


## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# A Systematic Review on Socially Responsible Human Resource Management: Implications for Social Value Creation

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## ABSTRACT

The contribution of business and management scholars to the discourse on corporate social responsibility (CSR) has grown exponentially in the last decades. This article systematically reviews the extant literature on socially responsible human resource management (SRHRM) and its role in fostering social value creation. The review analyzed 78 empirical studies from Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. Findings indicate that CSR requirements serve as the primary drivers of SRHRM initiatives. However, research on the social dimension of sustainability—specifically, the “people” aspect—remains underdeveloped, rendering social sustainability the most underexplored pillar of sustainability. Consequently, the study calls for future research investigating the relationship between SRHRM and social value creation.

## 1 | Introduction

Sustainability remains a significant agenda of world leaders to handle the challenges of poverty alleviation, global warming, climate change, energy crises, and unequal development (Siddique et al. 2024). Thus, the advancement of sustainable development has gained considerable attention from scholars, policymakers, and practitioners aiming to provide persons with a better life globally by 2030 (Gyimah et al. 2023). The growing alertness of sustainability and corporate social responsibility has led to the increasing importance of human resource management as firms aim to achieve clean production without contributing negatively to the environment and improve the well-being of society (Amrutha and Geetha 2020). Because of the cognizance of sustainability by world leaders, human resource management is currently seen as the soul of businesses,

especially in the environmental and social aspects since human resources remain the implementers of CSR initiatives (Amrutha and Geetha 2020; Ogbeibu et al. 2022). Subsequently, human resource management has transitioned from a focus on strategic issues to sustainability issues; hence, the popularity of socially responsible human resource management (Freitas et al. 2020; Jabbour and de Sousa Jabbour 2016; Pham et al. 2023). This outlines the historical transformation of human resources practices and focuses primarily on the shift from Strategic Human Resource Management to Green Human Resource Management, then to Socially Responsible Human Resource Management (Freitas et al. 2020; Pham et al. 2023).

Social responsibility involves achieving business and financial objectives while paying attention to social and environmental impacts, as well as trying to reduce the adverse effects

on society. A firm's acquisition of a competitive advantage relative to other competitors depends significantly on the firm's responsiveness to the institutional norms of their environment and the extent of compliance with such standards (Shaaban 2023). SRHRM, which has been conceptualized as corporate social responsibility focused on addressing the concerns of employees, including recruiting socially responsible staff and rewarding employees' participation in CSR initiatives (Shen and Jiu-hua Zhu 2011; Shen and Benson 2016; Uddin et al. 2020), is crucial in promoting social value by aligning corporate strategic goals to sustainable HRM practices while sensitizing employees to participate in CSR activities. Under this, firms undertake specific organizational actions and policies that consider stakeholder expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance (Gond et al. 2017; Aguinis 2011; Shen and Jiu-hua Zhu 2011; Shen and Benson 2016; Uddin et al. 2020). Although CSR activities are geared toward internal and external stakeholders, research has shown that most CSR activities are focused on the external stakeholders neglecting the internal stakeholders. Meanwhile, the internal stakeholders (employees) remain the implementers of CSR activities and, as such, must be given the needed attention (Pham et al. 2023).

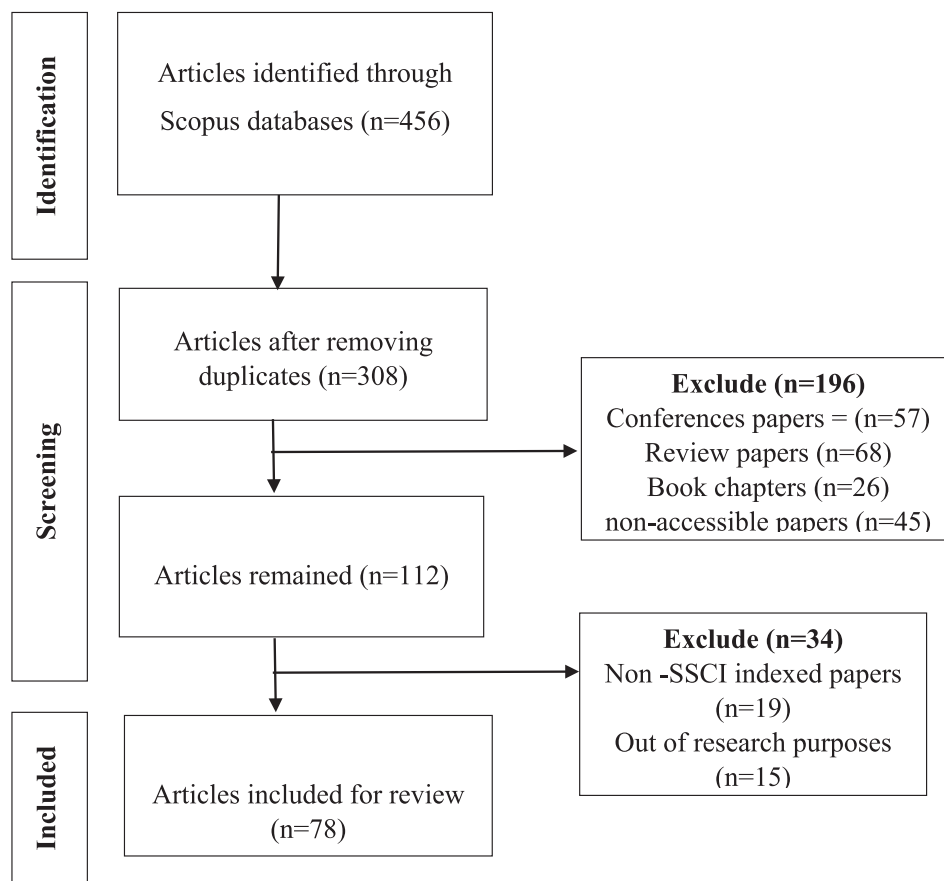
Socially responsible human resource management (SRHRM) has been identified as a series of HRM practices that are geared toward employees to ensure the effective implementation of CSR initiatives and programs while reshaping the behavior and attitudes of employees toward sustainability (Territory et al. 2006; Shen and Jiu-hua Zhu 2011; Shen and Benson 2016; Rawshdeh et al. 2019a). Such SRHRM practices include work-life balance, family-friendly HRM, HR diversity management, flexible and equal employment, non-discrimination against minorities, training and development, and more recently on addressing societal grand challenges (Territory et al. 2006; Shen and Jiu-hua Zhu 2011; Shen and Benson 2016; Newman et al. 2016; Rawshdeh et al. 2019b; Adu-Gyamfi et al. 2021). Thus, organizations adopting SRHRM practices do not only recruit candidates with specific technical competencies but engage candidates whose values align with social responsibility (Pham et al. 2023, Shen and Benson 2016). In addition, organizations engaging in SRHRM practices provide CSR training and development programs for their employees to equip them with knowledge aimed at fostering employees with social responsibility competencies to engage in social activities (Pham et al. 2023; Newman et al. 2016). Furthermore, SRHRM embeds performance management into CSR initiatives such that employees' CSR initiatives are formally recognized and rewarded (Adu-Gyamfi et al. 2021). The SRHRM approach can also enable firms to prevent internal costs like energy wastage, raw materials wastage, and costly accidents while increasing their profit margins to meet societal needs. This can be done by engaging employees in training to reduce such internal costs (Palazzo et al. 2020; Kramer and Porter 2011). These are critical for improving social value creation through a harmonious framework with strategic corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and human resource management practices.

