



Kent Academic Repository

Khan, Majid, Usman, Muhammad, Shafique, Imran, Ogbonnaya, Chidiebere and Roodbari, Hamid (2023) *Can HR managers as ethical leaders cure the menace of precarious work? Important roles of sustainable HRM and HR manager political skill*. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 10 . pp. 1824-1850. ISSN 0958-5192.

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/102213/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2023.2241821>

This document version

Author's Accepted Manuscript

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

CC BY-NC (Attribution-NonCommercial)

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in **Title of Journal** , Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

Can HR Managers as Ethical Leaders Cure the Menace of Precarious Work?

Important Roles of Sustainable HRM and HR Manager Political Skill

ABSTRACT

While extensive research has explored the relationship between HRM and various organizational and employee outcomes, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the role of HRM in discouraging extreme work. To address this gap, building mainly on stakeholder theory, we specifically propose that HR managers' ethical leadership negatively influences precarious work, which serves as a catalyst for extreme work cultures by exacerbating workloads, prolonging working hours, and intensifying physical and mental stress. Importantly, we propose that sustainable HRM mediates the association between HR managers' ethical leadership and precarious work. Finally, the present study hypothesizes that HR managers' political skill acts as a boundary condition for the effects of HR managers' ethical leadership on sustainable HRM and precarious work. Data collected from two sources (260 employees and the same number of HR managers) employing a time-lagged design supported our hypotheses. Other than theoretical contributions to different important knowledge areas, such as ethical leadership, HRM, and precarious work, we offer a number of practical implications that could help organizations counter extreme work and its negative repercussions mainly for employees.

Keywords. Ethical leadership, sustainable HRM, political skill, extreme work, precarious work

Introduction

Given the deterritorialized labour markets and working conditions, employees around the world are exposed to intensified inequalities, insecurities, and several other challenges that continue to harm the quality of work and working conditions (International Labour Office, 2021). For instance, the incident of Rana Plaza in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2013, where more than 1100 people is another example of poor working conditions (ILO, 2013). Even normal workplaces (i.e., not known for risky and intense work) are turning to extreme work in terms of long hours, work overload (Boxall & Macky, 2014), and work intensity (Patterson, 2001; Turnbull & Wass, 2015). Employment is encroaching on employees' non-workspace and time, leading to the normalizing of extreme work cultures and behaviours (Holland & Liang, 2019; Patterson, 2001; Turnbull & Wass, 2015). The adverse effects of extreme work on employees' well-being and overall quality of life are well-documented (Ho & Kuvaas, 2019; Wankhade et al., 2020). For example, extreme work leads to poor work-life balance, stress (Boxall & Macky, 2014; Turnbull & Wass, 2015), fatigue, low staff morale (Wankhade et al., 2020), and gendered division of labor (Gascoigne et al., 2015). However, despite being widely recognized as unsustainable and has been linked to a myriad of detrimental outcomes, our knowledge regarding how organizations address extreme work and effectively alleviate its negative repercussions for employees' well-being is scarce (Ho & Kuvaas, 2019; Wankhade et al., 2020). Therefore, scholars have called for research on identifying different leader behaviours and organizational practices such as sustainable human resource management (HRM) to help organizations deal with extreme work and its destructive outcomes (Ho & Kuvaas, 2019; Wankhade et al., 2020).

To bridge this crucial gap, we foreground the role of HR managers as ethical leaders in shaping sustainable HR practices that can help organizations go some way to mitigate extreme work and its negative consequences. Specifically, building mainly on stakeholder

theory (Freeman, 1984; 1994), we propose that ethical leadership is negatively associated with precarious work directly and indirectly, via sustainable HRM. Precarious work is defined as “uncertainty, instability, and insecurity of work in which employees bear the risks of work and receive limited social benefits and statutory entitlements” (Vosko, 2010, p. 2). Our focus on precarious work serves a twofold purpose. First, because by fueling the intensification of workloads, longer working hours, and heightened physical and mental stress (Patterson, 2001; Vosko, 2010), it acts as a catalyst to extreme work cultures. For instance, feelings of job insecurity and income uncertainty inherent in precarious employment arrangements place individuals in a perpetual state of striving, leading to longer work hours in the pursuit of work-related goals at the expense of their well-being (Butler & Russell, 2018). Second, addressing precarious work in itself is important because it is widespread across all sectors of the economy, in both developed and developing countries. Precarious work has several implications for the nature of work, workers, organizations, and gender roles (Kalleberg, 2009; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013). Indeed, precarious work is one of the key challenges that require immediate attention (Butler & Russell, 2018; Moisander et al., 2018; Petriglieri et al., 2019). By centering our study on precarious work, we assist organizations in both mitigating precarious work itself and addressing one of the crucial factors that shape extreme work cultures.

Ethical leadership is understood here as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers” (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). We focus on ethical leadership because stakeholder theory posits that businesses have an ethical responsibility to take care of the rights of all the stakeholders including employees. Since ethical leadership is a moral and principled approach (Brown & Treviño, 2006), we argue that ethical leaders take care of employee rights and can develop and implement a range of organizational policies

and practices that are aimed at protecting employees by curbing instability, uncertainty, and insecurity (implied as precarious work). It is noteworthy that we consider HR managers as ethical leaders, given their imperative role in the development and implementation of different HR practices, including hiring, training and development, compensation and rewards, work hours, and leave policy. We understand that HR managers as ethical leaders can embed ethical values such as fairness and trustworthiness and enforce equal opportunities, diversity, and job flexibility in related HR functions and thus are better able to curb precarious work.

Moreover, to explicate why ethical leadership negatively affects precarious work, we suggest that ethical leadership leads to sustainable HRM, which in turn negatively influences precarious work. Ehnert et al. (2016, p. 90) define sustainable human resource management as “the adoption of HRM strategies and practices that enable the achievement of financial, social, and ecological goals, with an impact inside and outside of the organization and over a long-term time horizon while controlling for unintended side effects and negative feedback”. As noted by Järlström et al. (2018), sustainability in HRM covers various similar concepts such as green HRM (Renwick et al., 2016) and socially responsible HRM (Cohen, 2010). Green HRM entails HR policies and practices that shape employee pro-environmental behaviours to ultimately reduce organizations’ carbon footprint and thus does not directly focus on broader social aspects of businesses. Compared with green HRM, socially responsible HRM represents a broader concept that takes into account “the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance” (Aguinis, 2011, p. 855). To achieve the triple bottom line, socially responsible HRM focuses on recruiting and retaining employees who are socially responsible, providing them with training related to corporate social responsibility, and linking their social contributions through remuneration, performance appraisals, and promotions (Shen & Benson, 2016). As such, both green HRM and socially

responsible HRM give primacy to the organization's objectives and pay less attention to internal dimensions of social sustainability, which entails issues around employee well-being (Aust et al., 2022; Pfajfar et al., 2022; Wikhamn, 2019). However, sustainable HRM not only aims to achieve the triple bottom line but also tends to deal with issues related to employee wellbeing. Thus, we consider sustainable HRM because other than taking into account a wide range of human, social and environmental aspects of organizations, it takes care of employee well-being (Aust et al., 2020; Rothenberg et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the integration of HR practices with sustainability is not a straightforward process; rather, requires embedding ethicality across the organization (Järlström et al., 2018). Ethical leaders seek to select employment programs that comply with institutional requirements while simultaneously shaping organizational conditions for employees and community well-being (Ali et al., 2022). As such, we argue that through sustainable HRM, ethical leaders are better able to contribute to employees' health and well-being while simultaneously humanizing the work context. In other words, ethical leadership may reduce precarious work via sustainable HRM practices.

