Article

"Searching for Gold" with Sustainable Human Resources Management and Internal Communication: Evaluating the Mediating Role of Employer Attractiveness for Explaining Turnover Intention and Performance

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Abstract: Objective: The main objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of sustainable human resources management (SHRM) and internal communication (IC) on turnover intention (TI) and employee performance (PER) while assessing the mediating role of organizational attractiveness (AT) over these relationships. In this sense, this study intends to evaluate the effect of SHRM and IC on employee PER and TI, with AT acting as the mediator in a joint model of analysis. **Methodology:** To achieve the aforementioned purposes, a cross-sectional quantitative study was prepared using the Structural Equation Model (SEM). In total, 177 individuals participated in the study. Regarding gender, 62.4% were female. Participants came from all districts of Portugal and were aged from 21 years old to over 55 years old. **Results:** The main results show that both SHRM and IC are significantly correlated with AT, PER, and TI. Additionally, AT has a total mediation effect in the relationship between SHRM, PER, and TI and also between IC, PER, and TI. **Practical implications:** These results seem to support the need for organizations to invest in combined strategies and practices that aim to intertwine SHRM and IC towards the benefit of the worker. Both areas have been shown to have solid effects over PER and TI, as well as on the development of favorable worker perceptions that identify the organization as a good place to work. Practitioners should look at both SHRM and IC as valid ways of stimulating the quality of the worker–organization relationship. Incorporating these areas into common strategic planning and consecutive practices seems advisable regarding workers' performance and employee retention.

Keywords: sustainable human resources management; internal communication; attractiveness; performance; turnover intention

1. Introduction

Sustainability is hardly a recent subject with regard to human resources management (HRM) or research into communication. The subject has been the center of wide discussions from practitioners and researchers aiming to discover valid ways of enhancing firm competitiveness through sustainability for quite some time (e.g., Elkington 1998). The subject has been brought towards the attention of HRM over the last decade, as managers and researchers became interested in understanding how to build effective and impactful sustainable HRM (SHRM) practices (e.g., Ehnert et al. 2014; Wikhamn 2019). The idea of providing HRM with a focal relevance towards the maximum aim of supporting corporate sustainability (CS) development goals has gathered support from those who see it as a valid way of renewing the area's strategic centrality. Likewise, communication professionals and researchers have also been exploring the challenges facing those seeking to realize

sustainability goals. As internal communication (IC) deals with the critical aspect of how information is managed within the organization, it is a central aspect for assuring workers' involvement with the strategic sustainability compromises of their firm.

It is interesting to see that, commonly, the areas of HRM and IC are considered independently from one another in terms of the development of internal policies, practices, or procedures aimed towards workers. This reality is mainly due to HRM and IC professionals not necessarily sharing the exact same starting points of analysis over organizations' development needs, as HRM is closely related to management orientations and IC is closely related to communication orientations. The area of HRM starts from HR being regarded as a matter of investment towards the maximization of productivity benefits. On the other hand, the area of IC emerges from an understanding that workers have informational needs that deserve adjusted forms of information dissemination regarding the existence of different internal publics. These starting points have led to the formation of distinctive kinds of practices (that can be developed independently from one another) that aim to attain diverse outputs. Both areas, however, agree over the importance of internal investment, and also agree that workers are a key element in organizational development. As managers and researchers traditionally make attempts to *"search for gold"* in order to find renewed ways of stimulating relevant outputs, generating alignment between both areas seems an appealing idea to search for. To stimulate proximity between these areas, organizations need to have sufficiently strong strategic compromises to bridge the two areas. Thus, there is an immediate question that has come to our attention: can SHRM and IC stimulate similar attitudinal and behavioral responses in workers?

This study's main research questions are the following: what is the predictive effect of SHRM and IC on workers' performance (PER) and turnover intention (TI) and does the perception of organizational attractiveness (AT) mediate these relationships?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sustainable Human Resources Management and Internal Communication

The new millennium worldwide agenda has brought the sustainability issue to the forefront in terms of countries' development concerns. The current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved by the United Nation's General Assembly on the 25 of September 2015 have worked as an effective source of motivation that has pressured governments to consider environmental protection alongside their desire for economic prosperity. An important milestone for this current agenda was, without a doubt, the work carried out by the Brundtland Commission. This commission was a United Nation's sub-organization created in 1983 with the purpose of bonding countries to sustainable development concerns. In 1987, the Brundtland Commission was dissolved after releasing the report "Our Common Future" (also known as the Brundtland Report) (Brundtland Commission 1987). The report was effective at emphasizing environmental concerns as a core element of government policies and defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 43). Current SDGs share the philosophical alignment of the Brundtland Report.