SRHRM practices contribute to the sustainability requirement of social equity, health, wellness, and well-being of employees, which are the tangible social values created by organizations

(Ullah et al. 2021). The concept of social value creation was first introduced by Kramer and Porter (2011) as a new strategy for strengthening the social responsibility of firms, creating shared value through organizations' policies and practices to enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions of the communities in which they operate (Kramer and Porter 2011). According to Palazzo et al. (2020), many organizations have made considerable efforts to generate value to benefit the organization and society. Building on the works of Porter and Kramer (2019), Palazzo et al. (2020) explains that the real power of shared value strictly linked with strategic corporate responsibility needs further exploration. Consequently, practitioners, policymakers, and leaders must refocus their competencies and knowledge in solving societal grand challenges.

Scholars like Porter and Kramer (2019) and Bosch-Badia et al. (2013) further argued that, the new approach to defining organisations is to recognize that societal needs, and not just conventional and economic needs define markets. They argued that, ultimately, corporations assuming shared value strategies can turn free enterprises into environmentally, socially, and financially sustainable entities. In the long run, shared value leads to a more enhanced sustainable value chain. Building on the above discussions, social value influences consumers purchasing behavior. This is because consumers become progressively aware of the social implications of the product and services they patronize. Therefore, businesses that wants to satisfy customers will place greater importance on social value of their customers and the communities in which they operate (Hoo Na et al. 2017; Porter and Kramer 2019; Weber 2008). According to Kramer and Porter (2011), social value is "...inevitably societal values and attributes too". It includes the capacity to create value in the conduct of business and enhancement of the economic and social welfare of the people (Kramer and Porter 2011). As Palazzo et al. (2020) noted, in the long run, employees of enterprises begin to focus more on value creation for the company and the people in the community they operate (Hoo Na et al. 2017; Porter and Kramer 2019; Weber 2008). Social value, therefore, refers to the total positive impact that firms create on society through a system that address social needs and problems that go beyond financial benefits (Certo and Miller 2008; Zahra et al. 2009).

In addition, Kramer and Porter (2011) opined that, in recent years, businesses have increasingly been criticized as a major cause of social, environmental, and economic problems, thereby prospering at the expense of the broader community. Interestingly, most companies remain stuck in a social responsibility mindset in which societal issues are at the periphery, not the core. To Kramer and Porter (2011), the solution lies in the principle of shared value, which involves creating economic value in a way that also creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges. It is worth mentioning that, based on these calls, some earlier scholars have made attempts to bridge the gap between business economic value and societal needs. For example, scholars have examined the impact of SRHRM on task performance (Nguyen et al. 2024), voluntary green behavior (Liu et al. 2024), sustainable performance (Al Mamun et al. 2024), employees' work behavior (Shen and Benson 2016), job performance (Waheed et al. 2020), organizational



**FIGURE 1** | The systematic selection process for the study.

engagement (Pham et al. 2020), organizational citizenship (Jamali et al. 2020), organizational performance, sustainability (Nakra and Kashyap 2024), workplace pro-environmental behaviors by employees (Uddin et al. 2020) and ethical workplace behaviors (Men et al. 2024). However, the current SRHRM literature exhibits a dearth of understanding of how SRHRM solves grand challenges in society through value creation. This research gap is crucial because social value creation extends beyond the business to encompass collective, community-driven efforts to advocate for positive societal change.

This study attempts to fill in the current knowledge gaps in SRHRM literature by reviewing the current state of empirical conversation on the SRHRM and its implications for social sustainability. The following research questions are addressed in this study.

1. What are the major characteristics of empirical studies on socially responsible human resource management (the most active authors, their citations, organizational focus, top journals, and top contributing countries)?
2. What are the key dimensions of socially responsible human resource management that contribute to social value creation?
3. What antecedents, practices, outcomes, mediating, and moderating factors have been studied in the socially responsible HRM literature?

The study aims to contribute to the existing literature by providing clarity to the nuanced understanding of the role of socially responsible human resource management in generating social value. This review seeks to inform organizational practices, policy decisions, and future studies on the subject by providing an overview of the previous research, highlighting important outcomes, trends, and relationships.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 explains the methodology, followed by a presentation of the analysis and findings in Section 3. In Section 4, we present the theoretical and practical discussions of the findings, their implications for social value creation and future research directions. Finally, in Section 5, we conclude the study and admit the limitations thereof.

## 2 | Methodology

In this study, we combine bibliometric with systematic literature review (SLR) approaches as they give clear pictorial evidence of the emergence of scientific knowledge using quantitative bibliometric tools and also provide a detailed qualitative review of the trajectory of key studies, thereby enhancing credibility (Gyimah et al. 2023). In line with previous studies (e.g., Gyimah et al. 2023; Mio et al. 2020; Pizzi et al. 2020), we followed the various systematic review methods to search and identify related articles from the appropriate databases, screened these

articles, and included the relevant ones for the final analysis (see Figure 1). Thus, following the steps used by Pizzi et al. (2020), the authors outlined relevant keywords and developed criteria for inclusion and exclusion.

## 2.1 | Methodology Adopted in the Systematic Literature Review

Following the study's objective, Scopus, which is one of the recognized and largest databases for conducting bibliometric and systematic review analysis, was selected for more impactful studies (Gyimah et al. 2023). The study makes use of the Scopus database and makes way for the consideration of all likely works published in a wide range of journals to reduce biases as well as possible omissions of using a narrower set of journals. The panel did cross-authentication in Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar.