Finally, to foreground when HR managers' ethical leadership is more effective, we suggest that HR managers' political skill acts as a boundary condition for the association between ethical leadership and sustainable HRM and the indirect association (via sustainable HRM) between ethical leadership and precarious work. Leader political skill is defined as leaders' ability *"to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives"* (Ahearn et al., 2004, p. 311). We consider HR managers' political skill because according to stakeholder theory (Frooman, 1999), stakeholders become more effective when they have power in or over the organization, pointing out that the effectiveness of HR managers' ethical leadership for developing sustainable HRM and deterring precarious work may depend on their ability to exert power on others (i.e., employees and top management) in the organization.

Indeed, political skill plays a critical role in the effectiveness of leaders' social influence on others in the organization and gives them the power to influence and manoeuvre different resources and situations in their favour, enabling them to deal with various individual and contextual challenges (Ahearn et al., 2004; Ferris et al., 1999). Importantly, leader political skill is target-specific (Rice & Cotton-Nessler, 2022). As such, we argue that HR managers as ethical leaders who are high on political skill are more capable of boosting buy-in from others, within (including top management) and outside of the organization and can be more effective in achieving their specific targets, such as developing sustainable HRM and deterring precarious work. Thus, the interaction between HR managers' political skill and ethical leadership can have important implications for the effectiveness of HR managers' ethical leadership in developing sustainable HRM, as well as dealing with precarious work.

Our study makes several important contributions. First, relying on stakeholder theory, we provide initial evidence that HR managers' ethical leadership results in positive consequences for employees by curbing precarious work. In particular, we demonstrate that HR managers' ethical leadership curbs precarious work due to having an embedded sustainable HRM at the workplace that not only cares about their competence development and thus financial aspects but also takes into account employees' health and well-being. In doing so, we enhance the networks of outcomes and antecedents of ethical leadership and precarious work, respectively. While existing scholarship suggests that leadership can play an important role (Heffernan & Wilkinson, 2022; Mrozowicki et al., 2013), there is little empirical evidence of the links between HR managers' ethical leadership and precarious work. **Importantly, since precarious employment arrangements can lead to extreme work (Butler & Russell, 2018; Vosko, 2010), by focusing on the link between ethical leadership and precarious work, we portray HR managers' ethical leadership as an important factor that can assist organization in countering extreme work and its negative consequences. Our**

research aligns with calls for the call for studies examining how organizations can effectively address extreme work ((Ho & Kuvaas, 2019; Neirotti, 2020; Wankhade et al., 2020).

Second, our research provides an empirical test of the mediating role of sustainable HRM in the relationship between ethical leadership and precarious work. By doing so, we contribute to the scarce literature on the antecedents and outcomes of sustainable HRM (Aust et al., 2020; Ehnert et al., 2016; Rothenberg et al., 2017) and respond to the calls for a closer understanding of the role of sustainable HRM in dealing with extreme work (Boxall & Macky, 2014; Wankhade et al., 2020). Finally, the current study contributes to political skill literature (Ahearn et al., 2004; Kolodinsky et al., 2007; Usman et al., 2020) by highlighting the value of HR managers' political skill as a means of accumulating and utilizing different social and personal resources that strengthen the effectiveness of ethical leadership in developing sustainable HRM and curbing precarious work. Figure 1 depicts the proposed model.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Theory and hypotheses

Precarious work

Precarious work has been studied in various disciplines, such as organizational studies (Allan & Blustein, 2022), public health (Benach et al., 2014), and sociology (Kalleberg, 2009).

Precarious work is a multidimensional construct with numerous objective work characteristics (e.g., low wages and short contracts) and constitutes what it means to have a *bad job* in the 21st century (Kalleberg et al., 2000). Work that is uncertain, insecure, limits employees' ability to advocate for change, and does not shield them from unfavourable working conditions is also considered precarious work. (Allan & Blustein, 2022; Birnbaum &

De Wispelaere, 2021; Quintana et al., 2020). A hallmark of precarious work is insecurity and can take several forms – such as job insecurity (the likelihood of losing one's current job), labour market insecurity (the likelihood of obtaining a new job), and income insecurity (one's ability to sustain during the extended unemployment) (Birnbaum & De Wispelaere, 2021). It also entails uncertainty about the work itself, as well as indecision on how to handle unforeseen situations and outcomes due to a lack of access to resources and social power (Bosmans et al., 2016). Precarious work also includes a wide range of qualitative aspects such as the nature of work, working conditions, wage rate, work overload, opportunity to upskill workers, social protection, and employee participation (Gallie et al., 2017). Precarious work does not involve the benefits of full-time stable jobs that come with healthcare and pension funds after retirement (Knox, 2006). Further, it renders limited power and control to the employees, indicating that employees have little participation in collective bargaining (Allan & Blustein, 2022). Although in developed countries, there are labour laws and regulations to curb severe forms of precarious work, precarious work has tended to intensify and manifest in different forms, particularly, in contexts (e.g., several developing countries) where the role of state and government policy is weak in facilitating the transformation of work and workers.

Stakeholder theory

The shareholders' profit maximization is not an immutable law of economics but emerged as a dominant objective for business organizations out of a long historical context in capitalist societies. The stakeholder framework was first articulated by Freeman (1984) in his seminal book entitled "*Stakeholder Management: A Stakeholder Approach*", where he conceptualized stakeholders as any group that affects or is affected by organizational performance. Stakeholder theory emphasizes the interconnectedness between an organization and its different stakeholders, such as investors, employees, suppliers, customers,

communities, and others with a stake in the organization. It stresses that an organization has a moral obligation towards all the stakeholder groups, not just shareholders. However, it is hard to determine who is the most significant, powerful, and salient stakeholder. To capture the saliency of a stakeholder, Frooman (1999) provides a three-pronged approach. First, the degree to which stakeholders provide the organization with useful resources determines the saliency of the stakeholders. The second determinant of saliency is the extent to which potential stakeholders put their resources at risk, such as, if the organization fails, they are ready to bear the brunt. Lastly, the third determinant is the extent to which the potential stakeholders have power in or over the organization.

