

A Culturally Grounded Framework for Green Talent Management, Innovation Dynamics, and Employee Green Performance in Arab Higher Education

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Abstract

Purpose: This study develops a culturally grounded conceptual framework explaining how Green Talent Management (GTM) enhances Employee Green Performance through the complementary mediating roles of Innovation Dynamics and Employee Engagement, while considering the moderating influence of Organizational Culture within Arab higher education institutions. The framework addresses the limited contextualization of sustainability-oriented human resource management by integrating strategic, institutional, and behavioural perspectives within a non-Western higher education context. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** This study adopts a conceptual research design based on an integrative review of the literature. The proposed framework is grounded in the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV), Institutional Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET), with the relationships interpreted within the institutional and cultural context of Arab higher education to provide a context-sensitive perspective on sustainability-oriented human resource management. **Findings:** The proposed framework demonstrates that Green Talent Management enhances Employee Green Performance by fostering Innovation Dynamics and Employee Engagement, while Organizational Culture may strengthen or weaken these relationships. Sustainability-oriented human resource practices are therefore more likely to generate environmentally responsible employee behaviours when aligned with the institutional and cultural characteristics of Arab higher education institutions. **Research Limitations/Implications:** As a conceptual study, the proposed framework has not yet been empirically validated. Future research is encouraged to examine the proposed relationships using quantitative, longitudinal, and cross-cultural research designs across different higher education systems. Such empirical validation would strengthen understanding of how Green Talent Management contributes to employee-level sustainability outcomes under diverse institutional and cultural conditions. **Practical Implications:** The proposed framework provides practical guidance for university leaders, human resource professionals, and policymakers seeking to embed sustainability into talent management systems. Aligning Green Talent Management practices with organizational culture and institutional priorities

can strengthen employee engagement, innovation capability, and environmental performance while supporting national sustainability strategies across the Arab region. **Social Implications:** By promoting sustainability-oriented human resource practices, the framework supports the development of environmentally responsible behaviours among university employees. Strengthening green capabilities within higher education institutions can contribute to more sustainable academic environments, responsible citizenship, and long-term societal development across Arab countries. **Originality/Value:** This study advances Green Talent Management research by introducing the Culturally Grounded Triple Influence Framework, which integrates the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV), Institutional Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET) to explain employee-level sustainability outcomes within Arab higher education. By combining strategic, institutional, and behavioural perspectives, the framework offers a theoretically integrated and context-sensitive contribution to sustainability-oriented human resource management.

Keywords: Green Talent Management, Employee Green Performance, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, Arab Higher Education, Sustainability-Oriented Human Resource Management

Introduction

Sustainability has become a strategic priority for governments, organizations, and higher education institutions worldwide. Escalating environmental, social, and economic challenges have increased expectations for universities to contribute not only through teaching and research but also through their organizational practices and institutional governance. As knowledge-intensive institutions, universities play an increasingly important role in fostering innovation, developing sustainability-oriented capabilities, and preparing future generations to contribute to national and global sustainability agendas, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Lozano et al., 2022; Kohl et al., 2022; Leal Filho et al., 2023). Within this evolving landscape, Green Talent Management (GTM) has emerged as a strategic approach for aligning human resource management with sustainability objectives. Unlike conventional talent management, GTM integrates environmental considerations throughout the employee lifecycle, including recruitment, training, performance management, career development, and retention. These practices aim to develop employees with the knowledge, skills, and motivation necessary to support organizational sustainability initiatives while strengthening organizational adaptability, innovation capability, and environmentally responsible behaviour, particularly within higher education institutions where employees play a central role in knowledge creation and societal development (Renwick et al., 2013; Jabbour & de Sousa Jabbour, 2016; Yong et al., 2022; Leal Filho et al., 2023; Odugbesan et al., 2023). Despite the growing body of research on Green Talent Management and Green Human Resource Management, existing studies remain concentrated primarily within corporate, manufacturing, and private-sector organizations, with comparatively limited attention devoted to higher education institutions (Renwick et al., 2016; Yong et al., 2022; Shao et al., 2024). Moreover, the literature has predominantly emphasized organizational-level outcomes, such as environmental performance and institutional sustainability, while providing comparatively limited insight into the employee-level mechanisms through which sustainability-oriented human resource practices influence environmentally responsible behaviour. Consequently, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, and Employee Green Performance have largely been examined as independent constructs rather than as interconnected organizational

mechanisms operating within a unified conceptual framework. The need for a more context-sensitive perspective is particularly evident within Arab higher education. Universities across the region operate within institutional environments characterized by collectivism, relatively high power distance, strong governmental influence, and ambitious national sustainability agendas, including the UAE Net Zero 2050 Strategy (Hofstede, 2001; Scott, 2014; UAE Government, 2024; Higher Colleges of Technology, 2024). These contextual characteristics suggest that the effectiveness of Green Talent Management depends not only on organizational practices but also on the institutional and cultural conditions that shape employees' interpretation, acceptance, and implementation of sustainability-oriented initiatives. Collectively, the existing literature reveals three important gaps. First, Green Talent Management research has focused predominantly on corporate and industrial settings, with comparatively limited attention to higher education institutions, particularly within non-Western contexts. Second, the employee-level mechanisms through which Green Talent Management contributes to sustainable performance remain insufficiently explained.

