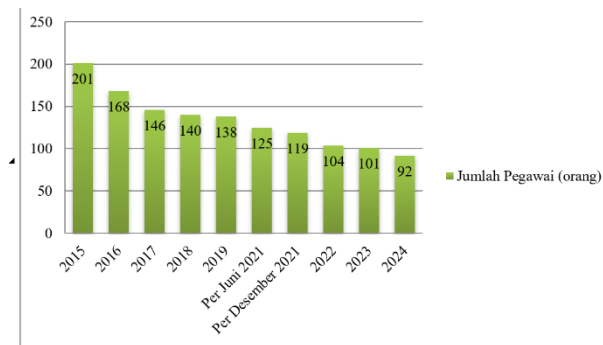


Figure 2. Number of Employees at SDABK (2015–2024)

This represents a reduction of more than 50% within 10 years. Most of the reduction was due to transfers and retirements, with no proportional recruitment. This shortage directly affects program implementation, especially in infrastructure development, disaster mitigation, and the provision of basic services.

Table 2. HR Needs vs. Existing Staff at SDABK (2021–2026)

Type of Staff	Existing	Required	Gap
Technical	43	125	-82
Functional	9	26	-17
Non-Technical	41	73	-32

(Source: Renstra SDABK 2021–2026)

The lack of technical staff (engineers, planners, and supervisors) is critical, as they are directly responsible for infrastructure projects. The shortage affects the execution of strategic programs, particularly in disaster preparedness, water resource management, and construction supervision.

Implemented Strategies

Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, SDABK has implemented several strategies to address HR challenges: Goal setting and performance agreements: Establishing clear performance targets aligned with the provincial RPJMD, Constructive feedback: Supervisors conducted regular performance reviews and evaluations to motivate employees, Training and professional development: Training programs focused on technical skills in water management and construction services, Creating a positive work environment: Initiatives such as morning exercises, recognition ceremonies for outstanding staff, and improved office facilities (e.g., lighting, air circulation, ergonomic layouts) to enhance motivation, Collaboration with BPSDM: Cooperation with the Regional HR Development Agency for staff competency building.

Challenges

Despite these strategies, several challenges remain, Budget limitations: Insufficient funds for training and recruitment, Declining technical staff: Continuous reduction in skilled personnel without effective replacement, External factors: Floods, landslides, and other natural disasters frequently disrupt program execution.

Discussion

The findings underscore that HR performance at SDABK remains below expectations due to structural and contextual challenges. The low realization of irrigation system performance and service satisfaction index reflects the gap between planned objectives and actual implementation. These findings align with Abdullah (2024), who emphasized that misaligned human resources and competencies negatively affect performance in government agencies.

The strategies implemented, such as clear goal-setting and training, resonate with Armstrong and Taylor (2023), who argue that performance improvement requires well-defined objectives and continuous development programs. However, the limited impact of these strategies at SDABK suggests that they are insufficient without adequate staffing and budgetary support. The consistent decline in staff numbers illustrates the pressing need for recruitment and capacity building. This is consistent with Noe et al. (2024), who highlight that sustainable HR strategies require adequate workforce planning and investment in competencies.

The issue of low public satisfaction further reflects service quality gaps. Fahlevi et al. (2024) noted that job satisfaction and employee achievement are directly linked to organizational service performance. In SDABK's case, the lack of sufficient technical staff leads to slower service delivery and limited innovation, which affects public perceptions. In addition, the external factor of natural disasters poses unique challenges for SDABK compared to other agencies. Flooding and landslides often disrupt construction and water management projects, contributing to underperformance. This contextual challenge requires adaptive HR strategies, including training staff in disaster management and strengthening inter-agency collaboration.

This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that HR performance improvement in government institutions cannot rely solely on internal strategies such as training and feedback. Instead, it requires a systemic approach that integrates workforce planning, budget allocation, and resilience against external risks. This finding fills the gap identified in previous studies, which often focused only on internal HR practices without fully considering contextual constraints in public sector organizations.

CONCLUSION

Based on the theory of employee performance improvement strategies, which consists of five indicators, it was found that the implementation at the Department of Water Resources and Construction Development (SDABK) of West Sumatra Province showed mixed results. Two indicators were implemented effectively, namely the creation of a conducive work environment and the provision of rewards and recognition. However, three indicators were not optimally implemented: the establishment of clear goals, the provision of constructive feedback, and continuous training and development.

Several obstacles were identified in implementing these strategies. First, challenges in setting clear goals at the department were influenced by structural aspects (division of tasks and policy frameworks), technical aspects (the ability to formulate SMART goals), and organizational culture. Second, employees often perceived feedback negatively. Instead of being viewed as a tool for self-development, feedback was frequently associated with punishment, leading to resistance. This was compounded by limited communication skills among leaders, many of whom were not adequately trained to deliver constructive criticism. As a result, feedback was often misinterpreted, creating tension or conflict in the workplace. Moreover, feedback was not yet integrated into the organizational routine; it was typically given only when significant mistakes occurred or during formal evaluations. Employees, therefore, tended to maintain old habits and resist suggestions that implied behavioral change.