Employees are internal stakeholders, who contribute resources, such as energy, skills, education, and experience to the organization and play important role in value creation. Employees are identified as primary stakeholders both from an ethical perspective (Phillips, 1997) and an instrumental point of view (Mitchell et al., 1997). Particularly, employees may be highly salient stakeholders because they have power, legitimacy, and immediacy – to whom the organization owes several obligations (Allan & Blustein, 2022).

The discussion of stakeholder theory in relation to HRM is a nascent and rare occurrence. In their influential review, Ferris, et al. (1999) revealed that a bulk of research published on HRM management is deeply rooted in micro-level processes that mainly focus on fairness in recruitment and selection, performance evaluations and fair compensation. However, broader ethical issues are either mentioned in passing or completely ignored. Surprisingly, the link between ethical approaches and HRM is underdeveloped as current approaches to HRM fail to place ethicality as their central warrant (Greenwood, 2013). Similarly, stakeholder theory is missing from the current analysis of theoretical underpinnings of HRM even though the term ‘stakeholder’ is used in the employment context

for employees as the immediate and most important and legitimate stakeholders within an organization (Guerci et al., 2014).

Stakeholder theory provides a pluralistic view of employment relations where it considers various aspects of morality (e.g., utilitarianism, rights, justice, feminism and discourse) which highlights that there are various groups with varying needs and interests within an organization (Greenwood, 2013). As a corollary, Järlström et al. (2018) describe legitimacy as one of the most important reasons for invoking stakeholder theory. The stakeholder salience analysis provided by Mitchell (1997) suggests that employees are not only legitimate but also urgent and powerful stakeholders. Accordingly, any HRM policies and practices need to consider employees' needs and rights (Guerci, & Shani, 2013; De Roeck, & Delobbe, 2012; Ilich & Brockbank, 2005). As such, we argue that by relying on the theoretical underpinnings of stakeholder theory, HRM can serve multiple stakeholders including employees. Further, as the concepts of ethical leadership, sustainable HRM, and stakeholder theory are concerned with value creation on various fronts such as the broader role of businesses in society, social justice, and various stakeholders' rights, including employees, stakeholder theory can help us comprehend precarious work, as well as highlight pathways through which ethical leaders can curb precarious work.

The influence of HR managers' ethical leadership on precarious work

In contemporary organizations, HR managers often emphasize followers' performance and efficiency, thereby ignoring followers' overall well-being (Kaufman, 2015; 2019). To enhance efficiency and financial performance, traditional leadership is focused on cutting labour costs and minimizing various employee benefits, making the job insecure (Keegan et al., 2018; Muehlberger, 2007). Stakeholder theory stresses a broader role of business organizations to create value for all the stakeholders, such as investors, suppliers, social justice, and employees' rights and well-being. Drawing on stakeholder theory, we argue that

HR Managers' ethical leadership can curb precarious work. We make this argument due to the following two reasons.

First, ethical leaders demonstrate personal values, such as trustworthiness, honesty, care for others, altruism, and fairness through their behaviours and decisions and are “meaning makers” (Yam et al 2018; Yeşiltaş & Tuna, 2018). Ethical leaders focus on the development and growth of employees, organizations, and society at large. Such a focus is rooted in the ethical leaders' sense of responsibility to these entities and future generations (Ali et al., 2022; Anser et al., 2021; Usman et al., 2022a). Ethical leadership's broader focus is consistent with stakeholder theory, which stresses a broader role of business organizations to create value for all stakeholders, including employees. As such, we argue that HR managers as ethical leaders will be considerate towards employees' well-being and address issues related to job security, job flexibility, and overall job conditions instead of focusing only on efficiency and productivity. In other words, HR managers as ethical leaders may curb precarious work.

Second, ethical leaders listen to employees' concerns through direct interactions and communication, using both bottom-up and top-down approaches (Brown et al., 2005). By doing so, ethical leaders become aware of employees' concerns related to job conditions, wages, and overall job conditions (Zhang & Tu, 2018). Such awareness is likely to encourage considerate and compassionate actions by HR managers as ethical leaders, thereby providing solutions to employees' job-related issues, such as poor working conditions and job security, and work-life balance (Zhang & Tu, 2018). This argument is consistent with the tenet of stakeholder theory that “the interaction among a firm and its stakeholders that address knowledge problems to improve correspondence in understanding between managers and stakeholders, thereby to assist in resolving ethical challenges faced by managers” (Mitchell et al., 2022, p. 77). In essence, we expect that ethical leadership can mitigate precarious work.

Hypothesis 1: HR managers' ethical leadership is negatively related to precarious work.

Sustainable HRM

HRM has been extensively studied in organizations, with a significant body of research exploring its relationship with various organizational and employee outcomes. These outcomes include employee performance (Tian et al., 2016), job satisfaction (Hewagama et al., 2019), employee retention (Anitha, 2014), employee engagement (Moore & Hanson, 2022), employee competence (Antonacopoulou & FitzGerald, 1996), organizational learning (Bhatnagar & Sharma, 2005; Gómez, 2004; Kang et al., 2007), and organizational performance (Becker & Gerhart, 1996), to name a few. Additionally, scholars have explored the integration of HRM with other organizational domains, such as environmental strategy (Dumont et al., 2017; Renwick et al., 2013) and corporate social responsibility (Voegtlin and Greenwood, 2016; Zhao et al., 2021), emphasizing the importance of aligning HRM practices with these broader organizational goals. However, one crucial area that has received limited attention in the literature is the role of HRM in discouraging extreme work (Wankhade et al., 2020) and thus we know little about how HRM can play a vital role in discouraging extreme work and promoting sustainable work practices.

The scarce sustainable HRM literature (e.g., Aust et al., 2022; Pfajfar et al., 2022; Wikhamn, 2019) provides perspectives that challenge the dominant narrative of the maximization of shareholders' wealth and instead align with engaging and meeting the interests of various stakeholders. Sustainable HRM vows to recognize performance outcomes that go beyond financial to assume social dimensions of sustainability, such as working towards employee job security, well-being, career development, and environmental outcomes. Indeed, the social dimension of HRM has both internal and external elements. Internal dimensions of social sustainability will largely involve issues around employee well-

being (Guest, 2017; Chughtai et al., 2015), in terms of health and job security, wages, job flexibility, and job conditions (Aust et al., 2022; Pfajfar et al., 2022; Wikhamn, 2019). Externally, the social sustainability aspect of HRM goes beyond the employees and includes issues such as the impact of HRM on local communities, global supply chains of developing countries, nature, and engaging in human rights issues (Hampton, 2019; Nolan & Bott, 2018; Linton et al., 2007).