Third, Organizational Culture, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, and Employee Green Performance have generally been investigated separately, leaving limited understanding of how these complementary constructs interact to translate sustainability-oriented human resource practices into employee green performance within culturally and institutionally distinctive higher education environments. The proposed framework differs from existing integrated Green Talent Management and Green HRM models by identifying two distinct but complementary mechanisms linking GTM to employee green performance. Innovation Dynamics represents the organizational and procedural pathway through which green knowledge, collaboration, creativity, and sustainability-related capabilities are translated into innovative practices, whereas Employee Engagement represents the behavioural and psychological pathway that reflects employees' willingness and motivation to participate in and sustain these practices. Integrating these mechanisms provides a more comprehensive explanation of how GTM translates organizational capabilities into employee green performance. The framework further extends existing models by positioning Organizational Culture as a moderating contextual factor, recognizing that organizational values, norms, leadership patterns, and shared expectations may strengthen or constrain the effectiveness of GTM, innovation, and employee engagement. This cultural perspective is particularly relevant to Arab higher education, where institutional structures, hierarchical relationships, collective values, and national sustainability priorities may shape employees' responses to and implementation of sustainability-oriented HR practices. To address these gaps, this study proposes a Culturally Grounded Triple Influence Framework that explains how Green Talent Management enhances Employee Green Performance through the complementary mediating roles of Innovation Dynamics and Employee Engagement while recognizing the moderating influence of Organizational Culture. The framework integrates the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV), Institutional Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET) to explain the strategic, institutional, and behavioural mechanisms through which Green Talent Management contributes to employee-level sustainability outcomes within the institutional and cultural context of Arab higher education. By extending Green Talent Management research beyond predominantly Western organizational settings, this study offers a theoretically integrated and context-sensitive framework for understanding sustainability-oriented human resource management in Arab higher education. The proposed framework advances existing knowledge by integrating complementary theoretical

perspectives into a single explanatory model while providing a foundation for future empirical research and practical guidance for university leaders and policymakers seeking to strengthen sustainability through strategic talent management. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature on Green Talent Management, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, Employee Green Performance, Organizational Culture, and the theoretical perspectives underpinning the proposed framework. Section 3 outlines the conceptual methodology adopted in this study. Section 4 presents the proposed conceptual framework and develops the research propositions. Section 5 discusses the theoretical and practical contributions of the proposed framework, identifies its limitations, and suggests directions for future research. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper.

Sustainability-Oriented Human Resource Management (SHRM) in Higher Education

The growing emphasis on sustainability has fundamentally transformed the strategic role of human resource management (HRM) within higher education institutions. Rather than serving primarily administrative functions, HRM is increasingly recognized as a strategic capability that enables universities to embed sustainability into institutional policies, organizational culture, employee development, and long-term organizational performance. This evolution has led to the emergence of Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM), which integrates environmental, social, and economic objectives into recruitment, training, performance management, career development, employee well-being, and talent retention, thereby strengthening organizational resilience and sustainable value creation (Ehnert, 2009; Kramar, 2014; Renwick et al., 2013; Jabbour & de Sousa Jabbour, 2016; Guerci & Carollo, 2016; Yong et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023). Within higher education, SHRM has become increasingly important because universities depend on highly skilled employees to generate knowledge, foster innovation, and contribute to sustainable societal development. Universities are now evaluated not only by their teaching and research performance but also by their ability to integrate sustainability into governance, education, research, community engagement, and internal organizational practices (Lozano et al., 2015; Leal Filho et al., 2019; Leal Filho et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2023; Higher Colleges of Technology, 2024). Consequently, they require human resource systems that develop employees' environmental competencies, encourage collaborative innovation, and promote sustainable workplace behaviours, thereby enhancing institutional resilience and long-term sustainability performance (Aboramadan, 2020; Odugbesan et al., 2023). Although SHRM provides the strategic foundation for integrating sustainability into human resource systems, it offers comparatively limited insight into the specific talent management practices through which organizations identify, develop, engage, and retain employees capable of driving environmental innovation and sustainable organizational change. This limitation has contributed to the emergence of Green Talent Management (GTM) as a distinct research stream that extends SHRM by focusing specifically on developing organizational green capabilities through sustainability-oriented talent practices, particularly within knowledge-intensive environments such as higher education (Renwick et al., 2016; Yong et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023; Shao et al., 2024).

Green Talent Management as a Strategic Capability for Sustainable Higher Education

Green Talent Management (GTM) has evolved from a specialized human resource practice into a strategic organizational capability that supports long-term sustainability objectives. Unlike traditional talent management, GTM embeds environmental responsibility throughout

the employee lifecycle by attracting, developing, engaging, and retaining employees with the knowledge, values, and competencies required to advance organizational sustainability goals (Renwick et al., 2013; Renwick et al., 2016; Jabbour & de Sousa Jabbour, 2016; Yong et al., 2022). Contemporary conceptualizations distinguish GTM as a combination of complementary hard and soft human resource practices. Hard practices include formal HR systems such as green recruitment, performance management, rewards, and retention, whereas soft practices emphasize employee development, empowerment, participation, leadership support, and the cultivation of sustainability-oriented values and behaviours. Together, these practices strengthen organizational environmental capabilities while enhancing long-term organizational effectiveness and sustainability performance (Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023). Beyond supporting environmental compliance, GTM is increasingly recognized as a strategic source of organizational value creation. Employees who experience sustainability-oriented recruitment, training, and career development are more likely to demonstrate proactive environmental behaviours, generate innovative ideas, and actively support organizational transformation. Consequently, GTM is now viewed as a strategic investment in human capital that strengthens innovation capability, employee commitment, and organizational adaptability in response to sustainability challenges (Aboramadan, 2020; Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023; Shao et al., 2024). Despite these advances, important research gaps remain. Existing empirical studies have focused predominantly on manufacturing firms, multinational corporations, and private-sector organizations, leaving higher education comparatively underexplored. In addition, the literature has emphasized organizational performance outcomes while providing limited explanation of the employee-level mechanisms through which sustainability-oriented talent practices influence environmentally responsible workplace behaviours. This limitation is particularly significant in universities, where institutional success depends heavily on employees' knowledge, collaboration, creativity, and continuous innovation (Yong et al., 2022; Aboramadan, 2020; Odugbesan et al., 2023; Shao et al., 2024). Addressing these limitations requires moving beyond the implementation of isolated human resource practices to examine the organizational processes through which GTM influences employee behaviour and sustainability outcomes. Among these processes, Innovation Dynamics represents a critical explanatory mechanism because it captures how employees transform green knowledge, organizational support, and sustainability-oriented HR practices into innovative solutions and environmentally responsible workplace behaviours. Accordingly, the following section examines Innovation Dynamics as a key theoretical link between Green Talent Management and Employee Green Performance.