Another obstacle was the lack of a supportive system. No formal mechanism or standardized procedure existed to guide leaders in delivering structured and effective feedback. Finally, regarding continuous training and development, SDABK did not have systematically designed programs. Training was not planned as an ongoing process within the agency but was instead considered the responsibility of the West Sumatra Provincial Government, coordinated by the Regional Human Resources Development Agency (BPSDM). Consequently, training opportunities were sporadic and not aligned with the specific needs of the department.

REFERENCES

- Aburahma, I. A. M., Amuna, Y. M. A., & Aqel, A. M. (2020). *The Relationship between GHRM Practices and Organizational Performance " Case study : Gaza University "*. 4(4), 1–8.
- Armstrong, M., & Taylor, S. 2023. *Human Resource Management Practice: A Guide to Effective Employee Management*. Kogan Page.

- Ari, E., Karatepe, O. M., Rezapouraghdam, H., & Avci, T. (2020). *A Conceptual Model for Green Human Resource Management: Indicators, Differential Pathways, and Multiple Pro-Environmental Outcomes*.
- Creswell, John W. 2014. *Research Design: Pendekatan Metode Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan Campuran*. Edisi Keempat (Cetakan Kesatu). Yogyakarta: Pustaka Belajar.
- Fahlevi, G., Hayadi, H., & Yusuf, F. A. 2024. Strategi Peningkatan Kinerja Pegawai Melalui Optimalisasi Kepuasan Kerja Dan Prestasi Kerja Di Dinas Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Kota Cilegon. *Desanta (Indonesian of Interdisciplinary Journal)*, 4(2).
- José, C., Jabbour, C., Beatriz, A., Sousa, L. De, Govindan, K., Alves, A., Ricardo, W., & Freitas, D. S. (2013). Environmental management and operational performance in automotive companies in Brazil: the role of human resource management and lean manufacturing. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 47, 129–140. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2012.07.010>
- Jumiati, S., & Toaha, M. (2025). *Exploring Green Human Resources Management Implementation in Higher Education Employees: Case Study at Hasanuddin University* (Vol. 2024, Issue Icame 2024). Atlantis Press International BV. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-758-8_222
- Khan, M. H., & Muktar, S. N. (2021). *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning What 's Next for Green Human Resource Management: Insights and Trends for Sustainable Development*. 16(1), 181–194.
- Liu, Z., & Mei, S. (2020). *Green human resource management, green organization identity and organizational citizenship behavior for the environment: the moderating effect of environmental values*. 19. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CMS-10-2019-0366>
- Mahdy, F., Alqahtani, M., & Binzafrah, F. (2023). Imperatives, Benefits, and Initiatives of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM): A Systematic Literature Review. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 15(6), 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15064866>
- Mehta, P. (2024). Bibliometric investigation on green human resource management research. *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences*, 6(3), 211–221. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jhass-05-2023-0062>
- Mukherjee, S., Bhattacharjee, S., Paul, N., & Banerjee, U. (2020). Assessing Green Human Resource Management Practices in Higher Educational Institute Public Policies-New Smart Settings in Public Management View project Assessing Green Human Resource Management Practices in Higher Educational Institute. *TEST Engineering & Management, VOL 82: JAN/FEB 2020*, 221.
- Pereira Ribeiro, J. M., Hoeckesfeld, L., Dal Magro, C. B., Favretto, J., Barichello,

- R., Lenzi, F. C., Secchi, L., Montenegro de Lima, C. R., & Salgueirinho Osório de Andrade Guerra, J. B. (2021). Green Campus Initiatives as sustainable development dissemination at higher education institutions: Students' perceptions. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 312(August 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.127671>
- Ren, S., Tang, G., & E. Jackson, S. (2018). Green human resource management research in emergence: A review and future directions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 35(3), 769–803. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-017-9532-1>
- Renwick, D. W. S., Redman, T., & Maguire, S. (2013). Green Human Resource Management: A Review and Research Agenda*. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 15(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2011.00328.x>
- Roscoe, S., Subramanian, N., Jabbour, C. J. C., & Chong, T. (2019). Green human resource management and the enablers of green organisational culture: Enhancing a firm's environmental performance for sustainable development. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 28(5), 737–749. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2277>
- Sikdar, P., Uddin, M. M., Dip, T. M., Islam, S., Hoque, M. S., Dhar, A. K., & Wu, S. (2021). Recent advances in the synthesis of smart hydrogels. *Materials Advances*, 2(14), 4532–4573. <https://doi.org/10.1039/d1ma00193k>
- Tanova, C., & Bayighomog, S. W. (2022). Green human resource management in service industries: the construct, antecedents, consequences, and outlook. *Service Industries Journal*, 42(5–6), 412–452. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2022.2045279>
- Tri, D. (2022). *Business Ecosystem & Strategy The influence of organizational environmental culture on employee performance mediated by green human resource management (GHRM) and job satisfaction*. 4(1), 24–36.
- Xie, H., & Lau, T. C. (2023). Evidence-Based Green Human Resource Management: A Systematic Literature Review. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 15(14). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151410941>
- Yong, J. Y., & Fawehinmi, O. O. (2019). *Green human resource management*. 203. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-12-2018-0438>