Sustainable HRM is a relatively new concept as compared with green HRM, which emerged a few decades earlier. The green HRM research started with a primary focus on exploring the role of employees in achieving the organization's environmental management – has its origins in the early 1990s (see, Ruiz-Quintanilla et al., 1996; Bunge et al., 1996). Most of the work in the green HRM stream is drawn on the environmental management perspective and how it influences employees of an organization concerning environmental outcomes (Wehrmeyer, 1996). Such works, later on, focused on the *greening* of HRM practices (see, Renwick et al., 2008). On the other hand, the concept of sustainable HRM emerged following Ehnert's (2009) ground-breaking book "*Sustainable human resource management: A conceptual and exploratory analysis from a paradox perspective*". The interpretation of sustainable HRM places green HRM within the broader field of sustainable HRM (Paulet et al., 2021), as green HRM focuses only on one aspect of sustainability.

Sustainable HRM is inspired by human relations, employee relations-welfare, and industrial relations movements (Aust et al., 2022; Pfajfar et al., 2022; Wikhamn, 2019). The global environmental and societal issues were not deemed as imperative to HRM until recently; rather, the focus of HRM models historically has been on following best HR practices in recruitment, rewards and training and development aimed at maximizing shareholder value (Usman et al., 2022b). Thus, conceptually, sustainable HRM is renovating the aim and outlook of HRM from economic value to the common good.

We considered sustainable HRM as comprising three aspects such as complying with employment regulations, employee competence development, and employee well-being-oriented HRM practices. First, legal context is imperative for HR practices as it provides grounds for organizations to get legitimacy through effective compliance. The legal context of a business affects its HR policies and practices, particularly when the organization operates in the international context and is faced with local, national, and international laws (Roehling, et. al., 2008). Thus, complying with legal frameworks such as labour laws is an integral part of the HRM fabric, however, hardly any theoretical or empirical project studied its importance (Scheibmayr, & Reichel, 2021). Second, our focus on competence development incorporates factors such as training and development to enhance employee skills to help them grow in their careers (Wikhamn, 2019). Lastly, employee well-being-oriented HRM was included because it leads to employee well-being and freedom to express concerns about issues related to working with the intent to positively contribute to the organization (see, Hu et al., 2018; Pfajfar et al., 2022). Given their focus on employee development and well-being, we understand that these internal social aspects of HRM can help organizations deter precarious work.

The mediating role of sustainable HRM

Recently, a large number of workers have been working in non-standard working conditions and the legal status of such workers who are on the periphery of the organization is less secure and marked with precarity than those who are at the centre (Crane & Matten, 2016). How do we deal with such a problem? One way is a move towards sustainable HRM. A workplace that treats employees unfairly or puts them under stress will have a long-term effect on their lifestyle, well-being, and health (Ehnert et al., 2016). This aspect reflects the internal social side of sustainable HRM – that is, organizations should treat their workers in a

way that takes care of their well-being in terms of social relations and well-being and retain meaningful work-life balance (Crane & Matten, 2016; Ehnert et al., 2016).

Stakeholder theory suggests that ethics and business are interlinked and taking care of stakeholders' rights is the moral obligation of a business organization. In line with this proposition of the stakeholder theory, we argue that ethical leaders who have a genuine concern for employees' well-being and rights within the organization can develop sustainable HRM. For instance, ethical leadership shows concern and takes responsibility for the professional development of employees and their personal matters, thus going beyond the contractual obligations (Yidong & Xinxin, 2013) to inspire employees to improve their practices, skills, and knowledge beyond expectations and established standards (Treviño et al., 2006; Tseng & Wu, 2017). Therefore, it is likely that HR managers as ethical leaders integrate employees' competence development (an important internal social aspect of HRM) into HRM.

Moreover, according to Brown et al. (2005), an ethical leader acts both as a moral person (i.e., demonstrates honesty, benevolence, and care toward followers) and a moral manager (i.e., a credible role model who might use his/her authority to care of rights of different stakeholders). The moral manager's role of ethical leadership can be important in enforcing legal aspects of sustainable HRM. As moral managers, ethical leaders establish standards for the ethical behaviours of organizational members and accountability mechanisms that strengthen ethical behaviours and discourage unethical behaviours (Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Since ethical leaders take care of employee well-being and rights, it is also likely that HR managers as ethical leaders can embed employment standards into HRM. Likewise, ethical leadership demonstrates integrity, concern for employees' personal and professional interests (Brown et al., 2005), and justice (Neubert et al., 2009). We argue that these values will be reflected through HRM practices if HR

managers adopt ethical leadership behaviours. In essence, we expect that HR managers as ethical leaders can enforce HRM that facilitates employee competence development, takes care of their well-being, and embed legal aspects of employment relations.

Finally, we posit HRM practices are primarily focused on internal social aspects of sustainability in the form of employee competence development and employee well-being and their legal employment rights to treat employees fairly in terms of wages, mitigate their job insecurity, promote job flexibility, and improve job conditions. Thus, we understand that HR managers as ethical leaders mitigate precarious work through the development of HRM which incorporates internal dimensions of social sustainability. This argument concurs with stakeholder theory, which stresses that a business should be aimed at creating value for all the stakeholders (Freeman et al., 1994), rather than merely focusing on one aspect, which is increasing shareholders' wealth. Overall, we argue that HR Managers as ethical leaders will embed sustainable HRM policies and practices in an organization that in turn play a key role in reducing precarious work. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Sustainable HRM mediates the negative relationship between HR managers' ethical leadership and precarious work.

Political skill as a moderator

Stakeholder theory suggests that among primary stakeholders, organizational leaders have a unique position. Indeed, they are at the centre of the stakeholders' network and play a central role in managing this network and stakeholders' value creation. However, the effectiveness of organizational leadership's decisions depends on leaders' ability and skill to influence and enrol different stakeholder groups into important decisions aimed at value creation for a wider network of stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Jones, 1995). Drawing from this premise of stakeholder theory, we propose that HR Managers' political skill moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and sustainable HRM.