Research into combining HRM and sustainability has been gathering contributions related to the SDGs, notably the *(a)* economic growth and *(b)* decent work SDGs, thus resulting in a visible trend in research on HRM (e.g., De Prins et al. 2014; Diaz-Carrion et al. 2018; Raveenther 2020). While this SHRM research trend is growing within HRM literature, existing research is still characterized by a focus on the impact of SHRM on business and on society (e.g., Randev and Jha 2019; Raveenther 2020) and not so much on discussing how to proceed (e.g., Ehnert et al. 2019).

SHRM consists of a way of permitting the "achievement of financial, social and ecological goals while simultaneously reproducing the HR base over a long term" (Kramar 2014, p. 1084). It may also be defined as "the adoption of HRM strategies and practices that enable the achievement of financial, social and ecological goals, with an impact inside and outside of the organization and over a long-term horizon" (Ehnert et al. 2016, para. 90).

Thus, it represents a long-term compromise with the cause of sustainability, inviting organizations to set up a display of HR practices seeking to "minimize the negative impacts on the natural environment and on people and communities, and acknowledges the critical enabling role of CEOs, middle and line managers, HRM professionals and employees" (Kramar 2014, p. 1084). Consequently, SHRM may be a quite viable way of enabling employee integration into the organization's sustainability strategy.

Research under the remit of SHRM covers diverse topics. A very compelling classification typology is delivered by Ehnert et al. (2019), in which the authors propose four types of SHRM: (a) Socially Responsible HRM (type 1). A trend in research oriented towards the link between HRM and corporate social responsibility, majorly based on approaching in what way the firm's HR systems and practices capture CSR concerns. (b) Green HRM (type 2). A trend in research aimed at investigating employee involvement in the organization's environmental sustainability strategy. (c) Triple Bottom Line HRM (type 3). A trend in research approaching HR functions that is pointed towards the people-oriented practices that encapsulate triple bottom line influences and how they shape HRM actions. (d) Common Good HRM (type 4). An underdeveloped research trend aiming to deliver business models addressing "the call for a new paradigm by redefining the purpose of business in terms of common good values" (p. 5). This area of research also seeks to outline the ways in which HRM can "support business leaders and employees in contributing to ecological and social progress in the world" (p. 5).

From a pragmatic perspective, Gomes and Santos (2022) arranged existing literature within this field according to three core components of SHRM, in which each component makes its own contribution under the broader goal of developing sustainable HRM strategies and practices. Each component bears unique sets of action, thus facilitating the construction of pragmatic means of developing sustainability through the way people are managed according to sustainability strategies. The components are as follows: (1) Green HRM includes HR policies and practices that are intended to centralize a firm's resources towards supporting workers' ecological awareness, in which the practical implications are based on the shaping of HR practices for environmental actions. (2) Ethical and Socially Responsible HRM is directed towards the implementation of ethical premises in HRM practices and policies that aim to enrich organizational social performance within CSR performance. (3) Interactionist HRM is directed towards the development of consistent worker involvement in their company's sustainability efforts. For this matter, this component calls attention to the need to enrich workers with stimuli regarding sustainability goals, in which, based on the functions and prospects of IC, both SHRM and IC should be outlined and prepared with solid contact points.

By definition, IC refers to the "strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders at all levels within organizations" (Welch and Jackson 2007, p. 183). Thus, IC is a strategic area that permits organizations to produce value creation by dealing with the strategic management of information and communication within the organization. For this purpose, Verghese (2017) argues that IC (1) enables employees to be educated concerning culture and values, (2) encourages the involvement of employees in the business, (3) aligns the employee's actions with the needs of customers, (4) allows for the integration of new employees, (5) stimulates the sharing of internal information, and (6) supports leadership processes and outputs. IC is a strategic tool that can be used for information sharing and the creation of bonds between the workers and the organization, which thus helps build an organization's culture. According to Westphalen (1998), IC assumes three main strategic global functions: (1) information exposition, (2) information transmission, and (3) the inclusion of workers in the organization's reality and purposes. These global functions are central to the development of internal strategic agendas related to an organization's superior intentions, such as sustainability compromises. Ćorić et al. (2020) suggest that IC deals with all communication that takes place inside a given organization and represents shared ideas and information, as well as the stimulation of attitudes and behavior that support the organization in meeting their objectives.