A systematic search was performed through the Scopus database in March 2024, with criteria detailed below. Although Orliczky and Swanson (2006) first introduced the concept of SRHRM, the concept became popular in the HR literature in 2011 after Shen and Zhu's publication. As a result, the search focused on articles from 2011 to March 2024. The methodology adopted in this study is in line with the research approach adopted by prior studies and Human Resource Management practitioners in discussing socially responsible human resource management in the discourse of social value creation with a focus on sustainable development goal 8 (Pizzi et al. 2020; Gyimah et al. 2023).

The Scopus search was done using the Boolean strings OR. The search retrieved articles whose abstracts, and keywords contained either "Socially Responsible HRM" OR "Internal CSR" OR "Corporate Social Responsibility" OR "SRHRM OR SRHRM OR Social Value creation". This search resulted in 547 articles. As with our exclusion criteria, a further search with the exact Boolean string "Socially Responsible HRM" OR "Internal CSR" OR "Corporate Social Responsibility" OR "SRHRM" OR "SR-HRM" OR "Employee Oriented CSR" OR "Internal CSR" between the period 2011 to 2024. Filters also included limiting to Business Management, to ensure consistency in the subject area. This resulted in 456 articles on Socially Responsible Human Resource Management.

After this process, some articles were excluded because of similar reasons followed by Mio et al. (2020) and Gyimah et al. (2023) either because they were out of scope, or they focused on other research areas that were not linked to the present study, or they were in the press. Specifically, a total of 308 articles were retained after removing duplicates. We further excluded a total of ( $n = 230$ ) articles because some were conference papers ( $n = 57$ ), review papers ( $n = 68$ ), book chapters ( $n = 26$ ), non-accessible papers ( $n = 45$ ), non-SSCI papers ( $n = 19$ ) and out-of-research purposes ( $n = 15$ ).

The final set of 78 papers was then used for the bibliometric analysis. During this stage, adjustments were made to address errors and inconsistencies in the database. For example, homogenizing the author's keyword spelling. The next

step consisted of reading each article and conducting qualitative analysis consistently with best practices in systematic review (Amrutha and Geetha 2020; Barclay et al. 2011; Miah et al. 2024; Pizzi et al. 2020). Each article was coded, tagged, and later grouped into clusters, with articles allowed to be part of more than one cluster (Tranfield et al. 2003). Concerning the coding and tagging procedure, relevant parts of the text were selected and tagged with keywords representing their contents, contributing dynamically to the development of the final taxonomy while allowing flexibility in categorizing information with new tags, therefore reducing biases that can arise from a rigid pre-set system (Pizzi et al. 2020; Caputo et al. 2016). The approach was similar to that adopted by prior studies (Guthrie et al. 2012). The resulting taxonomy consisted of levels of analysis describing (a) organizational focus, (b) the geographical location, (c) the research method, and (d) the theoretical framework adopted or proposed within the studies.

## 2.2 | Sample Analysis

We used Excel for descriptive and statistical analysis regarding the geographic distribution of publications on socially responsible human resource management. These include publication by country, top 10 countries by publication, classification of countries into levels of development, top publications by journals, top 10 contributing journals by rankings, organizational focus, top contributing theories, antecedents, practices, mediators, moderators, and outcomes of SRHRM (López-López and Page 2023; Godino 2023; Gyimah et al. 2023). Excel was used because it offers multiple chart types that help to visualize data effectively (Núñez and González 2021; Neyeloff et al. 2012). Again, traditional detailed content analysis of the 78 papers was performed in the study to identify uncharted paths.

## 3 | Bibliometric Analysis

### 3.1 | Sample Statistics

Bibliometrics applies arithmetical approaches to the study of scientific activities in research areas (Pizzi et al. 2020). The study therefore uses bibliometric analysis to report on the characteristics of the publications as specified above in SRHRM field. Traditional content analysis was conducted to detect unexplored gaps to guide future research.

### 3.2 | Geographic Distribution of Publications

Table 1 presents result on publication by country whereas Table 2 shows the top 10 contributing countries. Specifically, the results indicate that China tops with 31 papers, followed by Spain with 12 papers, Bangladesh and Vietnam with 5 papers, Malaysia with 3 papers, Australia, Egypt, India, Italy and the USA have two (2) papers each. Other countries such as Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Indonesia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Serbia and the United Kingdom has 1 paper each. China dominates with

**TABLE 1** | Publication by country.

Country	Frequency	Percentage
Australia	2	2.56
Bangladesh	5	6.41
China	31	39.74
Cyprus	1	1.28
Czech Republic	1	1.28
Egypt	2	2.56
Finland	1	1.28
Germany	1	1.28
Ghana	1	1.28
India	2	2.56
Indonesia	1	1.28
Italy	2	2.56
Lebanon	1	1.28
Malaysia	3	3.85
Pakistan	1	1.28
Poland	1	1.28
Portugal	1	1.28
Serbia	1	1.28
Spain	12	15.38
UK	1	1.28
USA	2	2.56
Vietnam	5	6.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**TABLE 2** | Top 10 countries by publication.

Country	Articles	Region
China	31	Asia
Spain	12	Europe
Bangladesh	5	Asia
Vietnam	5	Asia
Malaysia	3	Asia
Australia	2	Australia
Egypt	2	Africa
India	2	Asia
Italy	2	Europe
USA	2	North America

31 papers and Africa with 3 papers, indicating the need for SRHRM research to focus on Africa for an all-inclusive and collaborative studies across the African Region. The analysis

is in line with Omidi and Dal Zotto (2022) who found out that the concentration of socially responsible human resource management research is found in Asia specifically China, followed by Spain.

### 3.2.1 | Classification of Countries Into Levels of Development

Table 3 depicts the classification of countries into level development. The results show that emerging economies like China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, India, Indonesia, Malaysia Poland, Serbia and Vietnam have produced more research works on SRHRM. This is followed by developed economies like the UK, Germany, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. The least-producing countries are found in the developing economies like Ghana, Egypt, Lebanon, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Thus, there is a need for researchers to focus attention on developing economies for a broader representation and understanding of the concept.

### 3.3 | Top Publications by Journals

Table 4 presents result on the top 10 contributing journals on the subject of SRHRM. Sustainability (1) is seen as the most prolific during the period 2011–2024 with seven (7) related studies. This is followed by the Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management with four (4) papers, the International Journal of Human Resource Management with four (4) papers, Journal of Business Ethics with four (4) papers, Frontiers in Psychology, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management and Sustainability (Switzerland) with three (3) papers each, followed by European Research on Management and Business Economics, Journal of Human Resource Development Management and Journal of Sustainable Tourism with two (2) papers each.

#### 3.3.1 | Journal Ranking

Table 5 revealed that 2-star journals have produced the highest (20) number of papers in the SRHRM literature. This is followed by a 3-star journal which has produced (10) empirical research on SRHRM during the period under the review. The 1-star and 4-star journals have produced (4) each.

