

A Correlational Study of Human Resource Management Practices, Organizational Culture, and Sustainability Practices of Restaurants in SOCCSKSARGEN

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationships among human resource management (HRM) practices, organizational culture, and sustainable practices in homegrown restaurants in the SOCCSKSARGEN region, Philippines. Using a correlational research design, the study surveyed 200 regular restaurant employees across the four key cities in the region, using a stratified random sampling method. A modified questionnaire measured HRM practices, organizational culture, and sustainability across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, with high reliability confirmed through Cronbach's. Results revealed that sustainable practices are frequently implemented, with high ratings in all domains. Both HRM practices and organizational culture were also rated high, indicating consistent training, fair compensation, clear performance appraisals, and a teamwork-driven, goal-oriented environment. Statistical analysis showed a significant positive correlation between HRM practices and organizational culture with sustainable practices, and a combined influence explaining 76.2% of the variance in sustainability outcomes. The findings underscore the critical role of HRM and culture in driving sustainability, aligning with global research that emphasizes integrating sustainability into business strategies. This study offers practical insights for local businesses and policymakers, highlighting the importance of aligning people management and culture to achieve long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

KEYWORDS: *Business management, correlation design, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable practices in business, particularly within the restaurant industry, have become increasingly relevant as global initiatives to

address climate change, lessen environmental degradation, and advance social equity intensify (Awa et al., 2024). In the Philippines, many restaurants face challenges in adopting sustainable practices due to limited awareness and understanding of environmental issues among both management and staff, which hampers effective implementation (Diaz, 2024). Additionally, economic constraints often lead restaurants to prioritize immediate financial gain over long-term sustainability objectives, resulting in a lack of investment in eco-friendly initiatives (Judina, 2019). Labor issues, including low wages and high turnover, further hinder the implementation of fair labor practices, emphasizing the need for innovative solutions to address both global and local sustainability challenges in the restaurant sector (Dingil et al., 2023).

Moreover, sustainable practices are crucial not only for environmental preservation but also for enhancing social value within communities (Porter & Kramer, 2019). By focusing on sustainability, businesses can create shared value that benefits both society and the economy, fostering local development and improving quality of life (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). Implementing sustainable practices often leads to job creation, skill development, and increased access to resources for marginalized populations, thereby promoting inclusive economic growth (UNDP, 2024). Finally, businesses that are better able to handle regulatory changes and reduce the hazards associated with environmental issues (Kitsios et al., 2020). As a result, sustainable practices play a significant social value in promoting environmental preservation, community well-being, and social equity.

Recent studies have highlighted the substantial link between human resource management practices and sustainability, emphasizing how effective HRM can facilitate the implementation of sustainability initiatives within groups (Renwick et al., 2013). Similarly, the organizational culture plays an important role in promoting sustainable practices, as a culture that prioritizes sustainability encourages teams to embrace environmentally and socially responsible behaviors (Dasgupta & Banker, 2015). Isensee et al. (2020) suggest that aligning human resource management strategies with a sustainability-driven organizational culture can create an environment that effectively supports the achievement of long-term sustainability objectives.

These findings are particularly relevant to homegrown restaurants in SOCCSKSARGEN, where businesses often operate with limited resources and face increasing pressure to adopt sustainable practices while maintaining

competitiveness, preserving local identity, and contributing to regional economic development. These findings are particularly relevant to homegrown restaurants in SOCCSKSARGEN, where businesses often operate with limited resources and face increasing pressure to adopt sustainable practices while maintaining competitiveness, preserving local identity, and contributing to regional economic development.

While sustainable practices are widely studied for their influence on business success, there is still limited understanding of how specific HR management practices and organizational culture directly support sustainability, especially in small, homegrown businesses. Despite growing interest in sustainable practices, there is limited research examining how human resource management practices and organizational culture facilitate sustainability specifically in small, homegrown restaurants in SOCCSKSARGEN. These establishments face unique challenges related to resource limitations, workforce development, and sustainability adoption that may differ from those experienced by larger restaurant chains and corporations. Despite the increasing scholarly interest in sustainable practices, limited empirical evidence exists regarding how human resource management practices and organizational culture facilitate sustainability initiatives among small, homegrown restaurants in SOCCSKSARGEN. These establishments face distinct challenges, including resource constraints, workforce development concerns, and limited access to sustainability-related initiatives, which may differ considerably from the experiences of large restaurant chains and corporations. Consequently, examining these relationships within the regional context remains a significant research gap. Most existing studies have focused on traditional HRM aspects but have not extensively explored how these practices relate to sustainability initiatives (Purgał-Popiela, 2024). Additionally, few have explored sustainable practices in various sectors, including restaurants, but have lacked a focused examination of the relationship between HRM and organizational culture (Faeni et al., 2025). This gap underscores the need for more targeted research that links human resource management practices, organizational culture, and sustainable practices in smaller, community-based enterprises, where such insights could have a significant practical impact on business success.