Leader political skill has an imperative role in leadership effectiveness and organizations' success (Ahearn et al., 2004). Leaders high on political skill are more socially astute and therefore they build networks and create social capital more effectively (Brouer et al., 2013). Politically skilled leaders demonstrate self-discipline, calmness, and flexibility through their behaviours and decisions that improve their interpersonal effectiveness and enable them to influence and enrol others (e.g., peers, employees, and other important stakeholders into their objectives (Ahearn et al., 2004; Brouer et al., 2013). A leader adept in political skill will have established a platform of support and skills to provoke desirable responses from the support platform by conveying a sense of importance and urgency around important agendas (Nwankwo & Richardson, 1996), such as the development of sustainable HRM practices. As such, we argue that compared to others, HR managers as ethical leaders who are high on political skill will be more effective in enrolling different stakeholders into their agenda of developing sustainable HRM.

Moreover, political skill enhances individuals' understanding of the work context, helps them identify competing goals of different stakeholders and enables them to manoeuvre them in desirable ways (Nwankwo & Richardson, 1996). Political skill provides leaders with power and a sense of control over events that help them overcome resistance emerging from other internal stakeholders (i.e., employees). As such, as compared to others, HR managers as ethical leaders who are high on political skill can be more effective in manoeuvring different stakeholder groups and obtaining the resources required to develop and implement sustainable HRM. Consequently, it is likely that, compared to others, the influence of ethical leadership on sustainable HRM will be more pronounced for leaders who are high on political skill. Thus, we propose:

H4. HR managers' political skill moderates the positive association of HR managers' ethical leadership with sustainable HRM, such that the association is strong when political skill is high (vs. low).

So far, we have proposed a framework, which suggests that sustainable HRM mediates the impact of HR managers' ethical leadership on precarious work. We also theorized that HR managers' political skill moderates the impact of HR managers' ethical leadership on sustainable HRM. Based on the notion that HR managers' ethical leadership positively impacts sustainable HRM, and that this impact is reinforced when HR managers' political skill is high, we further argue that the indirect impact of HR managers' ethical leadership on precarious work via sustainable HRM is strong when HR manager political skill is high. Since leaders high on political skill are more capable of gaining and manoeuvring resources in their favour (Douglas & Ammeter, 2004), there will be a strong negative indirect (via sustainable HRM) relationship between ethical leadership and precarious work when HR manager political skill is high. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis.

H5. HR managers' political skill moderates the negative indirect relationship between HR managers' ethical leadership and precarious work, via sustainable HRM, such that the relationship is strong when political skill is high (vs. low).

Research Method

Data collection and analysis

We collected 260 responses from two sources – employees and human resource (HR) managers – in three different rounds, separated by a lag time of two months. To collect data, we randomly chose 500 alumni of a large public sector university in an Indian subcontinent country to help us in data collection and 377 alumni agreed to facilitate our data collection. These alumni provided us with the contact number of HR managers and the list of employees

working in their respective organizations, operating in different 377 manufacturing and service organizations in the country.

We randomly chose 377 employees from the list provided by the alumni members. Each potential respondent received an information sheet explaining the general purpose of the study and the promise of confidentiality and received informed consent from 342 employees and 318 HR managers. In the first round, we received 298 employee responses about HR managers' ethical leadership and 278 HR managers' responses about their political skill and demographic controls. In the second round, we received 266 HR managers' responses about sustainable HRM and finally, in the third round, we received 295 employee responses about precarious work. After matching the data using unique codes and screening the responses for missing values, our final sample size was 260 responses. Structural equation modelling in Mplus (8.8) was employed to analyse the data.

In terms of age, our HR manager sample consisted of 63.8% males and 36.2% females. The respondents' mean age was 39.34 years. The respondents' tenure with the current organization was 4.97 years. Further, 44.6% of the respondents had undergraduate degrees and 55.4% had master's degrees.

Measures and variables

We gauged all the constructs using a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

HR managers' *ethical leadership*. Ethical Leadership was assessed by adapting a ten-item scale ($\alpha = .93$) by Brown et al. (2005). Sample item: "*My HR manager listens to what employees have to say*".

SHRM. As explained earlier, we focused on internal social aspects of SHRM, given our focus on mitigating precarious work and the theoretical relevance of legal compliance SHRM, competence development, and employee wellbeing-oriented aspects of SHRM with

curbing precarious work. SHRM-LC was measured by using a six-item scale ($\alpha = .85$) from Shen and Zhu (2011). Sample item: “*Employees in our organization are paid above minimum wages and based on their performance*”. SHRM-CD was measured by adapting a five-item scale ($\alpha = .87$) by Wikhamn (2019). Sample item: “*Extensive training programs are provided for individuals in our organization*”. SHRM-WB was measured by using a four-item scale ($\alpha = .83$) by Pfajfar et al. (2022). Sample item: “*Our organization makes decisions with employees’ interests in mind*”.

Precarious work. Precarious work was measured using a four-dimensional scale by Creed et al. (2020). Each dimension is comprised of three items. These four dimensions include job conditions ($\alpha = .86$), job remuneration ($\alpha = .89$), job security ($\alpha = .84$), and job flexibility ($\alpha = .87$). Sample items: “*To what extent are you able to negotiate your work schedule (e.g., the days and times you work (R))*” (Job conditions), “*To what extent does your pay meet unexpected expenses? (R)*” (Job remuneration), “*To what extent are you concerned about losing your current job in the near future?*” (Job security), and “*To what extent are you able to take time off if you are unwell without worrying about losing your job or being penalized (e.g., hours cut)? (R)*” (Job flexibility). The items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent).

Political skill. Political skill was assessed by adopting a six-item scale ($\alpha = .90$) by Ahearn et al. (2004). Sample item: “*I am good at getting others to respond positively to me*”.

Control variables

HR managers’ age and gender, tenure, and education were controlled. Moreover, since there is a conceptual overlap between ethical leadership and servant leadership (Hoch et al., 2018), we controlled for servant leadership. We assessed servant leadership using a seven-item scale ($\alpha = .93$) by Liden et al. (2015). A sample item: “*My supervisor emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community*”. Our results regarding our hypotheses were statistically

significant both with and without controls. For the sake of parsimony, we have presented our results regarding our hypotheses without controls (Table 3).

Results

Correlations and descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics and correlations among the understudied variables are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Measurement model assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis was employed in Mplus (8.8) to assess the measurement model consisting of sustainable HRM, HR managers' ethical leadership, HR manager political skill, and precarious work. All the items demonstrated significant loading ($p < .001$). The fit indices – $\chi^2 (224) = 542.42$, $\chi^2/df = 2.42$, TLI = .91, CFI = .92, SRMR = .05, and RMSEA = .07 – showed a good fit of our measurement model with the data.