Designing IC strategies and practices demands action plans that have been developed in accordance with global strategic orientations. A very compelling way of considering how to manage IC deals with the symmetrical communication perspective model (Grunig 1992). The main idea surrounding the model here considered is that whenever IC is developed in accordance with symmetry, it will more likely stimulate openness and reciprocity concerning organizational values, culture, and practices, as well as openness between managers and organizations on the basis of mutual understanding and acceptance (Yue et al. 2020).

Grunig (1992) postulated that asymmetrical communication is unbalanced by nature as it only considers the top-down circuit of information inside an organization to be relevant. On the other hand, symmetrical communication is based on the notion that the information that circulates from a top-down perspective is as important as the information that circulates in a bottom-up circuit, implying that the workers are a very important and critical aspect in the growth of an organization's IC strategies. Thus, symmetrical communication allows for the interests of the organization and the worker to be presented, in which both sides are respected and considered in a similar way (Men and Stacks 2014). The notion of open communication and reciprocity, as well as negotiation between organization and workers, is thus widely accepted and desired, with the maximum goal of promoting ideas based on mutual respect that consider and involve both top-down and bottom-up circuits of information (Yue et al. 2020).

An analysis of the collaboration between sustainable HRM and IC seems not only possible but advisable. Despite the areas of HRM and IC being rooted in different orientations under different theoretical and practical guidance, both areas share a common concern: the workers. The area of IC has its roots in communication theory and mostly views the workers as internal publics having internal needs. On the other hand, HRM is rooted in management theory and is concerned with the development of HRM practices that result in relevant productive processes. From a holistic perspective embedded within the sustainability compromise, it seems quite possible and interesting to conceive that both areas could share a common alignment that is pointed toward valuing workers. Both SHRM and IC aim to develop activities and structures of action that favor workers within their productive processes. Stimulating interactive policies between SHRM and IC under the sustainability umbrella may very well be a valid path to follow. However, to understand how and if this is manageable, there is a fundamental empirical research question worthy of consideration: can SHRM and IC stimulate similar attitudinal and behavioral responses in workers, thus justifying the bridging of these areas?

2.2. Organizational Attractiveness, Performance, and Turnover Intention

Organizational attractiveness relates to the degree to which an organization is perceived as a good place to work or to the desirability of having a work relation with a given organization (Aiman-Smith et al. 2001). Due to the importance of this indicator, several researchers have dedicated their efforts toward an understanding of attractiveness predictors and consequences (e.g., Joseph et al. 2014; Krys and Konradt 2022), especially in the context of understanding which factors determine the attraction of an organization to a worker in recruitment or employee retention contexts (Collins and Kanar 2013).

Several attractiveness predictors are known, such as person–organization fit (e.g., Lievens et al. 2001; Cinar 2019), job and organizational attributes (e.g., Gomes and Neves 2010; Gomes and Neves 2011; Lievens 2007; Roongrerngsuke and Liefooghe 2013) procedural justice (e.g., Ranjan and Yadav 2018), workplace authenticity (e.g., Reis et al. 2017), prior work experiences (e.g., Gomes and Neves 2010) and corporate social responsibility (Story et al. 2016). Attractiveness has also been associated with several relevant consequences for organizations, such as job pursuit intentions (e.g., Khan and Muktar 2020), intention to apply to a job vacancy (e.g., Gomes and Neves 2019), employee engagement (e.g., Slåtten et al. 2019), turnover intention (e.g., Ranjan and Yadav 2018; Slåtten et al. 2019), employee performance (e.g., Nguyen et al. 2021), and employer brand perception (e.g., Joglekar and Tan 2022).

However, it is interesting to see that, despite attractiveness being known for its association with relevant organizational indicators, not much is yet answered regarding its relation to internal communication. We were able to locate a study worthy of consideration in this matter, which indicated a promising association between IC satisfaction and attractiveness (Tkalac Verčič et al. 2021); this study explored the effect of IC on employee engagement and attractiveness, in which results showed a positive and significative association.

Also relevant and worthy of consideration is a certain absence of knowledge regarding the relationship between SHRM and organizational attractiveness, despite relevant clues seeming to suggest a relation. Existing research presents concrete evidence of an association between green human resources management and organizational attractiveness (e.g., Umrani et al. 2022; Merlin and Chen 2022; Chaudhary and Firoz 2022). This relation seems expected and justified by the importance of green HRM to current workers' evaluation of the values that their employer holds. Likewise, the relationship between CSR and attractiveness is also known (e.g., Duarte et al. 2014; Agnihotri and Bhattacharya 2021). Furthermore, the association between sustainable HRM and attractiveness has also been worthy of consideration, showing promising positive and meaningful associations in both conceptual (e.g., App et al. 2012) and empirical studies (e.g., Jafri 2021). Also worthy of consideration regarding this issue is a study developed by Merlin and Chen (2022), in which the authors found green human resource management to have a positive and significant influence on organizational reputation and organizational attractiveness. Likewise, Chaudhary (2020) also established a positive relationship between green human resources management and organizational attractiveness, in which attractiveness played a mediatory role in explaining the intention to pursue a career in an organization.