Innovation Dynamics as a Mechanism for Sustainable Employee Behaviour (Revised)

Innovation has become a strategic capability for higher education institutions seeking to respond to rapidly evolving environmental, technological, and societal challenges. Universities are increasingly expected to develop innovative solutions that advance sustainability while continuously improving teaching, research, and institutional performance. Accordingly, innovation is no longer viewed solely as the creation of new technologies or products but also as the continuous improvement of organizational processes, employee practices, and institutional learning (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010; Holm et al., 2023; Leal Filho et al., 2023). Within this context, Innovation Dynamics refers to the organizational processes through which employees generate, share, develop, and implement new ideas. These processes include leadership support, collaboration, knowledge sharing,

organizational learning, and work environments that encourage creativity and experimentation. Rather than focusing exclusively on innovation outcomes, Innovation Dynamics explains how organizations create the conditions that enable innovation to emerge, diffuse, and become embedded in everyday organizational practice (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010; Lukes & Stephan, 2017; Holm et al., 2023). Growing evidence suggests that Green Talent Management strengthens these innovation processes by equipping employees with sustainability-related knowledge, skills, and motivation. Sustainability-oriented recruitment, continuous training, and career development encourage employees to collaborate, exchange environmental knowledge, and develop innovative solutions that support organizational sustainability. Consequently, organizations that strategically invest in green talent are better positioned to cultivate innovative work environments capable of sustaining long-term environmental and organizational performance (Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023; Shao et al., 2024). Despite these advances, Innovation Dynamics remains comparatively underexplored within Green Talent Management research, particularly in higher education. Existing studies have generally examined innovation capability, sustainability, and human resource practices as separate streams, providing limited explanation of how innovation processes translate sustainability-oriented talent practices into employee-level sustainability outcomes. This limitation is especially relevant within Arab universities, where innovation is influenced not only by organizational resources but also by institutional expectations, cultural values, leadership support, and national sustainability priorities (Hofstede, 2001; Scott, 2014; UAE Government, 2024). These observations position Innovation Dynamics as a critical mechanism linking Green Talent Management with Employee Green Performance. However, innovation alone does not guarantee environmentally responsible behaviour. The successful implementation of innovative ideas ultimately depends on employees' willingness to embrace organizational goals, participate actively in change initiatives, and remain psychologically committed to sustainability. Accordingly, Employee Engagement represents a complementary behavioural mechanism through which innovation is translated into sustainable workplace behaviour.

Employee Engagement as a Behavioural Mechanism (Revised)

Employee Engagement has become one of the most extensively examined constructs in contemporary human resource management because it explains how employees translate organizational practices into positive workplace behaviours. Engaged employees demonstrate higher levels of commitment, enthusiasm, and psychological investment in their work, making them more willing to contribute beyond formal job requirements. Rather than representing a stable individual characteristic, Employee Engagement is increasingly understood as an organizational outcome that develops when employees perceive meaningful work, organizational support, opportunities for participation, and professional growth (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006; Shuck et al., 2017; Saks & Gruman, 2021). Within sustainability-oriented organizations, Employee Engagement assumes even greater importance because environmental initiatives depend largely on employees' voluntary commitment rather than compliance with formal organizational policies. Sustainability-oriented human resource practices—including green recruitment, training, participation, recognition, and career development—strengthen employees' emotional attachment to organizational sustainability objectives. As engagement increases, employees become more willing to exchange environmental knowledge, collaborate with colleagues, support innovation initiatives, and adopt environmentally responsible workplace behaviours (Dumont

et al., 2017; Aboramadan, 2020; Odugbesan et al., 2023). A growing body of research identifies Employee Engagement as an important mechanism linking Green Talent Management with positive organizational and environmental outcomes. Nevertheless, existing studies have primarily examined engagement as a direct consequence of sustainability-oriented human resource practices, while providing comparatively limited explanation of its role in translating Green Talent Management into Employee Green Performance, particularly within higher education. Moreover, empirical evidence from Arab and Gulf universities remains limited despite the region's increasing commitment to sustainability and institutional transformation (Shuck et al., 2017; Saks & Gruman, 2021; Aboramadan, 2020). These findings suggest that Employee Engagement functions as a central behavioural mechanism through which Green Talent Management contributes to employee-level sustainability outcomes. Understanding how employees become psychologically connected to organizational sustainability objectives helps explain why some sustainability initiatives successfully translate into environmentally responsible behaviour while others produce only limited organizational change. However, the effectiveness of both Green Talent Management and Employee Engagement is likely to depend on the broader organizational environment in which employees operate. This highlights the importance of Organizational Culture as a contextual factor that may strengthen or weaken the influence of sustainability-oriented human resource practices on employee behaviour and sustainability outcomes.

Employee Green Performance as the Desired Sustainability Outcome (Revised)

Employee Green Performance (EGP) has emerged as one of the most important employee-level outcomes in sustainability-oriented human resource management because it reflects the extent to which employees contribute to organizational environmental objectives through their daily work behaviours. Unlike traditional job performance, Employee Green Performance encompasses both formal environmental responsibilities embedded within employees' assigned duties and discretionary behaviours that support environmental sustainability beyond prescribed job requirements. Accordingly, EGP provides a comprehensive perspective on how sustainability-oriented organizational initiatives are translated into observable and measurable workplace behaviours (Boiral & Paillé, 2012; Bissing-Olson et al., 2013; Paillé et al., 2014; Aboramadan, 2020). The literature distinguishes between in-role and extra-role green performance. In-role green performance refers to employees' ability to perform assigned responsibilities in environmentally responsible ways, including compliance with environmental procedures and efficient resource utilization. In contrast, extra-role green performance encompasses discretionary behaviours such as proposing environmental improvements, encouraging colleagues to adopt sustainable practices, and voluntarily participating in environmental initiatives. Together, these complementary dimensions are widely recognized as essential for achieving long-term organizational sustainability because formal environmental policies alone are insufficient without employees' active commitment and voluntary participation (Boiral & Paillé, 2012; Bissing-Olson et al., 2013; Paillé et al., 2014). Recent research suggests that Employee Green Performance results from the interaction between organizational practices and employees' psychological and behavioural responses. Sustainability-oriented human resource practices provide employees with the knowledge, resources, and motivation needed to perform environmentally responsible behaviours, while Innovation Dynamics and Employee Engagement further enhance employees' capability and willingness to contribute to sustainability objectives. However, these relationships have generally been examined