### 3.4 | Year-Wise Publication of Articles on SRHRM

Figure 2 shows the evolution of publications in the field based on the yearly publication growth. The graph spans from 2011 to December 2024 and depicts the number of articles published on this concept. The initial years, particularly 2011–2017, showed limited activity on the concept, with a sharp rise between 2017 and 2019. On the contrary, research activity on the concept decreased in 2020. This could be attributed to the outbreak of COVID-19, which eventually shifted scholarly focus; however, there was a sharp increase in research activity on the concept in 2021 and decreased slightly in 2022. In 2023, it increased again. Notably, 2023 stands out with a high

**TABLE 3** | Classification of countries into level development.

Classification	Countries	Frequency	Percentage
Developed economies	Australia	7	33.33
	Finland		
	Germany		
	Italy		
	Portugal		
	Spain		
	UK		
Emerging economies	China	9	42.86
	Cyprus		
	Czech Republic		
	India		
	Indonesia		
	Malaysia		
	Poland		
	Serbia		
	Vietnam		
Developing economies	Bangladesh	5	23.81
	Egypt		
	Ghana		
	Lebanon		
	Pakistan		
Total		21	100

average, which suggests impactful research during the period. This trend points to an emerging field that is gradually gaining scholarly attention.

### 3.5 | Methods/Approach

As presented in Figure 3, the findings on the methods show that most SR-HRM studies employ a quantitative approach to research SR-HRM, internal CSR, employee-oriented CSR ( $n = 32$ ), followed by Case studies ( $n = 17$ ), qualitative approach ( $n = 14$ ), and mixed methods ( $n = 9$ ). This suggests that quantitative methods dominate in the SR-HRM literature compared to the other methods.

### 3.6 | Organizational Focus

Unlike previous studies (e.g., Omidi and Dal Zotto 2022) which focused on only antecedents, practices, and outcomes of SR-HRM, this study touches on the organizational focus, top contributing theories, top cited authors, as well as the antecedents (practices, mediators and moderators) and outcomes of SR-HRM.

This section presents results on the organizational focus on the SRHRM literature over the period under study. As displayed in Figure 4, it is evident that 26% of SRHRM studies focused on the manufacturing sector. This is followed by 23% with a focus in the hospitality and tourism industry. 13% each also focused on SMEs and financial institutions. Hospitals (7%), the food industry, the clothing industry, and aviation each account for 6%. The concentration on manufacturing and the hospitality sector suggests that more research on SRHRM is required in other sectors like education and the extractive sector, among others. This will aid a better understanding of the concept in these sectors.

### 3.7 | Top Contributing Theories

Table 6 shows that there is an absence of a consolidated theory to investigate the SRHRM concept. This absence shows a fundamental challenge observed by several scholars in the field. However, an analysis of the studies revealed that 23.08% have used the social exchange theory to analyze the concept SR-HRM, representing the highest contributing theory. This is followed by the social identity and institutional theories with 12.82% each, the stakeholder theory with 8.97%, the

**TABLE 4** | Top 10 contributing journals.

Year	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
2011			2							
2012										
2013										
2014										
2015										
2016			1		1				1	
2017						1		1		
2018	2	1						1	1	
2019	1						3			
2020				1						
2021	4	1			1	1				
2022		1		2						
2023		1	1	1	1	1				1
2024				1						1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

Note: (1) Sustainability, (2) Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, (3) International Journal of Human Resource Management, (4) Journal of Business Ethics, (5) Frontiers in Psychology, (6) International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, (7) Sustainability (Switzerland), (8) European Research on Management and Business Economics, (9) International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management, (10) Journal of Sustainable Tourism.

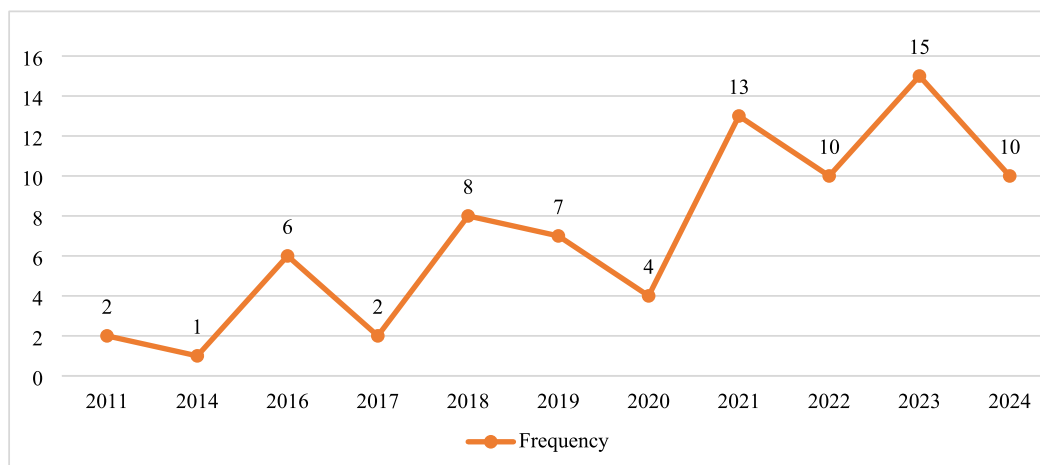
**TABLE 5** | Top 10 contributing journals by ranking.

Journal Ranking	Frequency	Percentage
4-star	4	10.53
3-star	10	26.32
2-star	20	52.63
1-star	4	10.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.00</b>

conservation of resource theory and social information processing theory with 7.69% each, and finally, the person organization fit theory with 6.41% and the situational strength theory with 5.13%.

### 3.8 | Top 10 Cited Authors

Table 7 outlines the ten (10) cited research authors on the subject of socially responsible human resource management development. First, Shen and Jiuhua Zhu (2011) paper with 203



**FIGURE 2** | Publication by year.

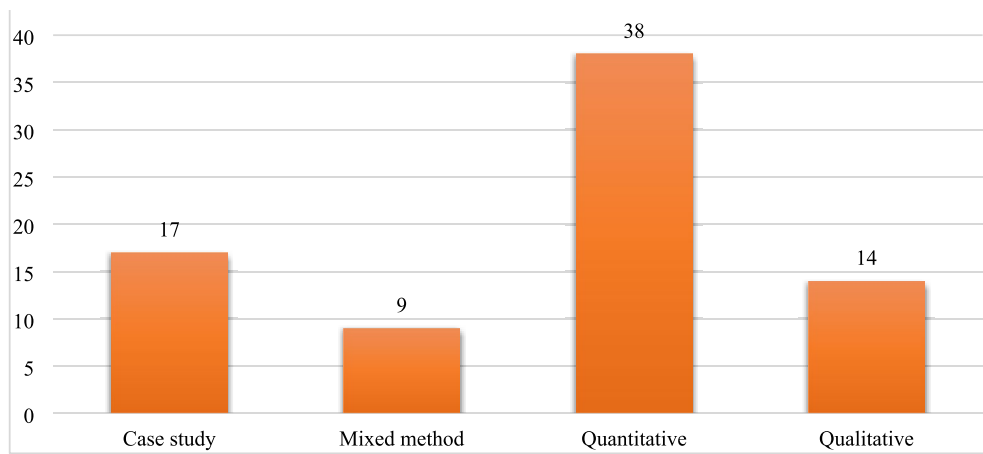


FIGURE 3 | Methods.