Further, for all the variables of the present work, average variance extracted (AVE) > .50 of all the variables (Table 2). For all the variables, the square root of AVE was greater than their inter-construct correlations and both average shared variance (ASV) and maximum shared variance (MSV) < AVE (Table 2). Thus, the scales were satisfactory both in terms of convergent and discriminant validities.

Insert Table 2 about here

Hypotheses testing

The results revealed a negative association between HR managers' ethical leadership and precarious work ($B = -.24, SE = .06, p < .01$) (Table 3). The results also showed a significant negative indirect association (via sustainable HRM) between HR managers' ethical leadership and precarious work ($B = -.11, SE = .03, p < .01$) (Table 3). Thus, our results supported hypotheses 1 and 2.

Further, the interaction term of ethical leadership and HR manager political skill was added to the indirect effect model to test hypotheses 3 and 4. We found a significant impact of the interaction term on sustainable HRM was significant ($B = .28, SE = .07, p < .01$) (Table 3). Figure 2 illustrates the precise features of this moderated path. Simple slope plots at two different levels (low and high levels of HR manager political skill) of the moderator are displaying two conditional values of the effect of HR managers' ethical leadership on sustainable HRM. The association was significant ($B = .70, SE = .10, p < .01$) when HR manager political skill was high, while the relationship was insignificant ($B = .15, SE = .09, ns$) when HR manager political skill was low. Thus, hypothesis 3 was supported.

Finally, the results of the moderation-mediation analysis showed a significant negative conditional indirect impact [$B = -.19, SE = .04, CI = (-.28, -.09)$] of HR managers' ethical leadership on precarious work via sustainable HRM when HR manager political skill was high. On the contrary, when HR manager political skill was low, the conditional indirect impact was insignificant ($B = -.04, SE = .03, ns$). The moderated-mediation index for the indirect association of HR managers' ethical leadership with precarious work via sustainable HRM was also significant [$index = -.07, SE = .02, CI = (-.12, -.03)$]. Thus, our results supported hypothesis 4.

Insert Figure 2 and Table 3 about here

Discussion and theoretical contributions

The goal of this research was to understand how and when HR managers' ethical leadership negatively influences precarious work. Utilizing stakeholder theory, the present study proposed that HR managers' ethical leadership is negatively associated with precarious work. Moreover, the study also proposed that sustainable HRM mediated the negative relationship between HR managers' ethical leadership and precarious work. Finally, the study tested the role of HR manager political skill as an important moderator of the direct and indirect effects of HR managers' ethical leadership on sustainable HRM and precarious work, respectively. Using time-lagged and two-source data, the present study found support for all the hypothesized relationships.

Our study has several theoretical implications. First, building on stakeholder theory, our study adds novel insights for research on precarious work. Previous research generates useful insights by bringing to the fore some important repercussions of precarious work. For instance, studies suggest that precarious work results in depression, anxiety, and burnout (Benach et al., 2014). It also negatively affects job satisfaction, well-being, meaningful work, job performance, employee voice, and self-esteem (Allan & Blustein, 2022; Lott, 2014). However, there is less known about how organizations can deter precarious work. Indeed, there are growing calls (e.g., Bartram et al., 2022; Petriglieri et al., 2019; Solinger et al., 2020) for identifying different leader behaviours and organizational practices that can deal with precarious work. We respond to these calls and contribute to the literature on precarious work by showing that HR managers as ethical leaders and sustainable HRM can play imperative roles in helping organizations curb precarious work.

Second, the inherent characteristics of precarious work, such as insecurity, instability, and uncertainty of employment and income can create a culture conducive to work intensification. Precarious workers often face heightened vulnerability due to the absence of job and income security and stability, as well as limited access to benefits. Such vulnerability coupled with the need to secure continued work and income can push individuals to accept and endure longer work hours and adverse work demands. Likewise, the fear of job loss can drive individuals to accept excessive workloads and subject themselves to increased physical and mental strain. As a result, the inherent challenges and insecurities of precarious work contribute to the development of extreme work culture, where individuals in a relentless pursuit of work-related goals compromise their well-being and work-life balance. As such, precarious work is an important predictor of extreme work. Thus, by showing that HR managers' ethical leadership deter precarious work, we respond to the call for studies that explore effective strategies for organizations to address extreme work and contribute to the literature on extreme work (Ho & Kuvaas, 2019; Neirotti, 2020; Wankhade et al., 2020). Indeed, previous studies on extreme work have made valuable contributions by providing evidence about the detrimental effects on employee well-being, work-life balance, fatigue, and morale (Boxall & Macky, 2014; Ho & Kuvaas, 2019; Wankhade et al., 2020; Turnbull & Wass, 2015). There is a scarcity of research on how organizations effectively address extreme work and mitigate its adverse repercussions for employees (Ho & Kuvaas, 2019; Wankhade et al., 2020). Given the severe detrimental effects of extreme work on employee well-being, the paucity of research on how organizations deal with extreme work and mitigate its negative outcomes (Ho & Kuvaas, 2019; Wankhade et al., 2020), our findings are timely and relevant.

Third, we contribute to the literature on ethical leadership. Previous studies (e.g., Ali et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2005; Eva et al., 2019; Men et al. 2020) show that ethical

leadership leads to employee positive outcomes (e.g., learning, green behaviour, and ethical behaviours) and negatively influences employee negative outcomes (e.g., unethical behaviours and knowledge hiding). In line with stakeholder theory, our findings suggest that HR managers as ethical leaders, through their emphasis on protecting the rights of various stakeholders (Brown et al., 2005; Chughtai et al., 2015), address issues related to employee job security, job flexibility, and overall job conditions. By showing that HR managers' ethical leadership predicts sustainable HRM and negatively influences precarious work, we advance the network of ethical leadership's outcomes.

Fourth, consistent with stakeholder theory, our findings indicate that HR managers as ethical leaders demonstrate ethical values in the workplace and take care of employees' rights. To do so, HR managers embed different aspects of employee well-being in HRM in the form of sustainable HRM, which in turn negatively affects precarious work. Although there is an emphasis on developing sustainable HRM practices (Pfajfar et al., 2022; Wikhamn 2019), there is no consensus on what sustainable HRM is. Likewise, our knowledge of its antecedents is scarce at best. We contribute to the nascent literature on sustainable HRM by focusing on internal social aspects of sustainable HRM and providing empirical evidence of its antecedents and outcomes. Importantly, we highlight its role as a mechanism explaining why HR managers' ethical leadership negatively influences precarious work.

Finally, we integrate an imperative individual factor— HR manager political skill — into our model and reveal its impact on the link between HR managers' ethical leadership and sustainable HRM. Past research suggests leader political skill provides them with power and helps them mobilize different resources in their favour (Ferris et al., 1999; Ahearn et al., 2004). Studies also suggest that leader political skill plays an important role in the organization's success (Ahearn et al., 2004; Pfeffer, 1981). We advance this research by highlighting an important yet largely overlooked role of HR managers' political skill as a

boundary condition of the links of HR managers' ethical leadership with sustainable HRM and precarious work.