independently, offering limited understanding of how Green Talent Management, Innovation Dynamics, and Employee Engagement collectively influence Employee Green Performance, particularly within higher education institutions (Aboramadan, 2020; Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023; Shao et al., 2024). Within higher education, Employee Green Performance extends beyond operational environmental practices to include behaviours that promote sustainable teaching, research, knowledge sharing, and institutional engagement. Academic employees influence not only the environmental performance of their institutions but also the sustainability knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of future graduates. Despite this strategic importance, employee-level green performance remains comparatively underexplored within universities, particularly across the Arab region, where sustainability initiatives continue to expand under national development agendas (Leal Filho et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2023; Higher Colleges of Technology, 2024; UAE Government, 2024). These observations suggest that Employee Green Performance should be understood as the outcome of multiple interacting organizational and behavioural mechanisms rather than the direct consequence of isolated human resource practices. They also highlight the importance of considering the organizational context within which sustainability-oriented practices are implemented, thereby positioning Organizational Culture as a key contextual factor influencing employee-level sustainability outcomes.

Organizational Culture as a Contextual Boundary Condition (Revised)

Organizational Culture has long been recognized as a fundamental determinant of how employees interpret, accept, and implement organizational initiatives. It encompasses the shared values, beliefs, norms, and assumptions that shape employees' behaviours and guide organizational decision-making (Schein, 2010; Denison & Mishra, 1995; Schneider et al., 2013). Within higher education institutions, organizational culture influences employees' willingness to embrace change, collaborate with colleagues, participate in innovation, and support sustainability initiatives. Consequently, identical Green Talent Management practices may produce different outcomes depending on the prevailing organizational culture. The significance of Organizational Culture is particularly evident within Arab higher education institutions, where organizational practices are embedded within broader cultural values and institutional expectations. Universities across the region generally operate in environments characterized by collectivism, relatively high power distance, respect for hierarchy, and strong alignment with national development priorities. These contextual characteristics influence employees' responses to leadership, organizational policies, and sustainability initiatives, thereby shaping the effectiveness of sustainability-oriented human resource practices (Hofstede, 2001; Scott, 2014; UAE Government, 2024). Recent research increasingly recognizes that Organizational Culture can strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of sustainability-oriented human resource practices. Supportive organizational cultures encourage knowledge sharing, employee participation, innovation, and collective commitment to environmental objectives, whereas less supportive cultures may discourage employees from engaging in sustainability initiatives regardless of the quality of HR practices. Nevertheless, relatively few studies have examined Organizational Culture as a contextual factor influencing the relationships among Green Talent Management, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, and Employee Green Performance, particularly within higher education institutions operating in Arab contexts (Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023; Shao et al., 2024). Accordingly, Organizational Culture should be viewed not merely as an organizational characteristic but as a contextual boundary condition that shapes the

effectiveness of sustainability-oriented human resource practices. By influencing employees' responses to Green Talent Management initiatives, Organizational Culture may strengthen or constrain the effects of Innovation Dynamics and Employee Engagement on Employee Green Performance. Incorporating Organizational Culture into the proposed framework therefore provides a more comprehensive explanation of how sustainability-oriented human resource practices generate employee-level sustainability outcomes within the institutional and cultural context of Arab higher education.

Literature Synthesis and Research Gaps

The preceding review demonstrates that Green Talent Management has evolved into a strategic approach for advancing organizational sustainability through the development of employees' environmental capabilities, the promotion of innovation, and the enhancement of sustainable performance. The literature also consistently recognizes the importance of Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, and Employee Green Performance in explaining employee-level sustainability outcomes. Collectively, these studies suggest that sustainability-oriented human resource practices operate through multiple organizational and behavioural mechanisms rather than direct relationships alone (Renwick et al., 2016; Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023; Shao et al., 2024). Despite these advances, three important gaps remain. First, Green Talent Management research has focused predominantly on private-sector organizations and Western institutional settings, leaving higher education—particularly within Arab contexts—comparatively underexplored. Second, existing studies provide limited explanation of the employee-level mechanisms through which Green Talent Management influences environmentally responsible behaviour. Third, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, and Employee Green Performance have generally been examined as separate constructs rather than as complementary mechanisms operating within an integrated conceptual framework (Aboramadan, 2020; Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023). Addressing these gaps requires a theoretically integrated and context-sensitive perspective that explains not only whether Green Talent Management contributes to sustainability, but also how, through which organizational and behavioural mechanisms, and under which contextual conditions these relationships occur. Accordingly, this study proposes a Culturally Grounded Triple Influence Framework integrating the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV), Institutional Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET). The framework explains how Green Talent Management enhances Employee Green Performance through the complementary mediating roles of Innovation Dynamics and Employee Engagement while recognizing the moderating influence of Organizational Culture within the institutional and cultural context of Arab higher education. This integrated perspective provides the conceptual foundation for the methodology presented in the following section.

Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach used to develop the proposed conceptual framework. As this study is conceptual rather than empirical, the methodology focuses on the systematic identification, evaluation, and synthesis of existing literature to construct a theoretically grounded framework. The approach ensures that the proposed model is informed by established theories, supported by empirical evidence, and capable of addressing the conceptual and contextual gaps identified in the preceding literature review. The following subsections describe the research design, literature identification and selection

process, and framework development procedures (Jaakkola, 2020; Snyder, 2019; Tranfield et al., 2003).