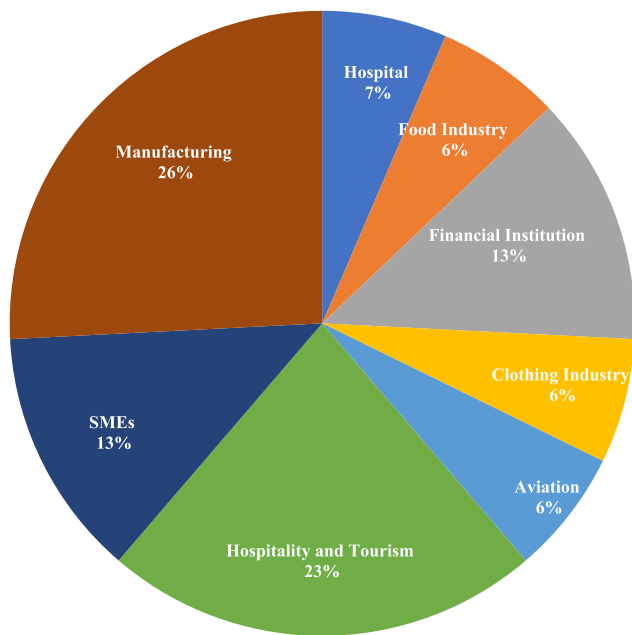


FIGURE 4 | Organizational focus.

citations highlight how SRHRM fosters employee dedication and ethical workplace behavior. Another influential contribution comes from Newman et al. (2016) with 183 citations. The authors examined the impact of SRHRM on employees' organizational citizenship behavior, mediated by organizational identification. Their study underscores the role of SRHRM in fostering a work environment where employees align themselves with corporate values, leading to enhanced commitment and performance. Additionally, He et al. (2021) with 77 citations explored how SRHRM alleviates employee concerns, particularly in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Their research highlights the importance of socially responsible HR policies in mitigating employee stress and enhancing workplace well-being. The collective contributions of these researchers provide a foundation for SRHRM's role in social value creation. Their work demonstrates that when HRM incorporates social responsibility, it enhances employee

TABLE 6 | Most contributing theories.

Theories	Frequency	Percentage
Social exchange theory	18	23.08
Social identity theory	10	12.82
Institutional theory	10	12.82
Stakeholder theory	7	8.97
Person-organization fit theory	5	6.41
Conservation of resource theory	6	7.69
Situational strength theory	4	5.13
Social information processing theory	6	7.69
Self-regulation theory	4	5.13
Self-determination theory	5	6.41
Pro-active motivation theory	3	3.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

engagement, well-being, and ethical behavior, ultimately benefiting both organizations and society.

### 3.9 | SRHRM Antecedents, Practices, Mediators, Moderators and Outcomes

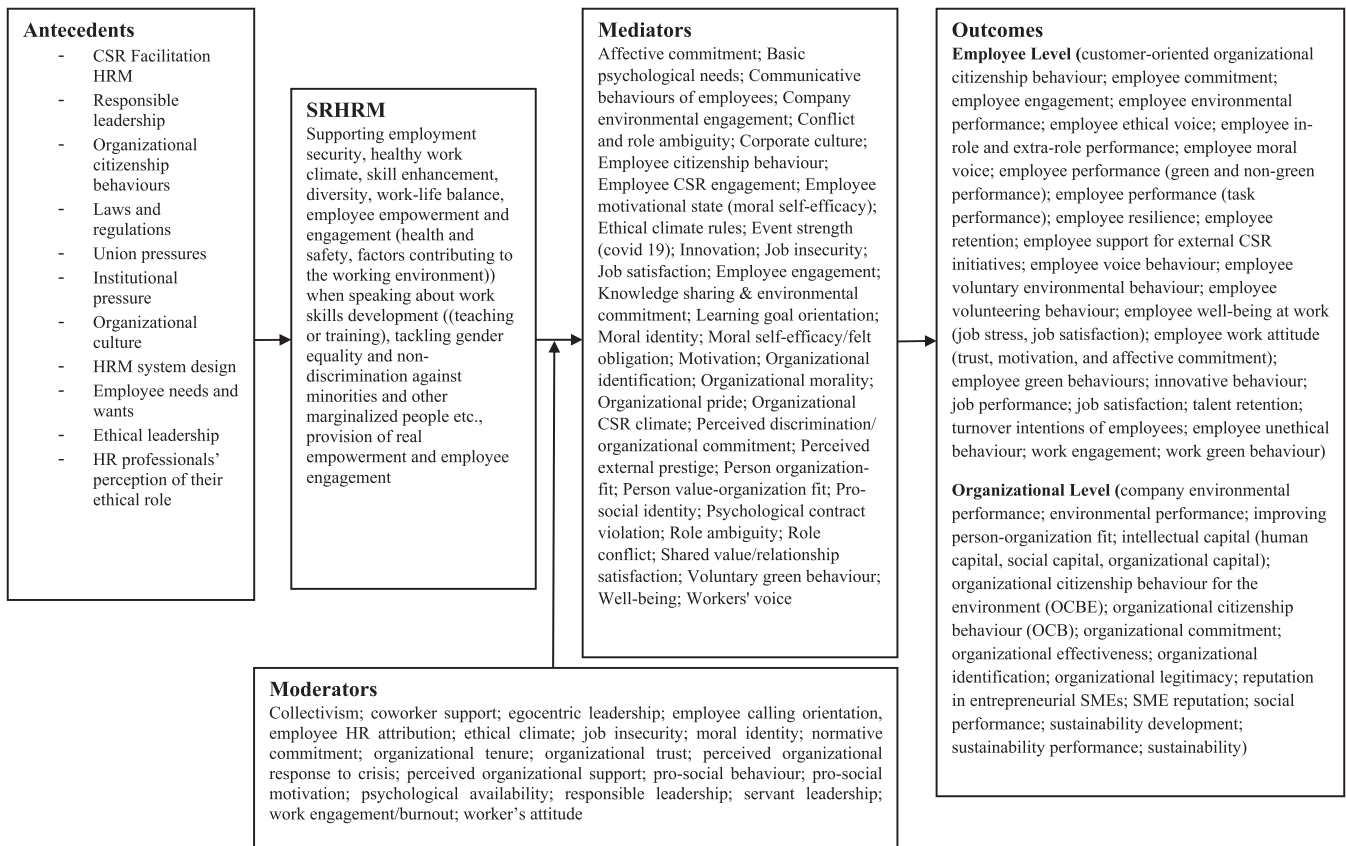
Figure 5 details relevant antecedents to SRHRM, practices, possible mediators, moderators, and outcomes in the literature.