Due to this existing evidence, it seems that both IC and SHRM are associated with organizational attractiveness, and we thus propose the following hypotheses:

H1: *Internal communication is positively and significantly related to organizational attractiveness.*

H2: *Sustainable HRM is positively and significantly related to organizational attractiveness.*

Employee performance has been a subject of interest in many studies, as understanding how to predict an employee's efficiency or effectiveness in work contexts is a critical matter for every organization. It is considered as the duties and tasks that are committed to within the organization and that must be performed according to the goals prepared and determined by the organization (Liao 2009). The association between HRM and performance is known and seems to be quite stable based on the assumption that people are a strategic asset to organizations (e.g., Kazlauskaite and Buciuniene 2010). Several empirical studies have shown a link between HRM and employee performance in different contexts. For instance, Alsafadi and Altahat (2020) found a positive and meaningful association between HRM practices and employee performance. In the same manner, Mahfouz et al. (2021) observed that HRM practices have a significant impact on employee performance in a relation mediated by employee commitment.

Another aspect deserving consideration is renewed interest regarding the link between HRM and employee performance, which has arisen due to the sustainability issue in HRM. Empirical evidence regarding the relationship between SHRM and employee performance is still scarce, despite relevant indications showing the research effort that should be made to evaluate the relation. Jerónimo et al. (2020) developed a very interesting study showing that the relation between SHRM and employee performance is not a direct one and is mediated by either perceived organizational rationale for sustainability or organizational identification. Furthermore, Tortia et al. (2022) found compelling results showing that SHRM practices related to involvement and workload positively influence performance. In a similar way, Manzoor et al. (2019) found that sustainable HRM practices, such as selection, participation, and employee empowerment, have a significant and positive influence on employee job performance.

Following the same reasoning, the relationship between IC and employee performance is also very important to establish. The idea that the way how an organization informs

their workers and manages communication channels within the organization influences performance and productivity seems valid. Existing evidence, though scarce, seems to validate the relation. For instance, Titang (2013) provided empirical evidence regarding this relation, showing that IC has a significant impact on employee performance and that employee performance may be stifled due to inadequate communication structures. In the same line of research, Polycarp (2022) found that IC has a significant positive relationship with staff performance. Thus, it seems appropriate to suggest that both SHRM and IC should have a positive and meaningful association with employee performance. According to our line of reasoning, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3: *Internal communication is positively and significantly related to performance.*

H4: *Sustainable HRM is positively and significantly related to performance.*

The ability for an organization to produce depends on workers putting their talent up to the challenge of succeeding organizational goals, and thus retaining skillful workers will always be a priority for top managers. Understanding ways to avoid employee turnover is a vigorous challenge for modern organizations and is crucial if competitive organizations are to remain stable in terms of their long-term viability. This is because high turnover rates result in high recruitment costs and training requirements, a loss of experienced workers, and negative impacts on a company's performance (Ton and Huckman 2008).

Employee turnover intention (TI), by definition, is the employee's willingness to voluntarily abandon their current career at an organization (Lazzari et al. 2022). Studying what determines turnover intention and understanding valid ways of controlling employee's voluntary abandonment of organizations has been a matter of interest among researchers for quite some time, despite some doubts persisting over a complete perspective regarding relevant predictors. Nevertheless, several determinants of TI have been established, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (e.g., Miao and Rhee 2020), emotional intelligence (e.g., Ouerdian et al. 2021), CSR perceptions (e.g., Gaudêncio et al. 2020) emotional stability and organizational commitment (e.g., Tsaousoglou et al. 2022), job satisfaction (e.g., Jenkins and Thomlinson 1992), work–family conflict (e.g., Ribeiro et al. 2021a, 2021b), authentic leadership (e.g., Ribeiro et al. 2020b), organizational justice (e.g., Mengstie 2020), HRM practices (e.g., Memon et al. 2021), job characteristics (e.g., Ahmad 2018), training satisfaction and work engagement (e.g., Memon et al. 2016), leaders' coaching skills (Romão et al. 2022), and burnout (Gomes et al. 2022).