Research Design

This study adopts a conceptual research design to develop a theoretically integrated framework explaining how Green Talent Management contributes to Employee Green Performance within the institutional and cultural context of Arab higher education. A conceptual design is appropriate when knowledge is dispersed across multiple research streams and requires critical synthesis to generate new theoretical insights and identify future research directions. Rather than collecting primary data, conceptual research advances theory by integrating established theoretical perspectives with existing empirical evidence into coherent explanatory frameworks (Jaakkola, 2020; Snyder, 2019; Paul & Criado, 2020). Accordingly, this study adopts a theory-building approach that synthesizes literature on Green Talent Management, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, and Employee Green Performance. The proposed framework integrates the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV), Institutional Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET) to explain the strategic, institutional, and behavioural mechanisms through which sustainability-oriented human resource practices contribute to employee-level sustainability outcomes within Arab higher education (Jaakkola, 2020; Webster & Watson, 2002; Snyder, 2019).

Literature Identification and Selection

The proposed framework was developed through a structured literature review following established guidelines for conceptual research and theory development (Tranfield et al., 2003; Snyder, 2019; Webster & Watson, 2002). Relevant studies were identified primarily through the Scopus and Web of Science databases because of their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed research in management, sustainability, human resource management, organizational behaviour, and higher education. The literature search employed combinations of keywords related to Green Talent Management, Sustainable Human Resource Management, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, Employee Green Performance, Organizational Culture, Higher Education, and Sustainability. To improve the comprehensiveness of the review, backward and forward citation tracking was also undertaken to identify influential studies relevant to the development of the proposed framework (Snyder, 2019; Webster & Watson, 2002; Booth et al., 2021). The selection process prioritized peer-reviewed journal articles and seminal theoretical works that made substantial conceptual or empirical contributions to the study constructs. Particular emphasis was placed on research conducted in higher education and other knowledge-intensive organizations because of their relevance to the study context. This approach ensured that the proposed framework was grounded in a robust, coherent, and contextually relevant body of literature (Tranfield et al., 2003; Paul & Criado, 2020; Snyder, 2019).

Conceptual Framework Development

The proposed framework was developed through an iterative process of literature synthesis and theoretical integration. Reviewed studies were analysed to identify the principal concepts, dominant theoretical perspectives, and recurring empirical findings related to Green Talent Management and employee-level sustainability outcomes. Particular attention was given to conceptual and contextual gaps, especially the limited integration of Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, and Employee Green Performance

within a unified explanatory framework. This process enabled the study to move beyond synthesizing previous research toward developing a more comprehensive theoretical explanation of the relationships among the selected constructs (Jaakkola, 2020; Snyder, 2019; Webster & Watson, 2002). Building on these insights, the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV), Institutional Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET) were integrated to explain how strategic capabilities, institutional influences, and employee reciprocity collectively shape employee-level sustainability outcomes. Integrating complementary theoretical perspectives enhances conceptual explanation by providing coherent insights into complex organizational phenomena that cannot be adequately explained through a single theoretical lens (Jaakkola, 2020; Paul & Criado, 2020; Tranfield et al., 2003). The resulting synthesis informed the development of the proposed conceptual framework, which serves as the theoretical foundation for the research propositions presented in the following section.

Conceptual Framework Development

Building upon the preceding literature review and methodological process, this section presents the proposed Culturally Grounded Triple Influence Framework. The framework integrates Green Talent Management, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, and Employee Green Performance into a unified explanatory model that addresses the conceptual and contextual gaps identified in previous research. Rather than examining these constructs independently, the framework explains how their interactions collectively influence employee-level sustainability outcomes within the institutional and cultural context of Arab higher education (Renwick et al., 2016; Jabbour & de Sousa Jabbour, 2016; Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Jaakkola, 2020).

The term "Triple Influence" reflects the integration of three complementary theoretical perspectives—the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV), Institutional Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET)—which together explain the strategic, institutional, and behavioural mechanisms through which Green Talent Management contributes to Employee Green Performance. The framework is described as culturally grounded because these relationships are interpreted within the institutional and socio-cultural context of Arab higher education rather than through a separate cultural theory (Hart, 1995; Scott, 2014; Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Paul & Criado, 2020). The following subsections explain the theoretical integration underpinning the framework before presenting the conceptual relationships and research propositions.

Theoretical Integration of the Proposed Framework

Explaining employee-level sustainability outcomes requires a theoretical perspective capable of accounting for the strategic, institutional, and behavioural processes through which sustainability-oriented human resource practices influence employee behaviour. Although previous studies have employed individual theories to explain specific dimensions of Green Talent Management, no single theoretical perspective sufficiently captures the complex relationships among Green Talent Management, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, and Employee Green Performance within higher education institutions. Accordingly, this study adopts a multi-theoretical perspective that integrates the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV), Institutional Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET) to provide a more comprehensive explanation of sustainability-oriented employee behaviour (Hart, 1995; Scott, 2014; Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005;