The present study is anchored on the premise that organizational sustainability is largely influenced by the strategic utilization of internal resources and capabilities. In the context of homegrown restaurants, effective human resource management practices and a supportive organizational culture

may constitute valuable organizational assets that facilitate the implementation of sustainable practices and long-term competitiveness. The Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory posits that valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate organizational resources provide a source of sustainable competitive advantage. Within this perspective, human resource management practices and organizational culture are regarded as strategic internal resources that shape employees' behaviors and organizational capabilities, thereby influencing the implementation of sustainable practices and long-term organizational performance. The theory suggests that organizations possessing unique internal resources, such as effective people management systems and strong organizational values, are better positioned to implement sustainability initiatives and sustain competitive advantage over time.

This study explores the relationship between human resource management practices, organizational culture, and sustainable practices, targeting key stakeholders who can benefit from its findings. The results will be disseminated through multiple channels to maximize their impact. The results will first be submitted to peer-reviewed journals focused on sustainability, hospitality, and human resource management, contributing to academic discussions and filling gaps in the current literature. Furthermore, the findings will be presented at relevant conferences and symposia to engage with industry professionals. A copy of the results will be provided to the National Economic Development Authority in the SOCCSKSARGEN region to advocate for the integration of sustainable practices at the policy level.

Research Question

1. What is the level of human resource management practices of homegrown restaurants in SOCCSKSARGEN?
2. What is the level of organizational culture of homegrown restaurants in SOCCSKSARGEN?
3. What is the level of sustainable practices of homegrown restaurants in SOCCSKSARGEN?
4. Is there a significant relationship between :
 - 4.1 Human resource management practices and sustainable practices?
 - 4.2 Organizational culture and sustainable practices
5. Is the singular and combined influence of human resource management practices and organizational culture on sustainable practices significant?

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a correlational research design to examine the relationships among human resource management practices, organizational culture, and sustainable practices among homegrown restaurant owners and managers in SOCCSKSARGEN. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to observe and understand real-life connections between variables without changing or controlling them, giving a clearer picture of how things naturally happen in the restaurant setting. As Bhandari (2022) explains, correlational research looks at the statistical relationships between two or more variables as they naturally occur, helping identify whether meaningful connections exist. By using this design, the study determined how human resource management practices and organizational culture are linked to sustainable practices, offering valuable insights into what helps local restaurants operate more sustainably and responsibly within their communities.

Research Locale

This study on human resource management practices and organizational culture as determinants of sustainable practices of restaurants was conducted in SOCCSKSARGEN Region (Region XII), Philippines. The relevance of local industry trends business practices in regions like SOCCSKSARGEN cannot be overstated. As the local economy continues to develop, homegrown restaurants have become vital contributors to employment, community identity, and cultural preservation. These establishments often rely on local ingredients, suppliers, and labor, creating a ripple effect that supports other sectors in the region. The study was based on the homegrown restaurants located in the four key cities: General Santos, Koronadal, Tacurong and Kidapawan.

The four cities were purposively selected because they represent the primary economic and commercial centers of the SOCCSKSARGEN Region and possess a substantial concentration of homegrown restaurants. Their inclusion enabled the study to capture diverse organizational practices and employee experiences, thereby providing a more representative understanding of sustainability practices within the regional restaurant industry.

Research Respondents

The study included 200 respondents to ensure meaningful, representative data. The study was classified using a stratified random sampling design based on its location within each city. Since the target participants are

homegrown restaurant employees, the researcher identified all homegrown restaurants in the cities and the employees who qualify for the study. The participants were regular employees of homegrown restaurants in the SOCCSKSARGEN region. The researcher coordinated closely with the DTI Regional Office to access updated records and identify eligible establishments.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a modified questionnaire to assess human resource management practices, organizational culture and sustainable practices with a five-point Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). The human resource management practices tool was adapted from Ahmad (2021) with indicators training and development, compensation and benefits, performance appraisal and work life policies. In the organizational culture section, adapted from Arogundade (2020), with the domains: organizational structure, risk-taking, teamwork, competitiveness, strategic goal orientation, and spend culture. For sustainable practices, the tool was adapted from Sarango-Lalangui et al. (2018), with key dimensions including economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Reliability testing confirmed that all instruments were statistically reliable, with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from 0.79 to 0.90.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained approval from the Dean of the Graduate School and sent a formal letter to the DTI Regional Office XII in SOCCSKSARGEN Region, requesting a list of homegrown restaurants in the area. The list provided by DTI included the business names, owner names, and addresses of these establishments. If the information was incomplete, the researcher conducted on-site inspections to verify eligible restaurants and employees based on set criteria.