An overview of the content of IC and sustainable HRM research suggests that both indicators should be significantly and negatively related to employee's turnover intention. When searching for valid predictors of employee's TI, it seems that both IC and SHRM work well for organizations as structures that aid in predicting TI. In accordance, we propose the following hypotheses:

H5: *Internal communication is negatively and significantly related to turnover intention.*

H6: *Sustainable HRM is negatively and significantly related to turnover intention.*

When considering the revisions presented earlier, as well as the foreseen associations between IC, SHRM, organizational attractiveness, TI, and performance, we believe that an integrative and holistic model of analysis is possible to propose. The sequence of relationships we are proposing may be justified by the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Using the rationale suggested by this theoretical framework, there are a sequence of steps that explain behavior intention and behavior. A person's beliefs concerning the characteristics and attributes of an object determine an attitude, which is a personal positive or negative evaluative positioning regarding the object itself. A person's behavioral disposition results from attitudinal positioning regarding the object. Using the theoretical reasoning provided, we propose that both IC and SHRM may function as beliefs (descriptively formed beliefs) (Fishbein and Ajzen propose that individuals are able to form beliefs in several ways: informationally, through acceptance of information regarding an

object; descriptively, based on an individual's experience facing an object; or inferentially, based on inferences beyond observable events) about the organization that can shape favorable or unfavorable attitudes. Organizational attractiveness results from the belief formation process (subsequently leading to the status of attitude) as it deals, by definition, with the favorable positioning of an organization as a good place to work. Lastly, both TI and performance have the status of behavioral intention outputs. As such, we propose that TI and performance results from a process in which organizational attractiveness acts as a mediator in the relationship established between IC and sustainable HRM. According to the reasoning made, we propose the following mediation hypotheses:

H7: *Organizational attractiveness mediates the relation between internal communication and performance and between internal communication and turnover intention.*

H8: *Organizational attractiveness mediates the relation between sustainable HRM and performance and between sustainable HRM and turnover intention.*

3. Method

Sample and Procedure

A quantitative methodological approach was conceived to best explore this study's purposes and hypotheses through the use of a cross-sectional study design. Concerning the data collection procedure, a questionnaire was prepared on the Google Forms platform and made available on social networks from 15 June to 30 of July 2022, which thus provided a diverse group of participants for the study. The questionnaire was prepared using recommendations from Podsakoff et al. (2003), and the following indicators were built to measure the study variables through a *Likert scale* with scores ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) regarding the statements presented:

Internal communication: 6 items used based on Dozier et al. (1995) ($\alpha = 0.95$). Sample item: "*most communication between management and employees can be said to be two-way communication*".

Sustainable human resources management: 6 items used based on Xuan et al. (2021) ($\alpha = 0.96$). Sample item: "*in my organization HRM follows a sustainable development orientation*".

Individual performance: 4 items used based on Rego and Cunha (2008) and Staples et al. (1999) ($\alpha = 0.79$). Sample item: "*I am an effective employee*".

Turnover intention: 3 items used based on Bozeman and Perrewé (2001) ($\alpha = 0.79$). Sample item: "*I am actively searching for an opportunity to leave the organization*".

Organizational attractiveness: 4 items used based on Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) and Highhouse et al. (2003) ($\alpha = 0.95$). Sample item: "*this organization is very attractive as a place to work*".

The study sample was a non-probabilistic convenience sample composed of 177 participants. Regarding qualifications, the sample included participants with different qualifications levels (9.8% mandatory education; 45.7% graduate degree; 12.7% postgraduate level; 31.8% master's degree and above). Regarding gender, 62.4% were female. Regarding age, the highest percentage of participants fell in the 39 to 54 age group (56.1%), followed by those up to 38 years old (27.2%) and those over 55 years old (16.8%). Regarding seniority in the company, the majority of participants had worked in their organization for more than 15 years (38.7%), followed by those that had worked in their organizations for between 1 and 5 years (28.3%) and those that had worked in their organizations for between 6 to 10 years (15%).

4. Results

4.1. Statistical Procedure Overview

We carried out the Harman technique to assure that data did not suffer from common method bias. We also applied bootstrapping (at n = 1000 units) to permit re-sample distribution by calculating "the statistic of interest in multiple re-samples of the data set and by sampling n units with replacement from the original sample of n units"

(Preacher et al. 2007, p. 190). The usefulness of the bootstrap methodology has been noted (especially when accessing indirect effects) as the tests reliably detect whether sampling distribution of the mediated effect skews away from 0.

We developed our statistical procedures using a Structural Equation Model (SEM) and also tested the study hypothesis using the SEM due to overall fit indices being provided when estimating relationships between variables. For estimating model fit, the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and χ^2 values are reported.