Jaakkola, 2020). The Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV) provides the strategic foundation of the framework by conceptualizing Green Talent Management as an organizational capability that develops employees' environmental knowledge, competencies, and innovation capacity to achieve long-term sustainability. Within higher education institutions, Green Talent Management strengthens internal capabilities through sustainability-oriented recruitment, training, and retention practices that enhance Innovation Dynamics, encourage knowledge sharing, and improve Employee Green Performance (Hart, 1995; Hart & Dowell, 2011; Renwick et al., 2016; Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023). Institutional Theory complements this strategic perspective by explaining why universities adopt sustainability-oriented human resource practices. Rather than being driven solely by internal strategic objectives, Green Talent Management is also shaped by governmental regulations, stakeholder expectations, professional norms, and national sustainability agendas. Within Arab higher education, these institutional pressures encourage universities to embed sustainability into governance, human resource management, and organizational practices in order to maintain legitimacy while responding to evolving environmental and societal expectations (Scott, 2014; UNESCO, 2023; UAE Government, 2024; Leal Filho et al., 2023). While NRBV explains organizational capabilities and Institutional Theory explains external drivers, Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides the behavioural explanation of the proposed framework. SET argues that employees reciprocate organizational investments in sustainability-oriented human resource practices through stronger psychological engagement, greater participation in innovation activities, and higher levels of environmentally responsible workplace behaviour. Consequently, Employee Engagement is the principal behavioural mechanism through which Green Talent Management translates into enhanced Employee Green Performance (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Saks, 2006; Shuck et al., 2017; Aboramadan, 2020; Odugbesan et al., 2023; Zacher et al., 2023). Collectively, these three theories provide complementary explanations of the proposed framework. NRBV explains how Green Talent Management builds strategic organizational capabilities; Institutional Theory explains why universities adopt sustainability-oriented human resource practices; SET explains how employees reciprocate these organizational investments through stronger Employee Engagement and environmentally responsible workplace behaviour, while also supporting their participation in sustainability-oriented innovation activities. Their integration forms the theoretical foundation of the Culturally Grounded Triple Influence Framework, providing a theoretically integrated and context-sensitive explanation of employee-level sustainability outcomes within the institutional and cultural context of Arab higher education. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed conceptual model, while Table 1 summarizes each theoretical perspective's contribution.

Table1

Theoretical Contributions to the Proposed Culturally Grounded Triple Influence Framework

Theoretical Perspective	Primary Focus	Contribution to the Proposed Framework	Key Constructs Explained	Representative References
Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV)	Strategic organizational capabilities for sustainable competitive advantage	Explains how Green Talent Management functions as a strategic organizational capability that develops environmental competencies, stimulates Innovation Dynamics, and enhances Employee Green Performance.	Green Talent Management; Innovation Dynamics; Employee Green Performance	Hart (1995); Hart and Dowell (2011); Renwick et al. (2016)
Institutional Theory	Institutional legitimacy and external environmental pressures	Explains why universities adopt Green Talent Management in response to governmental policies, stakeholder expectations, professional norms, and national sustainability priorities.	Green Talent Management; Organizational Culture (Context)	DiMaggio and Powell (1983); Scott (2014); Leal Filho et al. (2023)
Social Exchange Theory (SET)	Employee reciprocity and behavioural exchange	Explains how employees reciprocate organizational investments in Green Talent Management through greater Employee Engagement, leading to enhanced Employee Green Performance.	Employee Engagement; Employee Green Performance	Blau (1964); Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005); Saks (2006); Shuck et al. (2017)
Integrated Theoretical Perspective	Strategic, institutional, and behavioural integration	Integrates the complementary strengths of NRBV, Institutional Theory, and SET to explain why Green Talent Management is adopted, how it promotes Innovation Dynamics and Employee Engagement, and how these mechanisms jointly enhance Employee Green Performance within the institutional and cultural context of Arab higher education.	Entire Conceptual Framework	Developed for the present study

Source: Developed by the author based on Hart (1995), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Blau (1964), Hart and Dowell (2011), Scott (2014), Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), Renwick et al. (2016), Shuck et al. (2017), and Leal Filho et al. (2023).

Building upon the integrated theoretical foundation presented in Table 1, Figure 1 illustrates the proposed Culturally Grounded Triple Influence Framework. The framework depicts the hypothesized relationships among Green Talent Management, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, and Employee Green Performance. It further demonstrates how the complementary perspectives of the Natural Resource-Based View

(NRBV), Institutional Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET) collectively provide the strategic, institutional, and behavioural foundations underpinning the proposed conceptual model within the institutional and cultural context of Arab higher education (Hart, 1995; Scott, 2014; Blau, 1964; Jaakkola, 2020).