#### 3.9.1 | Antecedents of SRHRM

Similar to studies conducted by Gond et al. (2024), this section outlines the factors, drivers, or forces that trigger the adoption and implementation of SRHRM practices in organizations. The study uncovered that organizational macro-level factors

TABLE 7 | Top 10 cited research authors.

Authors (year)	Paper title	Journal	Total citations	Year
Shen and Zhu	Effects of socially responsible human resource management on employee organizational commitment	International Journal of Human Resource Management	203	2011
Newman et al.	The impact of socially responsible human resource management on employees' organizational citizenship behavior: the mediating role of organizational identification	International Journal of Human Resource Management	183	2016
He et al.	On being warm and friendly: the effect of socially responsible human resource management on employee fears of the threats of COVID-19	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	77	2021
Shen	When CSR Is a Social Norm: How Socially Responsible Human Resource Management Affects Employee Work behavior	Journal of Management	67	2016
Celma et al.	Socially responsible HR practices and their effects on employees' wellbeing: Empirical evidence from Catalonia, Spain	European Research on Management and Business Economics	47	2018
Lechuga Sancho et al.	Understanding the link between socially responsible human resource management and competitive performance in SMEs	Personnel Review	45	2018
Jia et al.	The effect of socially responsible human resource management (SRHRM) on frontline employees' knowledge sharing	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	42	2019
Sorribes et al.	Sustainable human resources management in crisis contexts: Interaction of socially responsible labor practices for the wellbeing of employees	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	36	2021
López-Fernández et al.	Socially responsible human resource management and employee perception: The influence of manager and line managers	Sustainability (Switzerland)	32	2018
Shao et al.	Double-edged effects of socially responsible human resource management on employee task performance and organizational citizenship behavior: Mediating by role ambiguity and moderating by prosocial motivation	Sustainability (Switzerland)	28	2019



**FIGURE 5** | Example of antecedents, moderators, mediators and outcomes of SRHRM.

include general CSR facilitating HRM initiatives (Jamali et al. 2019). Apart from the CSR facilitating HRM initiatives that drive SRHRM, there are other drivers such as responsible leadership (Dong and Zhong 2021) and organizational culture (Espasandín-Bustelo et al. 2021). Additionally, previous research in the SRHRM literature has revealed other external and internal stakeholder demands such as union pressures, laws and regulations, and institutional pressures from international organizations like international labor organizations (Iqbal et al. 2024; Yin et al. 2021; Shan et al. 2017; Shen and Jiuhua Zhu 2011). Most of the scholars have investigated drivers at the macro level with minimal focus on the micro-level drivers. The micro-drivers include employees needs and wants (Shao and Peng 2023; Shen and Jiuhua Zhu 2011) and HR Professionals' perception of their ethical role (Parkes and Davis 2013).

### 3.9.2 | Practices in SRHRM

This section reports on the practices adopted in SRHRM by previous scholars. As per most of the reviewed papers, the practices of SRHRM include the core HRM functions which include recruitment and selection, training and development, fair compensation, performance appraisal, and reward (Territory et al. 2006; Shen and Jiuhua Zhu 2011; Shen and Benson 2016; Adu-Gyamfi et al. 2021; Zhang et al. 2022). Apart from the traditional HRM functions, the current review brings to the fore some other SRHRM practices that have been considered by other researchers as HR practices that are fair and ethical such as

non-discrimination against minority groups (e.g., trans-gender), work-life balance, health and safety empowerment, equal opportunities, healthy work climate (Adu-Gyamfi et al. 2021; Shen and Benson 2016; Newman et al. 2016; Omosebi 2024; Dhas and Karthikeyan 2015). Nevertheless, some scholars have called to include sexual minorities in SRHRM practices (Omidi and Dal Zotto 2022; Shan et al. 2017). Thus, the review shows some neglected SRHRM practices such as sexual minorities which could be explored by future studies.

### 3.9.3 | Moderators of SRHRM

The current review addresses the boundary conditions or factors that strengthen or reduce the effect of SRHRM on firm and individual outcomes. The studied moderating factors include ethical leadership (Rawshdeh et al. 2019b), collectivism (Shao and Peng 2023), coworker support (Zhou and Zheng 2024) egocentric leadership (Al-Amin et al. 2021) employee calling orientation (Hameed et al. 2016), employee HR attribution (Lee et al. 2023), normative commitment (Mory et al. 2016), psychological green climate, moral attentiveness, organization-set performance goal, and CSR attribution (Al Mamun et al. 2024; Men et al. 2024; Pham et al. 2023; Liu et al. 2024), organizational tenure, organizational trust, perceived organizational response to crisis, perceived organizational support, pro-social behavior, pro-social motivation, psychological availability, responsible leadership, servant leadership (Lu et al. 2023; Pham et al. 2023; Vu 2022; Shao et al. 2019; Hameed et al. 2016; Lee et al. 2023) and worker's attitude (Rubel et al. 2023). The results show that

the use of moderators by SRHRM researchers is at the beginning stage and still nascent. This calls for more studies to explore other relevant contingency factors which can help us to understand the complexities and the dynamics of the SRHRM literature.