Practical implications

By revealing that HR managers' ethical leadership is negatively related to precarious work, we suggest that HR managers should demonstrate care and concern for the rights of all the stakeholders including employees through their behaviours and actions. By demonstrating ethical leadership behaviours, HR managers can address issues related to precarious work, such as job flexibility, job insecurity, and overall job conditions. By curbing behaviours, HR managers can alleviate several negative consequences of precarious work, such as employee anxiety, burnout, and extreme work.

Moreover, by finding that sustainable HRM mediates the relationship between HR managers' ethical leadership and precarious work, we suggest that HR managers can add different social aspects to HRM to curb precarious work. Specifically, managers should focus on employees' competence development and provide them fair opportunities to grow in their careers. Likewise, HR managers should show compliance with labour law to ensure that all applicants have equal opportunity to get hired and there is no discrimination in wages, selection, promotion, and other HR practices based on race, ethnicity, religious and political affiliations, and so on. Moreover, HR managers need to deter employees' feelings of job insecurity and offer flexible hours to enhance employees' well-being.

Finally, our findings suggest that HR managers' political skill holds the potential to enhance the effectiveness of HR managers' ethical leadership in developing sustainable HRM and curbing precarious work and its negative repercussions, including extreme work. Therefore, we suggest that senior management needs to enhance their HR managers' political skill. Political skill helps HR managers enhance their social resources, develop good relationships with stakeholders and enable them to enrol these different stakeholders into

their objectives. Consequently, HR managers' political skill enhances the effectiveness of their ethical behaviours for developing sustainable HRM and deterring precarious work and its negative consequences. As such, we suggest that senior management should be attentive to political skill in the selection of HR managers and endeavour to measure their level of political skill in the selection process, as awareness of HR managers' political skill can be helpful for organizations in designing different activities such as different types of training and coaching for HR managers depending on the level of their political skill. We also suggest that organizations should invest in training and development programs that enhance HR managers' political skill and inform them about the importance of networking, social capital, and effective stakeholder management and how to maintain and manoeuvre them to their advantage.

Limitations and future research

This study is not without limitations. For instance, we collected data from two sources and used a time-lagged design to eliminate common method bias. However, it is unlikely to establish causality. To draw strong causal inferences, studies should use longitudinal or experimental designs. Furthermore, in terms of ethical leadership, the present work considered HR managers. We suggest scholars focus on senior managers' ethical leadership and assess its trickle-down impact on HR managers. Furthermore, other leadership styles (e.g., servant leadership, inclusive leadership, and spiritual leadership) can help organizations address issues related to precarious work. For example, spiritual leaders demonstrate altruistic vision, empathy, compassion, and concern for employees' personal and professional development through their behaviour, as well as focus on the spiritual development of employees (Fry et al. 2005). We argue that HR managers as spiritual leaders can develop sustainable HRM and curb precarious work. A comparison of the effects of different

leadership styles can also offer valuable insights into the HR managers' leadership-precarious work link.

Finally, we contextualized the theoretical interrelations between HR managers' ethical leadership, sustainable HRM, and HR manager political skill in a developing country with a collectivist culture. The result of such an inquiry in a Western cultural context may have varying manifestations of how the constructs under consideration are related. Likewise, organizations in different parts of the world face different regulatory expectations. Thus, studying our model in Western culture may enhance our understanding of the interrelationship between HR managers' ethical leadership, sustainable HRM, political skill, and precarious work. Finally, we only focused on internal social aspects of sustainable HRM, given our main goal to deter precarious work. Future studies should include external social aspects of sustainable HRM such as green HRM to enhance our understanding of the role of HR managers' ethical leadership or other positive leadership in contributing to the development of sustainable HRM including both its internal and external social aspects.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be made available at any time during or after the review process by the corresponding author upon a reasonable request.

References

- Anitha, J. (2014). Determinants of employee engagement and their impact on employee performance. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 63(3), 308-323.
- Ahearn, K. K., Ferris, G. R., Hochwarter, W. A., Douglas, C., & Ammeter, A. P. (2004). Leader political skill and team performance. *Journal of Management*, 30(3), 309-327.
- Ahmad, S., Islam, T., Sadiq, M., & Kaleem, A. (2021). Promoting green behaviours through ethical leadership: a model of green human resource management and environmental knowledge. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 42(4), 531-547.

- Ali, M., Qu, Y. E., Shafique, S., Pham, N. T., & Usman, M. (2022). The role of ethical leadership in enhancing exploitative and explorative learning simultaneously: what does it matter if employees view work as central? *Personnel Review*, *51*(2), 787-804.
- Allan, B. A., & Blustein, D. L. (2022). Precarious work and workplace dignity during COVID-19: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 103739.
- Allen, T. D., & Shockley, K. (2009). Flexible work arrangements: Help or hype. *Handbook of Families and Work: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 265–284.
- Aust, I., Matthews, B., & Muller-Camen, M. (2020). Common Good HRM: A paradigm shift in Sustainable HRM. *Human Resource Management Review*, *30*(3), 100705.
- Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *16*(3), 315–338.
- Banks, G. C., Fischer, T., Gooty, J., & Stock, G. (2021). Ethical leadership: Mapping the terrain for concept cleanup and a future research agenda *The Leadership Quarterly*, *32*(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101471>.
- Becker, B., & Gerhart, B. (1996). The impact of human resource management on organizational performance: Progress and prospects. *Academy of Management Journal*, *39*(4), 779-801.
- Bedi, A., Alpaslan, C. M., & Green, S. (2016). A meta-analytic review of ethical leadership outcomes and moderators. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *139*(3), 517–536.
- Benach, J., Vives, A., Amable, M., Vanroelen, C., Tarafa, G., & Muntaner, C. (2014). Precarious employment: understanding an emerging social determinant of health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, *35*, 229-253.
- Bhatnagar, J., & Sharma, A. (2005). The Indian perspective of strategic HR roles and organizational learning capability. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *16*(9), 1711-1739.
- Birnbaum, S., & De Wispelaere, J. (2021). Exit strategy or exit trap? Basic income and the ‘power to say no in the age of precarious employment. *Socio-Economic Review*, *19*(3), 909–927.
- Bosmans, K., Hardonk, S., De Cuyper, N., & Vanroelen, C. (2016). Explaining the relation between precarious employment and mental well-being. A qualitative study among temporary agency workers. *Work*, *53*(2), 249–264.
- Boxall, P., & Macky, K. (2014). High-involvement work processes, work intensification and employee well-being. *Work, Employment and Society*, *28*(6), 963-984.