4.2. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in sequential stages to better understand the results achieved. We have presented the results of the correlation matrix of the study variables that shows how the variables of the study correlate with each other. After this analysis, how the study hypotheses were tested is presented, notably the mediation hypotheses foreseen in the model of analysis.

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables. The analysis presented in Table 1 shows significant correlations between the variables. Regarding reliability, our tests show that the Cronbach alpha values demonstrated strong internal reliability. Furthermore, we also tested the Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of all study variables, with solid values obtained by following Fornell and Larcker's (1981) recommendations.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix.

	MEAN	S.D	1.	2.	3.	4.	5	CR	AVE
1. SHRM	3.19	1.19	(0.96)	-		-	-	0.962	0.836
2. AT	3.58	1.03	0.75 *	(0.95)		-	-	0.954	0.838
3. PER	4.10	0.56	0.31 *	0.35 *	(0.79)	-	-	0.810	0.526
4. IC	3.31	1.05	0.84 *	0.76 *	0.27 *	(0.95)	-	0.946	0.747
5. TI	2.39	1.23	−0.47 *	−0.66 *	−0.21 *	−0.50 *	(0.91)	0.910	0.772

Cronbach alpha values reported in parentheses. * Correlation is significant at 0.01 (two-tailed). *Note: the data displayed in the table relate to this specific study.*

It is possible to see that all study variables are significantly and positively correlated with each other. Sustainable HRM is positively and significantly correlated with attractiveness ($r = 0.75$), as well as with performance ($r = 0.31$) and internal communication ($r = 0.84$); however, it is negatively correlated with turnover intention ($r = −0.47$). It is also possible to see that attractiveness is positively and significantly correlated with performance ($r = 0.35$) and internal communication ($r = 76$) while being negatively correlated with turnover intention ($r = −0.66$). In addition, internal communication is positively and significantly correlated with performance ($r = 0.27$) and negatively correlated with turnover intention ($r = −0.50$). Lastly, performance was negatively and significantly correlated with turnover intention ($r = −0.21$). These results seem to suggest that both sustainable HRM and internal communication are associated with important organizational outputs, such as how well an organization is perceived as being a good place to work, worker performance, and workers' intentions to abandon an organization. The results also suggest that sustainable HRM and internal communication are well associated with each other, suggesting the notion that these areas may be stimulated in a cohesive manner with the aim of developing relevant organizational outputs.

We also conducted additional tests using the SEM. Analysis of the goodness-of-fit of the theoretical model showed good fit of the data (χ^2 (221df) = 479,734, $p \leq 0.05$; RMSEA = 0.08; CFI = 0.94; TLI = 0.93; IFI = 0.94) with bootstrapping (n = 1000). An alternative single factor model of analysis revealed unacceptable fit indices. Figure 1 presents the theoretical model of analysis.
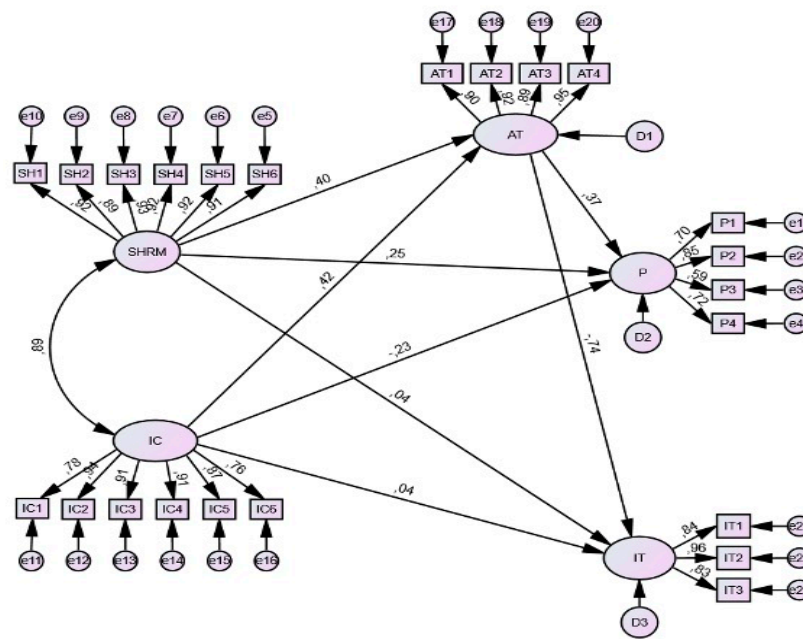
Figure 1. Theoretical model of analysis. Note: this figure was built based on the data retrieved for this study specifically.