To reduce the time required to gather quantitative data for analysis, enumerators were used for data collection. All enumerators were selected from the surrounding area of the target enumeration area and employed based on the researcher's specified credentials. The researcher first described the study's goal and informed respondents that participation was voluntary before handing out the instrument. To make sure they comprehend its contents, the researcher also provided them an outline of the informed consent. The researcher emphasized respondents' rights to inquire about the study and to discontinue participation at any time without consequence. The informed consent form was signed by the

respondents after they had indicated their consent to participate. Once the survey respondents gave their consent to participate in the study, a printed survey questionnaire was provided to them in person. The respondents were given 5 to 15 minutes to answer the survey questionnaire. Surveys were collected in person, city by city, across four key cities in the SOCCSKSARGEN Region, where data collection was completed within one month. The data is prepared for compilation and tabulation once the target sample has finished the survey and in-person meeting. The researcher ensures that respondents understand their right to ask questions about the study and their freedom to leave the study at any time without repercussions.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher is committed to upholding the highest ethical standards throughout this study. To ensure compliance with these standards, the research protocol was reviewed and approved by the University of the Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee (UIC REC) under Protocol Code: GS-FB-11-24-0170. All ethical principles including respect for persons, beneficence, justice, transparency, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly observed during data collection, analysis, and reporting. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with their rights, privacy, and welfare safeguarded at every stage of the research. The researcher ensured that no harm would come to any participant and maintained strict data privacy in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). Both physical and digital data were handled with care, securely stored, and used only for academic purposes. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

This study was conducted by a researcher who is both a business consultant and college instructor, thus bringing relevant industry insights and academic grounding to the research. While the researcher is new to the mixed-methods approach, she worked closely with her research adviser and dissertation panel to ensure proper methodologies and ethical practices were followed. The researcher also had access to institutional support and resources, such as the UIC Library and other university facilities, which provided critical assistance in completing the study. This research further emphasized community engagement, transparency, and inclusivity by integrating employees' perspectives in homegrown restaurants while promoting sustainable practices for broader societal impact.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the dependent variable, sustainable practices, which are typically rated high, with the category means across the domains ranging from 3.94 to 3.97, indicating that they are frequently implemented in homegrown restaurants.

The findings indicate a high level across three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental sustainability, indicating that sustainability practices are frequently implemented in homegrown restaurants. The results suggest that homegrown restaurants have grown their customer base, customer purchases, and profitability while maintaining well-managed businesses that adhere to legal labor obligations. They also prioritize sustainability, community engagement, employee development, and ethical practices, ensuring a safe work environment and responsible supplier relationships. The result supports the study by McDonagh et al. (2024), which investigated the adoption of sustainable practices in the hospitality industry across environmental, economic, and social dimensions, emphasizing how restaurants can balance growth and profitability while implementing sustainability strategies. Likewise, the findings are consistent with the study of Becerra-Bizarron and Rodrigo (2024), who examined how small and medium-sized restaurants incorporate sustainability practices into their business models, highlighting the importance of legal compliance, employee development, and ethical practices.

Table 1
Level of Sustainable Practices of Homegrown Restaurants in SOCCSKSARGEN Region

Latent Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Economic Sustainability	3.94	0.74	High
Social Sustainability	3.94	0.76	High
Environmental Sustainability	3.97	0.79	High
Overall Mean	3.95		High

Table 2 presents the level of human resource management practices, with an overall mean of 4.12, which is generally characterized as high, as the mean scores across the various domains range from 3.81 to 3.99, indicating that these practices are evident in homegrown restaurants.

Based on the findings, all domains, training and development, compensation and benefits, performance appraisal, and work-life balance, were rated as high, indicating that these aspects of human resource management

practices are evident and consistently practiced within the organization. The results suggest that homegrown restaurants support employee growth through training, fair pay, and clear performance evaluations. They feel satisfied with compensation and benefits, and see the performance review system as transparent and tied to compensation, which, in turn, leads to job satisfaction. The result is similar to Nishii et al. (2008), who showed that when employees recognized HR practices such as fair pay, training opportunities, and fair performance appraisal as consistent and supportive, employees tend to show increased levels of involvement and loyalty in the organization, which reinforces the importance of implementing consistent and supportive HR practices. Furthermore, the findings support the study by Ugwu and Onyishi (2020), which highlights that transparent compensation and performance review systems strengthen employees' perceptions of fairness, leading to improved motivation and job satisfaction, underscoring the critical role of fairness and transparency in driving positive employee outcomes.

