



## Original Article (Mixed)

# Design and validation of a sustainable human resource management model with a meritocracy promotion approach in the seven education districts of Mashhad

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**Abstract**

The present study aims to design and present a sustainable human resources management model with a meritocracy promotion approach in the seven education districts of Mashhad. The research is of mixed type and the research strategy is content analysis in the qualitative part and survey in the quantitative part. The statistical sample in the qualitative stage was 16 university experts selected as the sample size using the saturation principle and the purposeful and judgmental sampling method. In the quantitative part, all the principals of girls' and boys' schools in the seven education districts of Mashhad were 1327 people. The data collection method is in-depth and semi-structured interviews in the qualitative part and questionnaires in the quantitative part. Data analysis in the qualitative part was done using Maxqda software, SPSS software in the quantitative part, and AMOS in structural equations. The findings in the model of sustainable human resource management with a meritocracy promotion approach include 5 dimensions and 24 components, which include competency-based recruitment, competency-based improvement of sustainable human resources, competency-based human resource retention, sustainable and competency-based human resource performance evaluation, and performance-based payment system. In the quantitative part, the results showed that the aforementioned model has the necessary validity. According to the results of the research, managers of the seven education regions of Mashhad can promote meritocracy in the organization through the development and strengthening of sustainable human resource management.

**Keywords:**

Human resource management, sustainable human resource management, competence, meritocracy.

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## Extended abstract

### Introduction

Today, human resources are considered the most valuable and important assets of organizations. Given the changes and developments of the present era and with the entry of organizations into the knowledge-based economy, human resources are considered the most vital strategic element and the most fundamental way to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization (Rastegar et al., 2024). Therefore, in the era of globalization and increasing technological progress, human capital is recognized as the most important and valuable asset of organizations and the only factor in achieving sustainable competitive advantage. In this regard, financial resources and technologies alone cannot guarantee the advantages of organizations; rather, the presence of talented and capable managers can effectively compensate for the lack or deficiency of other resources (Zibarras & Coan, 2024). The existence of extensive and continuous developments in the social, economic and cultural fields greatly increases the responsibility and duties of social institutions and organizations; and education, as the most important institution emerging from the context of society and at the same time constructive and evolving it, has a significant impact on the progress of society (Maleki Hassanvand et al., 2023). If education in a country is dynamic and lively, that country will naturally be prosperous and developed. For this reason, investment in education has been considered a strategic investment by governments, and neglecting it will face serious challenges for any country (Mohammadi & Tooraani, 2023). Paying attention to meritocracy in the selection, appointment, and selection of educational managers will not only improve management quality, but will also pave the way for the creation of a dynamic and efficient educational system (Rouzbahan et al., 2022). If the criteria for selecting and promoting managers are the necessary expertise and competencies, managers will also pay attention to the effects of applying the aforementioned competencies in advancing goals (Hosseini et al., 2024). This approach provides a suitable basis for all facilities and resources available in the organization to be used optimally and lead to the greatest possible sustainability and productivity of the education system and the realization of its lofty goals in the long term (Rezapour et al., 2024). Therefore, considering the stated problem, this research seeks to answer the question: How is the design and validation of a sustainable human resource management model with a meritocracy promotion approach in the seven education and training districts of Mashhad?

### Theoretical framework

#### Sustainable human resource management

Sustainable human resource management refers to all activities related to the continuous development, implementation, and maintenance of a system that aims to create employees of a sustainable organization. In fact, this concept is that aspect of human resource management that is interested in transforming ordinary employees into sustainable employees so that they can achieve the organization's environmental goals and ultimately make a significant contribution to environmental sustainability (Rastegar et al., 2024).

#### Meritocracy

Meritocracy is a management philosophy and attitude in which human resources are placed and developed according to their inherent effort and ability. Meritocracy means granting status based on merit and not granting status based on being bright or being a social class. In the meritocracy style, the organization seeks to expand justice. It means that it does the right things correctly, selects and promotes competent people in a reasonable and logical manner,



and pays attention to both individual and organizational interests, and the individual's rightful values are not subject to the unreasonable demands of the majority (Aeinehchi et al., 2024). Dolatyari & Tavakoli (2025) investigated the identification of barriers to green human resource management in order to increase organizational sustainability. They concluded that the absence of necessary green structures, processes, and tools plays the greatest impact on the failure to increase organizational sustainability. Also, factors such as lack of leadership support, challenges in attracting green talented employees, and lack of green competencies are other influential factors. The interactions presented using the matrix of relationships between barriers in implementing green human resource management help human resource professionals visualize the power of the factors' influence on the entire system and focus on important barriers. It is expected that this study can enlighten human resource managers in the optimal use of company resources. Hosseini et al. (2024) investigated the factors affecting the implementation of sustainable human resource management in the oil industry. The results showed that 4 concepts were identified as causal conditions, 19 concepts as intervening conditions, and 33 concepts as background conditions for the implementation of sustainable human resource management.

### **Research methodology**

The research is of mixed type and the research strategy is content analysis in the qualitative part and a survey in the quantitative part. The statistical sample in the qualitative stage was 16 university experts selected as the sample size using the saturation principle and the purposeful and judgmental sampling method. In the quantitative part, all the principals of girls' and boys' schools in the seven education and training districts of Mashhad were 1327 people. The data collection method was in-depth and semi-structured interviews in the qualitative part and questionnaires in the quantitative part.

### **Research findings**

Data analysis in the qualitative part was done using Max Quda software and in the quantitative part, SPSS software and structural equations using AMOS were used. The findings in the sustainable human resource management model with the approach of promoting meritocracy include 5 dimensions and 24 components, which include competency-based recruitment, improvement based on the development of sustainable human resource competency, human resource retention with a competency approach, sustainable and competency-based human resource performance evaluation, and a performance-based payment system. In the quantitative part, the results showed that the aforementioned model has the necessary validity. According to the results of the research, managers of the seven education districts of Mashhad can promote meritocracy in the organization by developing and strengthening sustainable human resource management.

### **Conclusion**

The present study was conducted with the aim of designing and presenting a sustainable human resource management model with the approach of promoting meritocracy in the seven education districts of Mashhad. The results of this part of the research are aligned with the findings of Movahedizadeh et al. (2022), Zairhojghan et al. (2021), Tafarjkhah et al. (2021), Rouzbahan et al. (2022), Kakeman et al. (2021), Tafarjkhah et al. (2021), Sharma et al. (2022), Gunawan et al. (2021), Ahmadbeighi et al. (2021), Jaskeviciute et al. (2021), Mohammadi et al. (2023), Jalal Kamali et al. (2023), Moradibarouji et al. (2023). According to the results of the research, the following suggestion was made:



Education organizations should implement the necessary infrastructure, including the establishment of a real and effective suggestion system, to strengthen innovation and initiative of employees, including the creation of incentive mechanisms for innovative and creative employees and the implementation of its guidelines.