The estimates of the model provide evidence for hypotheses testing. Path analysis was performed to assess H1 to H6, revealing that both H1 and H2 were supported. Both IC ($\beta = 0.478$; *p* sig. < 0.05) and sustainable HRM ($\beta = 0.357$; *p* sig. < 0.05) were revealed to be positively and meaningfully related to organizational attractiveness. These results support the important notion that both the IC and SHRM areas of action directly influence how an organization is appraised as a good place to work and reinforce the possibility that intertwined sets of action between SHRM and IC are pertinent and appropriate. Regarding H3 and H4, results revealed that there is no significant path effect between both IC ($\beta = 0.108$; *p* sig. *n.s.*) and SHRM ($\beta = 0.092$; *p* sig. *n.s.*) and performance. In the same way, H5 and H6 were not supported as results did not reveal a significant path effect between both IC ($\beta = 0.046$; *p* sig. *n.s.*) and SHRM ($\beta = 0.003$; *p* sig. *n.s.*) and turnover intention. The results of these non-confirmed hypotheses suggest the need to evaluate whether the relations between IC and sustainable HRM and turnover intention and performance are in fact indirect (in accordance with what is foreseen in H7 and H8) by estimating the indirect effect of attractiveness as a mediator in these relationships.

To test for the mediation hypotheses (H7 and H8), we followed Kenny and Judd's (1984) directions for estimating mediation effects using an SEM. For total mediation effects, the indirect effect (via mediator) should be significant, whereas the direct effect should be non-significant. For partial mediation effects, the direct effects should be significant and so should the indirect effects (via mediator). Table 2 shows the standardized direct and indirect effects verified in the theoretical model.

Table 2. Theoretical model's standardized direct and indirect effects.

Path	**Direct Effect**	**Indirect Effect**
	(D.E)	*(I.E.)* **via** *Attractiveness*
SHRM–PER	*n.s.*	0.147; sig < 0.05
SHRM–TI	*n.s.*	-0.299; sig < 0.05
IC–PER	*n.s.*	0.154; sig < 0.05
IC–TI	*n.s.*	-0.315; sig < 0.05

Note: the data presented in the table relate to this specific study.

In accordance with our results, it is possible to see that there is evidence of a significant total mediatory effect from organizational attractiveness in the relationship between sustainable HRM and performance (direct effect $p = n.s.$; indirect effect via mediator = 0.147; p sig. < 0.05), as well as in the relationship with TI (direct effect $p = n.s.$; indirect effect via mediator = −0.299; p sig. < 0.05). This result suggests that SHRM activates a process predicting both performance and turnover avoidance intention, with organizational attractiveness as a valid mediator of both processes. This means that SHRM explains workers' performance via attractiveness, implying that the way how an organization develops SHRM practices leads to a related appraisal of the organization as a place to work, and as a result, workers determine the resulting desire to improve their performance. Furthermore, SHRM has also shown similar abilities regarding the avoidance of turnover intention. Workers seem to perceive the organizations' investment in SHRM as an enhancement of how attractive the organization is as a place to work, resulting in reduced intention to voluntarily abandon the organization.

Our results also show that internal communication has similar abilities to those verified with SHRM. Internal communication showed predictive abilities in terms of performance and turnover intention avoidance via organizational attractiveness (direct effect $p = n.s.$; indirect effect via mediator = −0.315; p sig. < 0.05) and performance (direct effect $p = n.s.$; indirect effect via mediator = 0.154; p sig. < 0.05).

These results imply that internal communication can be viewed as a solid path towards improving the way how an organization is evaluated as a good place to work, thus leading to workers perceiving that they will likely improve their performance and avoiding intentions to voluntarily abandon the organization. Results also suggest the intertwining of SHRM and IC in courses of action regarding the maximization of workers' attitudinal and behavioral outputs. Thus, these results support H7 and H8.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1. Discussion

Organizational studies are quite wide in terms of research interests for studies into the employee–organization relationship (e.g., Duarte et al. 2019; Ribeiro et al. 2020a; Balaskas et al. 2020; Gomes et al. 2021; Wiefek and Heinitz 2021). Within the wide plethora of relevant and current remits of investigation, the subjects of avoiding turnover intention and stimulating employee performance present themselves as key matters for promoting organizational success. Despite existing research into the turnover and performance subjects indicating clues for empirical research development and practitioners' courses of action, understanding if and how sustainable HRM and IC work together in solving this important issue is an open research question.

As mentioned earlier, the most common approach to studying the predictive abilities of HRM and IC is to consider them to be independent from one another, thus leading to a lack of research that aims to build bridges between them. Consequently, it is quite usual to manage the development of HRM and IC policies independently, despite both areas sharing the worker as the nuclear element that promotes organizational success.