Table 2
Level of Human Resource Management Practices of Homegrown restaurants in SOCCSKSARGEN Region

Latent Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Training and Development	3.99	0.80	High
Compensation and Benefits	3.81	0.97	High
Performance Appraisal	3.91	0.79	High
Work-life Policies	3.90	0.73	High
Overall Mean	3.90		High

Table 3 presents the second independent variable, organizational culture, which is typically described as high, with mean scores across various domains ranging from 3.91 to 4.01, indicating that it is often evident in homegrown restaurants.

Based on the findings, all the domains, organizational structure, risk taking, teamwork, competitiveness, strategic goal orientation, and spend culture were rated as high or often evident. The results suggest that homegrown restaurants are organized to some degree and focus on clearly defined goals and team performance. They also value planning and business growth, fostering a strong internal community to achieve a competitive advantage while efficiently assessing risks. The result aligns with Porter and Kramer (2019), who emphasized that a clearly defined organizational structure enhances decision-making, optimizes resource use, and supports financial sustainability,

key elements for achieving long-term organizational success. Similarly, Park and Choi (2020) found that clear goal setting and teamwork improve operational performance and innovation, helping them remain competitive in the market.

Table 3
Level of Organizational Culture of Homegrown restaurants in SOCCSKSARGEN Region

Latent Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Organizational Structure	4.01	0.83	High
Risk-taking	3.91	0.83	High
Teamwork	3.91	0.82	High
Competitiveness	3.94	0.86	High
Strategic Goal Orientation	3.99	0.77	High
Spend Culture	3.91	0.83	High
Overall Mean	3.94		High

The data in Table 4 demonstrate a correlation between human resource management practices and organizational culture with sustainable practices. The results indicate that both independent variables, human resource management practices and organizational culture, are significantly correlated with sustainable practices, with Pearson r values of 0.845 and 0.838, respectively ($p<0.05$).

The study reveals a significant correlation between human resource management practices, organizational culture, and sustainable practices. Statistical analysis indicates that human resource management practices have the greatest influence on sustainable practices among homegrown restaurants. This signifies that the level of human resource management practices significantly shapes and enhances their sustainable practices. The findings align with previous studies, such as those by Jabbour and de Sousa Jabbour (2016), who highlighted the critical role of HRM in integrating sustainability practices into organizational success, suggesting that when HRM is aligned with sustainability, it strengthens organizational performance and long-term competitiveness. Likewise, Kramar's (2018) findings further emphasize the role of HRM in promoting social sustainability through fair wages, work-life balance, diversity, and employee well-being, suggesting that socially responsible HRM practices can enhance employee satisfaction, retention, and organizational reputation. Additionally, the study supports the work of Renwick et al. (2016), who stressed that HRM practices are essential for achieving sustainability across economic, environmental, and social dimensions, indicating that integrated HRM strategies can drive both operational excellence and

meaningful sustainability outcomes.

Furthermore, the research by Zibarras and Coan (2015) indicate a positive correlation between human resource management practices and sustainable practices. The study suggests that organizations with proactive HRM practices, such as employee involvement, training, and leadership support, were more likely to adopt sustainability practices. Their research showed that integrating sustainability into HR practices strengthens employees’ commitment to sustainability goals and improves overall organizational performance. Similarly, Jabbour and Sousa Jabbour (2016) highlight that HRM practices, especially green training, employee empowerment, and reward systems, have a significant positive effect on sustainable practices in manufacturing firms.

Table 4

Correlation between Variables

Variables paired with sustainable practices	r	p	Remarks
Human Resource Management Practices	.845	.000	Significant
Organizational Culture	.838	.000	Significant

The data presented in Table 5 shows that both human resource management practices and organizational culture, when considered individually, significantly influence sustainable practices ($p<0.05$). This suggests that a unit increase in human resource management practices and organizational culture leads to increases in sustainable practices of 0.476 and 0.431, respectively, while holding other variables constant.

As a model, the r^2 value of 0.762 indicates that 76.20% of the variation in sustainable practices can be explained by the combined influence of human resource management practices and organizational culture. This implies that other variables, accounting for 23.80%, may significantly affect sustainable practices but were not included in this study.