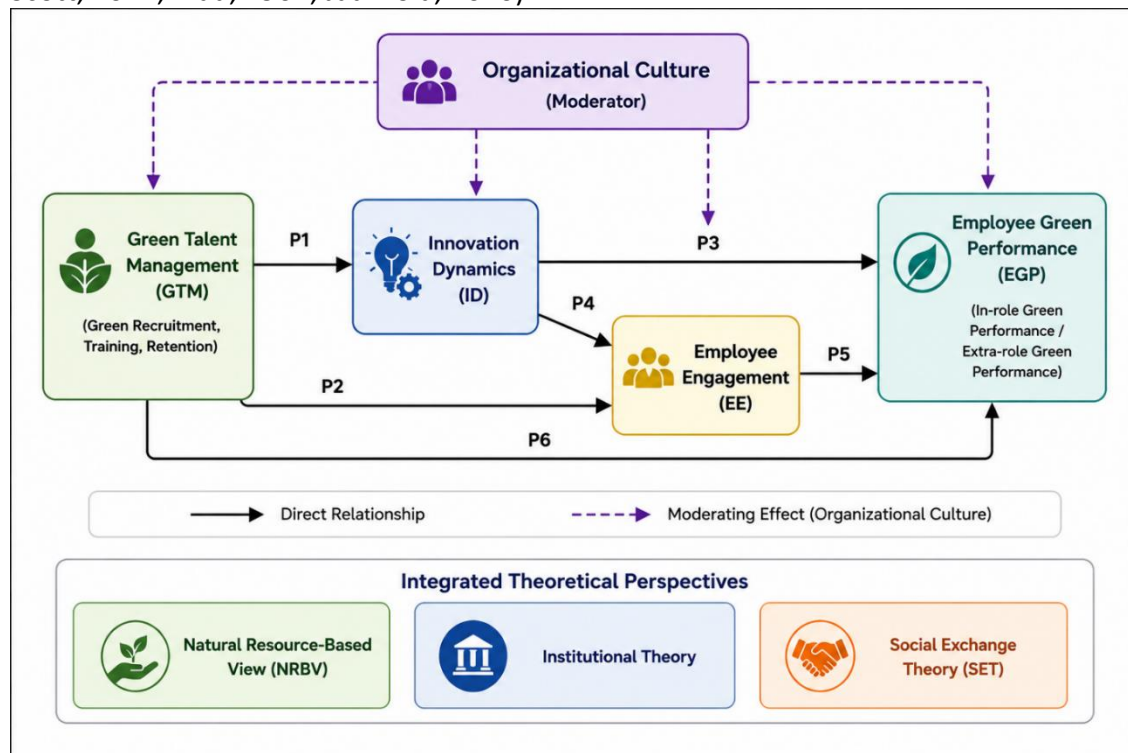


Figure 1. Proposed Culturally Grounded Triple Influence Framework

Source: Developed by the author based on Hart (1995), Hart and Dowell (2011), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Scott (2014), Blau (1964), Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), Renwick et al. (2016), Shuck et al. (2017), Aboramadan (2020), and Odugbesan et al. (2023).

Proposed Conceptual Relationships

Green Talent Management and Innovation Dynamics

Green Talent Management strengthens organizational innovation by attracting, developing, and retaining employees with the environmental competencies required to support sustainability initiatives. Sustainability-oriented recruitment, training, and retention enhance knowledge sharing, creativity, and innovation capability, enabling universities to develop innovative solutions aligned with environmental objectives. Consistent with the Natural Resource-Based View and Institutional Theory, Green Talent Management therefore enhances Innovation Dynamics by strengthening organizational capabilities while responding to institutional sustainability expectations (Hart, 1995; Hart & Dowell, 2011; Scott, 2014; Renwick et al., 2016; Jabbour & de Sousa Jabbour, 2016; Odugbesan et al., 2023; Leal Filho et al., 2023). Accordingly, Proposition 1 states that Green Talent Management positively influences Innovation Dynamics.

Green Talent Management and Employee Engagement

Green Talent Management also strengthens Employee Engagement by enhancing employees' perceptions of organizational support through sustainability-oriented recruitment, development, and retention practices. According to Social Exchange Theory, employees reciprocate these organizational investments through stronger cognitive, emotional, and

behavioural engagement, particularly when sustainability initiatives align with their personal values (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Saks, 2006; Shuck et al., 2017; Aboramadan, 2020; Odugbesan et al., 2023). Accordingly, Proposition 2 states that Green Talent Management positively influences Employee Engagement.

Innovation Dynamics and Employee Engagement

Innovation dynamics and employee engagement serve as complementary mechanisms, explaining distinct facets of how Green Talent Management (GTM) fosters employees' green performance. While innovation dynamics focus on the process of transforming environmentally oriented knowledge, ideas, collaboration, and creativity into new or improved sustainability practices, employee engagement centers on the employees' willingness, motivation, and commitment to supporting and sustaining these practices. In other words, innovation dynamics illustrate how green ideas and capabilities are developed and implemented, whereas employee engagement explains the extent to which employees are prepared to actively participate in and maintain these efforts. Consequently, considering both mechanisms together offers a more comprehensive explanation of how GTM translates organizational capabilities into green employee performance. Furthermore, innovation-oriented environments may enhance engagement levels by providing employees with greater opportunities to contribute, collaborate, and become involved in sustainability initiatives (Hart & Dowell, 2011; Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Lukes & Stephan, 2017; Holm et al., 2023). Accordingly, the third hypothesis posits that innovation dynamics positively influence employee engagement.

Innovation Dynamics and Employee Green Performance

Innovation Dynamics enable employees to translate sustainability knowledge into environmentally responsible workplace practices by promoting collaborative learning and continuous improvement. Consistent with the Natural Resource-Based View and Institutional Theory, innovation capability enhances Employee Green Performance by strengthening employees' ability to implement sustainability-oriented behaviours within universities (Hart, 1995; Hart & Dowell, 2011; Scott, 2014; Lukes & Stephan, 2017; Aboramadan, 2020; Leal Filho et al., 2023). Accordingly, Proposition 4 states that Innovation Dynamics positively influence Employee Green Performance.

Employee Engagement and Employee Green Performance

Employee Engagement represents the behavioural mechanism through which organizational sustainability initiatives are translated into environmentally responsible workplace behaviour. Employees who perceive organizational support are more likely to reciprocate through discretionary effort and stronger in-role and extra-role green performance, consistent with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Saks, 2006; Shuck et al., 2017; Aboramadan, 2020). Accordingly, Proposition 5 states that Employee Engagement positively influences Employee Green Performance.

Green Talent Management and Employee Green Performance

Green Talent Management directly enhances Employee Green Performance by embedding sustainability into recruitment, development, performance management, and retention practices. These practices strengthen employees' environmental competencies, motivation, and commitment, while the Natural Resource-Based View and Institutional Theory explain

their strategic and institutional significance (Hart & Dowell, 2011; Scott, 2014; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Renwick et al., 2016; Aboramadan, 2020; Odugbesan et al., 2023). Accordingly, Proposition 6 states that Green Talent Management positively influences Employee Green Performance.

Moderating Role of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture acts as a moderating factor (or moderator); Green Talent Management (GTM) practices do not necessarily yield identical results across all universities. A supportive culture—one that fosters collaboration, innovation, knowledge sharing, and shared environmental values—can enhance the effectiveness of GTM's impact on innovation dynamics, employee engagement, and environmental performance. Conversely, a less supportive culture may weaken these relationships. Thus, organizational culture helps explain when GTM practices are most effective and identifies the conditions under which this occurs. This issue is particularly significant within the context of higher education in the Arab world, where organizational structures, hierarchical relationships, collectivist values, and national sustainability priorities can shape how employees respond to sustainability-oriented human resource practices (Denison & Mishra, 1995; Schein, 2010; Ahmad et al., 2023; Hart & Dowell, 2011; Scott, 2014). Accordingly, the seventh hypothesis posits that organizational culture plays a positive moderating role in the relationships encompassed by the proposed framework.