Developing research with the agenda of understanding the determination of turnover intention and employee performance under the sustainability approach of HRM in connection with IC premises of action was thus an attempt to contribute toward the "*search for gold*" (having workers well aligned with the organization's development intentions). With this study, we have tried to understand if the sustainability challenge helps to bridge the areas of HRM and IC to each other. We also sought to understand whether sustainable HRM and IC have similar properties regarding the stimulation of workers' attitudinal and behavioral responses, which could thus justify intertwining the areas. Our main results show that internal communication and sustainable HRM have shown predictive abilities in terms of performance and turnover intention avoidance via organizational attractiveness. Our results reveal interesting remarks worthy of consideration regarding the theoretical, empirical, and practical perspectives.

5.2. Conclusions

In what can be considered the theoretical contributions of this study, we believe that sustainability compromises help to oversee and revisit HRM's remits of action. When considering the common strategic functions and courses of responsibility attributed to this management area (e.g., Pfeffer 1994; Lawler et al. 1995; Orlitzky 2007), one can conclude that they are insufficient when facing current and future challenges for these managers, despite them being unquestionably well established. HRM is and will be a strategic area for organizational development, especially if approached under a wider umbrella of responsibilities (notably those facing an organizations' sustainability projects). Our results show that sustainable HRM has the ability to stimulate favorable attitudes regarding seeing the organization as a good place to work and can determine a distal process leading to turnover intention avoidance and performance improvement. This result deserves to be revisited in further studies attempting to stabilize the added responsibilities facing HR managers that are arising from a renewed sense of orientation toward the development of sustainability compromises within organizations. A relevant path to follow is the building of bridges with IC. Our results show that IC has similar abilities in terms of stimulating workers' responses; thus, an interesting idea to follow is the development of management models that foresee IC and HR professionals sharing responsibilities, with the maximum aim of enriching practices surrounding their workers. According to our results and the theoretical approach followed, this may be a relevant clue that can be followed in future research, as the identification of best common practices for sustainable HRM and IC is yet to be achieved. An additional and interesting study to address would be that of replicating this study using a sample comparing millennials to non-millennials via multi-group comparison, since existing research is quite clear in indicating that these two groups may have different attitudes to work.

Our results also identified relevant challenges that existing research faces in regards to the turnover intention and performance prediction subject (e.g., Titang 2013; Jerónimo et al. 2020; Miao and Rhee 2020; Ouerdian et al. 2021; Tsaousoglou et al. 2022) by jointly evaluating the predictive abilities of IC and sustainable HRM in the same model of analysis. Our results have empirically shown that both sustainable HRM and IC are able to stimulate a distal process that explains two key elements of concern for managers.

This study also had the aim of stimulating debate between practitioners regarding the benefits and difficulties of building bridges between sustainable HRM practices and IC practices. Although worthy of consideration regarding the promising results, intertwining the areas should be seen as a matter requiring great effort as the areas have their own well-established courses of action that will be subjected to a renewed challenge. Managers should view this bridge building as an opportunity to enhance the nature of actions surrounding the workers (under the umbrella of the sustainability compromises) in a way that it stimulates how the organization is favorably analyzed and accessed by the workers. Thus, both HRM and IC managers should receive a clear invitation from top management to develop common plans of action surrounding the worker and establish the existence of bottom-up ways that workers can participate in company activities. Following this reasoning, it seems crucial to annually plan for joint sustainable and IC activities in a way that one can support the other in the common goal of strengthening the sustainability project of the organization. For instance, using the opportunities brought by social media to share relevant information surrounding the organization's sustainability project in such a way that workers get to know the HRM practices that have been designed toward the goal of sustainability and involving workers in these efforts through the appropriate use of information may very well be a good practice to follow.

6. Limitations and Future Studies

Lastly, although the present study has found compelling results, they should also be read with the necessary caution and not be interpreted in a generalized way, as this was a cross-sectional study that shares all the limitations that can be found in similarly

designed studies. An issue also worthy of consideration is that performance indicators were measured using a subjective measure of performance.

The results achieved may very well stimulate new models of analysis that share similar research intentions in terms of widening the research subjects involved in the testing of different mediator variables that intervene in the path model, such as organizational commitment or organizational identification. Likewise, it would also prove useful to widen testing into the joint predictive abilities of sustainable HRM and IC by incorporating employee identification, perceived support, or employee well-being. Lastly, this research was developed and carried out in Portugal and thus may not be completely immune to cultural factors that may have intervened in the results. It would be very interesting to consider future replication of this study in other countries to further evaluate the reliability of our results.

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