Table 5

Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	β	p	t	Remarks
Human Resource	.476	.000	7.1	Significant
Organizational Culture	.431	.000	6.479	Significant
$r^2 = .762$				
$p = .000$				
$F = 319.21$				

CONCLUSION

The status of human resource management practices as experienced by the respondents is high. This result shows that human resource management practices are often evident in the indicators of training and development, compensation and benefits, performance appraisal, and work-life policies. Moreover, this result shows that homegrown restaurant employees are highly aware of the importance of human resource management practices in shaping the restaurant's sustainable practices. On the status of organizational culture as experienced by the respondents, the result is high. These findings suggest that organizational culture is frequently manifested in the operations of homegrown restaurants and is recognized by employees as a significant determinant of sustainable practices. This finding means that respondents recognized organizational culture as an important determinant of the restaurants' sustainable practices. Furthermore, the respondents' status of sustainable practices is high. This result indicates that sustainable practices are often evident across the indicators of economic, social, and environmental sustainability, suggesting that homegrown restaurants have generally embraced practices that support long-term organizational and societal well-being.

The findings indicated that both human resource management practices and organizational culture influence sustainable practices. These findings suggest that enhancing human resource management practices and fostering a positive organizational culture are essential strategies for promoting and sustaining environmentally responsible behaviors within homegrown restaurants.

RECOMMENDATION

While employees rate training, compensation, and benefits highly, there are concerns about the lack of personalized growth opportunities and clear career progression. Employees may feel that training programs are too generic and do not align with their individual career goals, leading to stagnation and disengagement. To address this, management may collaborate with employees to create tailored development plans that align with their career aspirations. Structured mentorship programs, skills

workshops, and defined promotion tracks can provide clearer pathways for career advancement and recognition of employee efforts.

Although work-life balance is generally rated positively, challenges related to night shifts and unrealistic workload expectations remain. Employees may struggle with fatigue, which can affect their ability to manage personal commitments. Restaurants may offer more flexible work schedules and explore shift rotation systems to reduce disruptions to personal life, particularly for those working night shifts. Additionally, regular assessment of workload expectations will ensure that tasks are manageable, preventing stress and potential burnout.

Teamwork is identified as a core strength in organizational culture; however, some employees experience barriers to effective collaboration. Management may invest in team building activities and promote cross-departmental collaborations to foster better communication and coordination toward sustainability goals. Additionally, decision-making processes may need to be improved to ensure employees feel valued and involved in shaping the restaurant's direction. Empowering lower-level employees to contribute ideas will increase engagement and improve decision-making efficiency.

While competition is seen as a motivator, excessive competitive pressure can lead to stress and undermine employee well-being. Restaurant management may focus on balancing competitive elements such as performance targets and productivity incentives with a supportive work environment by promoting open communication, recognizing employee contributions, providing flexible scheduling, and fostering teamwork to ensure that competitiveness does not compromise employee well-being or sustainable practices. Recognizing individual achievements while focusing on team-based goals can reduce stress and enhance collaboration, ultimately improving employee morale and productivity.

The study suggests that organizational culture plays a significant role in driving sustainability efforts. To strengthen this, management may align organizational values with sustainability goals and communicate

these objectives clearly to employees. Regular engagement through sustainability workshops or discussions can embed these values into daily operations, encouraging employees to take an active role in sustainability initiatives.

On a broader scale, the study suggests that while some restaurants are prioritizing sustainability, there is a need for more widespread adoption of sustainable practices. The government may play a role by offering incentives to restaurants that adopt sustainable practices, such as local sourcing, waste reduction, and investment in green technologies. Certification programs or awards recognizing restaurants for their environmental efforts can motivate others to adopt similar practices.

For restaurant owners and managers, strengthening employee development initiatives and cultivating sustainability-oriented organizational cultures may improve long-term business performance and competitiveness. For local government units and the Department of Trade and Industry, sustainability training, incentives, and technical assistance programs may encourage wider adoption of sustainable practices among homegrown restaurants. For educational institutions, integrating sustainability and responsible business practices into entrepreneurship and management curricula may help prepare future business leaders to promote sustainable organizational practices.

For restaurant owners and managers, strengthening employee development initiatives and cultivating sustainability-oriented organizational cultures may enhance long-term business performance and competitiveness. For local government units and the Department of Trade and Industry, providing sustainability-related training, technical assistance, and incentive programs may encourage the wider adoption of sustainable practices among homegrown restaurants. For educational institutions, integrating sustainability and responsible business practices into entrepreneurship and management curricula may help prepare future business leaders to promote sustainable organizational practices.

Another study may be undertaken to explore the factors that

significantly contribute to sustainable practices, specifically focusing on variables such as leadership style, employee engagement, resource availability, and external stakeholder influence. Another research design may be used to gain deeper insights into these dynamics, such as a mixed-methods or longitudinal approach, to better understand how these variables interact over time or within different organizational contexts.

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