Discussion

The proposed Culturally Grounded Triple Influence Framework advances Green Talent Management research by providing a theoretically integrated explanation of how sustainability-oriented talent practices influence Employee Green Performance within Arab higher education. Rather than treating Green Talent Management as an isolated human resource practice, the framework conceptualizes it as part of an interconnected system in which Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, and Organizational Culture jointly shape employee-level sustainability outcomes. By integrating strategic, institutional, and behavioural perspectives, the framework responds to recent calls for more comprehensive and context-sensitive approaches to sustainability-oriented human resource management (Jaakkola, 2020; Paul & Criado, 2020).

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to Green Talent Management literature by providing an integrated conceptual explanation of how sustainability-oriented talent practices enhance Employee Green Performance through the complementary mediating roles of Innovation Dynamics and Employee Engagement. Whereas previous studies have primarily focused on direct relationships between Green Talent Management and organizational or environmental outcomes, the proposed framework explains the organizational and behavioural mechanisms through which sustainability-oriented talent practices are translated into employee-level sustainability outcomes (Renwick et al., 2016; Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023). A second contribution lies in integrating the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV), Institutional Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET) into a unified explanatory framework. Rather than relying on a single theoretical perspective, the framework demonstrates that sustainability-oriented employee outcomes emerge through the interaction of strategic organizational capabilities, institutional influences, and reciprocal employee behaviours,

thereby offering a more comprehensive explanation than any individual theory alone (Hart & Dowell, 2011; Scott, 2014; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Jaakkola, 2020). The framework also extends existing knowledge by positioning Organizational Culture as a contextual moderator that strengthens the relationships among Green Talent Management, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, and Employee Green Performance. Although previous studies have acknowledged the importance of organizational context, relatively few conceptual models have explicitly explained how organizational culture shapes the effectiveness of sustainability-oriented talent management practices. The proposed framework addresses this gap by demonstrating how supportive organizational values and norms enhance the implementation and outcomes of Green Talent Management (Denison & Mishra, 1995; Schein, 2010; Ahmad et al., 2023; Odugbesan et al., 2023). Finally, this study advances Green Talent Management research by extending its application to Arab higher education, a context that remains underrepresented in sustainability and strategic human resource management literature. By recognizing the institutional priorities, sustainability agendas, and organizational characteristics of universities across the Arab region, the framework broadens the contextual applicability of Green Talent Management theory and provides a foundation for future empirical research within higher education and other knowledge-intensive sectors (UNESCO, 2023; Leal Filho et al., 2023; Paul & Criado, 2020).

Practical Implications

The proposed framework provides practical guidance for university leaders, policymakers, and human resource professionals seeking to embed sustainability within talent management. Rather than implementing isolated environmental initiatives, universities should integrate sustainability throughout recruitment, training, performance management, career development, and retention to strengthen employees' environmental competencies, stimulate innovation, enhance engagement, and ultimately improve Employee Green Performance (Renwick et al., 2016; Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023; Shao et al., 2024). The framework further highlights the importance of creating organizational conditions that support sustainability-oriented behaviours. Universities should invest in interdisciplinary collaboration, green professional development, knowledge-sharing platforms, and recognition systems that encourage employees to participate actively in sustainability initiatives. Equally important is fostering an organizational culture that reinforces shared environmental values, supports innovation, and strengthens employees' commitment to institutional sustainability goals (Denison & Mishra, 1995; Schein, 2010; Shuck et al., 2017). For policymakers, particularly within the Arab region, the framework offers a strategic reference for aligning Green Talent Management with national sustainability priorities and higher education policies. Such alignment can strengthen universities' capacity to enhance institutional resilience, innovation capability, and long-term sustainability performance while supporting broader environmental transformation initiatives (UNESCO, 2023; Leal Filho et al., 2023; UAE Government, 2024).

Future Research Directions

Future research should empirically validate the proposed framework using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches across different higher education contexts. Examining the proposed direct, mediating, and moderating relationships through diverse empirical research designs would provide valuable evidence for refining and extending the framework (Jaakkola, 2020; Paul & Criado, 2020). Comparative studies involving public and

private universities, as well as institutions across the GCC and other emerging economies, would provide valuable insights into the contextual conditions influencing the effectiveness of Green Talent Management and assess the transferability of the proposed framework beyond the Arab higher education context (Leal Filho et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2023; Paul & Criado, 2020). Future research may also extend the framework by incorporating emerging sustainability-oriented capabilities, including green leadership, environmental knowledge sharing, green organizational climate, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence-enabled human resource management. Examining these factors may provide a richer understanding of how universities strengthen sustainability capabilities and enhance Employee Green Performance in increasingly dynamic educational environments (Holm et al., 2023; Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Odugbesan et al., 2023).

Conclusion

This conceptual study advances Green Talent Management (GTM) research by proposing the Culturally Grounded Triple Influence Framework, which explains how sustainability-oriented talent management practices enhance Employee Green Performance within the institutional and cultural context of Arab higher education. By integrating the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV), Institutional Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET), the framework demonstrates that sustainability-oriented employee outcomes emerge through the interaction of strategic organizational capabilities, institutional influences, and reciprocal employee behaviours. In doing so, it extends existing Green Talent Management literature by providing a theoretically integrated and context-sensitive perspective on sustainability-oriented human resource management (Hart & Dowell, 2011; Scott, 2014; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Jaakkola, 2020). Beyond its theoretical contribution, the framework offers practical guidance for universities seeking to embed sustainability within their talent management systems. By highlighting the complementary roles of Green Talent Management, Innovation Dynamics, Employee Engagement, and Organizational Culture, it provides a strategic foundation for strengthening employee-level sustainability performance while supporting broader institutional sustainability objectives. Although conceptual in nature, the proposed framework establishes a foundation for future empirical validation across higher education and other knowledge-intensive sectors. Future research should examine the proposed relationships in different institutional and cultural contexts to further refine and extend the framework's applicability (Leal Filho et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

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