### 3.9.4 | Mediators of SRHRM

This section presents the processes and the mechanisms through which SRHRM affects certain outcomes by previous researchers. The mediating factors found include green passion (Liu et al. 2024), knowledge hiding (Abbas et al. 2024), environmental green behavior (Al Mamun et al. 2024), moral disengagement (Men et al. 2024), interaction justice (Mistry et al. 2024), knowledge sharing, employee citizenship behavior, voluntary green behavior (Rubel et al. 2021; Sobhani et al. 2021; Uddin et al. 2020), role stress, perceived external prestige, basic psychological needs, learning goal orientation, moral identity, psychological contract violation, person value-organization fit, organizational pride, organizational CSR climate, moral self-efficacy, pro-social identity, conflict, and role ambiguity (Nguyen et al. 2024; Zhou and Zheng 2024; Lee et al. 2023; Shao et al. 2023; Zhao et al. 2023; Iqbal et al. 2024; Zhang et al. 2022, Shao et al. 2019; Jia et al. 2019; Newman et al. 2016; Luu 2023; Pham et al. 2023; Vu 2022). Additionally, scholars have looked at employee CSR engagement, shared value/relationship satisfaction, organizational identification, perceived external prestige, corporate culture, and workers voice (Lan et al. 2022; Iqbal et al. 2019; He et al. 2021).

### 3.9.5 | Outcomes of SRHRM

The section presents the outcomes of SRHRM as studied by previous researchers. The outcomes can be grouped into micro level and organizational level. A thorough investigation of the SRHRM literature reveals that at the micro (employee level), studies have

considered outcomes such as employee voluntary green behavior (Rawshdeh et al. 2019a), employee moral voice (Rawshdeh et al. 2023), employee task performance (López-Fernández et al. 2018), wellness of employees (Adu-Gyamfi et al. 2021), the affective commitment of employees (Estifo et al. 2019), employee innovative behavior, and employee ethical voice (Lee et al. 2023; Zhou and Zheng 2024). Additionally, scholars have studied employee unethical behavior and employee entrepreneurial behavior (Liu et al. 2024; Abbas et al. 2024; Men et al. 2024) as outcomes of SRHRM.

The organizational level outcomes include environmental performance (Gangi et al. 2021), organizational citizenship behavior (Shao et al. 2019; Newman et al. 2016) organizational commitment (Mory et al. 2016; Lan et al. 2022), sustainability (Nakra and Kashyap 2023), intellectual capital, sustainable performance (Barrena-Martinez et al. 2019; Al Mamun et al. 2024) and organizational sustainability (Bombiak and Marciniuk-Kluska 2019).

Although research on the processes that affect SRHRM exists, it is limited and nascent. Presently, there is little knowledge of how SRHRM reduces negative individual and firm outcomes. For example, Men et al. (2024) looked at the effect of SRHRM on unethical behavior. The results showed that SRHRM reduced unethical behavior among employees. Additionally, Rawshdeh et al. (2019b) also looked at the impact of SRHRM on employee deviant behavior and found that SRHRM reduced deviant behavior.

### 3.10 | Keywords

Figure 6 represents the key themes in SRHRM and its role in Social Value Creation. Dominant terms such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), employee engagement, ethical leadership, and workplace diversity highlight the core focus of SRHRM research. Key practices like work-life balance, training, and

## Keywords



**FIGURE 6** | Tree map of keywords.

employment stability contribute to fostering employee well-being and ethical workplaces. The inclusion of stakeholder theory, institutional theory, and social exchange theory indicates the theoretical foundations guiding this field. The tree map also suggests that SRHRM promotes green HRM practices, reinforcing environmental responsibility. The keywords analysis serves as a roadmap for organizations and scholars, emphasizing SRHRM's impact on sustainable growth, employee satisfaction, and corporate reputation while ensuring an inclusive and socially responsible workforce.

#### 4 | Discussion and Future Direction

Our analysis of the 78 selected empirical studies published between March 2011 and December 2024 through bibliometric and systematic review methods offers a comprehensive understanding of what future studies in this area should explore and investigate. To address the current research gaps and delineate potential research opportunities in the SRHRM literature, the current study depicts a different yet relevant vision for developing this field. We offer an analysis of the following key issues together with future directions for research in SRHRM literature.

##### 4.1 | Key Issue 1: Limited Number of Studies in Africa

The current study shows that SRHRM activity in Africa has been very minimal with only three (3) empirical studies in Africa, with two (2) from Egypt and one (1) study from Ghana. This shows that research on SRHRM is still in the infant stages in this region. Consequently, we propose and recommend future research on SRHRM practices to focus on institutions in Africa and other developing contexts.

##### 4.2 | Key Issue 2: Studies of SRHRM Relating to Social Value

Although the 1987 Brundtland Commission report on sustainability became more prevalent to businesses, human resource management practitioners, and researchers very few studies have focused on SHRM and its contributions to social performance (e.g., Adu-Gyamfi et al. 2021). However, relatively few studies have investigated the impact of SRHRM on social value creation. Future studies could advance the knowledge of how SRHRM creates social value.

##### 4.3 | Key Issue 3: Exploration of SRHRM Antecedents

Additionally, although SRHRM is gaining scholarly attention, many of the studies have a limited number of antecedents that drive SRHRM. The few antecedents found in the current systematic literature review were at the organizational level (e.g., Dong and Zhong 2021; Jamali et al. 2020) with minimal attention to employee and individual level antecedents. As a result, we recommend that future studies focus attention on individual and employee-level drivers of SRHRM.

##### 4.4 | Key Issue 4: Explore SRHRM Outcomes at the Organizational Level

The results Reveal that not much attention has been given to firm-level outcomes of SRHRM. The majority of the empirical studies revealed that most of the outcomes were at the employee level (Liu et al. 2024; Abbas et al. 2024; Al Mamun et al. 2024; Men et al. 2024). We propose that future researchers should refocus attention on the organizational-level outcomes of SRHRM.

**TABLE 8** | Key questions for future research agenda.

RQs	Research question	Reference
1	How do organizations consider SRHRM as one of the most promising initiatives central to organizations' operational strategy to create value?	Pham et al. 2023
2	Are there differences in SRHRM applications between different companies/organizations?	Pham et al. 2023
3	How do HR professionals deal with the dark side of the implementation of SRHRM practices?	Jia et al. 2019
4	How do organizational climates, individual values and employees' role in the organization influence their response to SRHRM and subsequent organizational outcomes, such as organizational identification and OCB?	Newman et al. 2016
5	How does ethical leadership moderate the relationship between SRHRM and workplace outcomes such as OCB, workplace innovation and corporate social performance?	Shao and Peng 2023
6	How does national culture influence SRHRM to generate organizational outcomes?	Pimenta et al. 2024
7	How do role-related mechanisms, such as role ambiguity, mediate the relationship between SRHRM and overall organizational effectiveness?	Liao et al. 2022
8	How do organizational-level factors such as ethical climate, collective organizational identification, and perceived CSR salience mediate the relationship between SRHRM and organizational success?	Shen and Benson 2016

#### 4.5 | Key Issue 5: Methodology Used

In terms of methodology, few studies in our review have used qualitative, mixed method, case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, or phenomenology. The outstanding approach has been the use of quantitative techniques. Future studies, therefore, could pay attention to the mixed-method and qualitative approaches.

Additionally, the study adopted the four-stage approach by Gyimah et al. (2023) to formulate eight future research questions (RQs). First, top-cited research authors (see Table 7) on SRHRM were reviewed. Next, the top contributing trending keywords (see Figure 6) were analyzed. Third, the remaining papers were examined to avoid citation bias. Lastly, previously addressed questions were excluded, and potential research directions were reframed as research questions, resulting in eight future RQs (see Table 8).

#### 4.6 | SRHRM Practices for Social Value Creation

Table 9 provides the overview of SRHRM practices and its impact on social value creation. A review of the literature identified that the human resource department plays a major role in the implementation of CSR initiatives since they manage the human resources who are the implementers of all CSR initiatives (Adu-Gyamfi et al. 2021). Therefore, future researchers and practitioners could pay more attention to employees to achieve CSR targets. In line with the social exchange theory, the literature revealed that key SRHRM practices such as work-life balance, workplace diversity, promotion, training, employee engagement, employment stability, health and safety, skills development, employee empowerment, and positive work environment are some socially responsible HRM practices that could create social value (Mory et al. 2016).

**TABLE 9** | Overview of SRHRM practices and its impact on social value creation.

SRHRM practices	Impact on social value creation
Work-life balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved mental and physical health. When employees maintain a healthy work-life balance, they are less likely to experience chronic stress, grief, burnout, mental illness, hypertension, and digestion challenges. This not only enhances their quality of life but also reduces healthcare costs for society as a whole. Healthier individuals contribute more effectively to society, reducing the strain on healthcare systems.</li> <li>Reduced commuting and office energy use would lower the environmental footprints, contributing to sustainability efforts and helping communities address climate change challenges</li> <li>Help employees manage their commitments between work responsibilities and personal matters including family.</li> </ul>
Workplace diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workplace diversity would lead to knowledge sharing, competitive strategies, varied ideas, and initiatives. This would lead to more innovative solutions which improve products services and technologies that benefit society, thereby addressing a broader range of needs in society.</li> <li>A diverse workplace fosters understanding and empathy among employees from different backgrounds helping to break down cultural barriers and promote peaceful coexistence and collaboration both in the workplace and in society.</li> <li>A diverse workplace serves as model for their communities demonstrating the benefits of inclusion and social cohesion. This leads to more inclusive communities where individuals are empowered to contribute to the local economy</li> </ul>
Training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Socially responsible training programs with a focus on leadership with an emphasis on ethical decision-making, inclusive leadership, and responsible management would shape future workforce that prioritizes people, the planet, and profits in their decision-making.</li> <li>This can lead to a situation where employees are trained to consider the social impact of their actions which would lead to a positive community impact.</li> <li>Employees trained in sustainability can implement practices that lead to reducing waste, conserving resources, and minimizing carbon footprint, contributing to broader environmental preservation efforts that benefit society.</li> <li>Promotion. This can improve the living standards of employees which can positively impact their families and society at large taking people out of poverty</li> </ul>
Health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The health and safety policies of the HR leads to the prevention of accidents, diseases, and injury, improved societal well-being of employees and their dependents</li> <li>By protecting the health and safety of all employees, companies contribute to reducing workplace discrimination and fostering a culture of inclusivity where employees are valued based on their abilities and contributions, not their vulnerabilities.</li> </ul>

## 4.7 | Implications of the Study

Our study contributes to existing literature by demonstrating that socially responsible human resource management (SRHRM) practices have implications for social value creation. Consequently, both the theoretical and practical implications are outlined below.

### 4.7.1 | Theoretical Implications

First, our study contributes to the extant literature by revealing that socially responsible human resource management (SRHRM) practices foster societal value creation. This finding expands academic understanding of how HRM can directly generate social value. Second, this study paves the way for future studies to develop methods to evaluate and measure the relationship between SRHRM practices and social value creation. We, therefore, invite scholars to further investigate the SRHRM–social value link with robust empirical methods. Additionally, the study highlights SRHRM as a crucial mechanism through which organizations contribute to broader societal well-being and sustainable development. Lastly, this study calls for researchers in the SRHRM field to increase awareness of SRHRM’s role in creating social value. This is because achieving organizational sustainability is unlikely without a conducive, socially responsible workplace environment—an insight that future scholarship and theory-building should continue to emphasize.

### 4.7.2 | Practical Implications

First, our findings indicate that organizations should prioritize the enactment and implementation of SRHRM practices in the workplace, as these practices directly contribute to social value creation. Managers are urged to integrate SRHRM principles into daily operations to positively impact society. Second, the findings highlight that integrating SRHRM practices into corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies is fundamental to enhancing social benefits and achieving sustainability goals. Third, by implementing socially responsible HR initiatives, companies can align their practices with global sustainability agendas, including contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This will not only benefit employees and communities but also help meet broader developmental objectives. Fourth, we recommended that organizations concentrate on key SRHRM domains—work-life balance, training and development, workplace diversity, and health and safety—since excellence in these areas is particularly effective in generating social value. These practices will enable firms to support employee well-being, thereby creating positive social outcomes. Fifth, HR practitioners must ensure that SRHRM initiatives are effectively enforced to enable companies to maintain a conducive work environment that drives social value creation alongside business performance. This can be achieved by embedding SRHRM practices into the organizational culture and everyday routines.

## 5 | Conclusions

This study provides an opportunity for practitioners and scholars to dive deep into how SRHRM affects social value and some grand challenges like poverty. The concept of SRHRM helps to improve conditions of work for employees, although there is a need to emphasize equity, health, wellness, and poverty alleviation. Therefore, businesses that pursue SRHRM practices in expanding their CSR initiatives should consider the sustainability of social risk/value/benefit. Furthermore, the review shows that CSR requirements were the major reasons for SRHRM initiatives in many organizations. Consequently, the increasing concerns for CSR demand that firms adopt SRHRM practices since employees remain the key implementers of CSR initiatives. In this sense, CSR policy implementation would contribute to the realization of the social dimension of sustainable development.

Finally, our review focused on SRHRM articles between March 2011 and December 2024. Therefore, future studies can take into consideration other time frames such as a study conducted by Mistry et al. (2024). Despite the limitation on scope, this study has shown the position of the understanding of sociocultural issues as an outcome of SRHRM practices. Indeed, SRHRM practices have a major role in the three pillars of sustainability. Nonetheless, the social (people) aspect remains underexplored. This, therefore, presents an opportunity for future studies to delve into SRHRM and its implication for social sustainability (social value creation).

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