- Brouer, R. L., Douglas, C., Treadway, D. C., & Ferris, G. R. (2013). Leader political skill, relationship quality, and leadership effectiveness: A two-study model test and constructive replication. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 20(2), 185-198.
- Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K. (2006). Ethical leadership: A review and future directions. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 595–616.
- Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 97(2), 117–134.
- Burgess, J., Connell, J., & Winterton, J. (2013). Vulnerable workers, precarious work and the role of trade unions and HRM. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24(22), 4083–4093.
- Butler, N., & Stoyanova Russell, D. (2018). No funny business: Precarious work and emotional labour in stand-up comedy. *Human Relations*, 71(12), 1666–1686.
- Butterick, M., & Charlwood, A. (2021). HRM and the COVID-19 pandemic: How can we stop making a bad situation worse? *Human Resource Management Journal*, 31(4), 847-856.
- Chan, C. C., McBey, K., & Scott-Ladd, B. (2011). Ethical leadership in modern employment relationships: Lessons from St. Benedict. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 100(2), 221–228.
- Cohen, E. (2010). *CSR for HR: A necessary partnership for advancing responsible business practices*. Sheffield: Greenleaf.
- Crane, A., & Matten, D. (2016). *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press.
- Creed, P. A., Hood, M., Selenko, E., & Bagley, L. (2020). The development and initial validation of a self-report job precariousness scale suitable for use with young adults who study and work. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 28(4), 636-654.
- Davenport, K. (2000). Corporate citizenship: A stakeholder approach for defining corporate social performance and identifying measures for assessing it. *Business & Society*, 39(2), 210–219.
- De Roeck, K. and Delobbe, N. (2012). Do environmental CSR initiatives serve organizations' legitimacy in the oil industry? Exploring employees' reactions through organizational identification theory. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 110, 397–412.

- Diekmann, K. A., Barsness, Z. I., & Sondak, H. (2004). Uncertainty, fairness perceptions, and job satisfaction: A field study. *Social Justice Research, 17*(3), 237-255.
- Douglas, C., & Ammeter, A. P. (2004). An examination of leader political skill and its effect on ratings of leader effectiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly, 15*(4), 537-550.
- Egri, C. P., & Hornal, R. C. (2002). Strategic environmental human resource management and perceived organizational performance: An exploratory study of the Canadian manufacturing sector. In S. Sharma & M. Starik (Eds.), *Research in corporate sustainability: The evolving theory and practice of organizations in the natural environment* (pp. 205–236). Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- Ehnert, I., Parsa, S., Roper, I., Wagner, M., & Muller-Camen, M. (2016). Reporting on sustainability and HRM: A comparative study of sustainability reporting practices by the world's largest companies. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 27*(1), 88–108.
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management. A stakeholder approach*. Boston. Pitman.
- Freeman, R. E. (1994). The politics of stakeholder theory: Some future directions. *Business Ethics Quarterly, 4*, 409–421.
- Freire, C., & Bettencourt, C. (2020). Impact of ethical leadership on job satisfaction: the mediating effect of work–family conflict. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*.
- Friedman, A. L., & Miles, S. (2002). Developing stakeholder theory. *Journal of Management Studies, 39*(1), 1–21.
- Frooman, J. (1999). Stakeholder influence strategies. *Academy of Management Review, 24*(2), 191–205.
- Fry, L. W., Vitucci, S., & Cedillo, M. (2005). Spiritual leadership and army transformation: Theory, measurement, and establishing a baseline. *The leadership quarterly, 16*(5), 835-862.
- Fudge, J., & Owens, R. (2006). *Precarious work, women, and the new economy: The challenge to legal norms*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Gallie, D., Felstead, A., Green, F., & Inanc, H. (2017). The hidden face of job insecurity. *Work, Employment and Society, 31*(1), 36–53.
- Gascoigne, C., Parry, E., & Buchanan, D. (2015). Extreme work, gendered work? How extreme jobs and the discourse of 'personal choice' perpetuate gender inequality. *Organization, 22*(4), 457-475.

- Gómez, C. (2004). The influence of environmental, organizational, and HRM factors on employee behaviors in subsidiaries: a Mexican case study of organizational learning. *Journal of World Business*, 39(1), 1-11.
- Greenwood, M. (2013). Ethical analyses of HRM: A review and research agenda. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 114(2), 355-366.
- Guerci, M., & Shani, A. (2013). Moving toward stakeholder-based HRM: A perspective of Italian HR managers. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24(6), 1130–1150.
- Guerci, M., Shani, A. B., & Solari, L. (2014). A stakeholder perspective for sustainable HRM. In I. Ehnert, W. Harry, & K. J. Zink (Eds.), *Sustainability and human resource management developing sustainable business organizations* (pp. 205–224). Heidelberg: Springer.
- Guest, D. E. (2017). Human resource management and employee well-being: Towards a new analytic framework. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 27(1), 22-38.
- Hampton, D. B. (2019). Modern slavery in global supply chains: Can national action plans on business and human rights close the governance gap?. *Business and Human Rights Journal*, 4(2), 239-263.
- Hayman, J. R. (2009). Flexible work arrangements: Exploring the linkages between perceived usability of flexible work schedules and work/life balance. *Community, work & family*, 12(3), 327-338.
- Hernandez, M. (2008). Promoting stewardship behavior in organizations: A leadership model. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 80(1), 121–128.
- Hewagama, G., Boxall, P., Cheung, G., & Hutchison, A. (2019). Service recovery through empowerment? HRM, employee performance and job satisfaction in hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 81, 73-82.
- Hoch, J. E., Bommer, W. H., Dulebohn, J. H., & Wu, D. (2018). Do ethical, authentic, and servant leadership explain variance above and beyond transformational leadership? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management*, 44(2), 501–529.
- Heffernan, A., & Wilkinson, J. (2022). Educational Leadership and Policy: Precarity and Precariousness. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 54(1), 1-6.
- Ho, H., & Kuvaas, B. (2020). Human resource management systems, employee well-being, and firm performance from the mutual gains and critical perspectives: The well-being paradox. *Human Resource Management*, 59(3), 235-253.

- Hyman, R., & Gumbrell-McCormick, R. (2017). Resisting labour market insecurity: Old and new actors, rivals or allies? *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 59(4), 538–561.
- ILO. (2020). *81 million jobs lost as COVID-19 creates turmoil in Asia-Pacific labour markets*. https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS_763819/lang-en/index.htm
- International Labour Office. (2015). *World employment and social outlook: Trends 2015*. International Labour Organization Geneva.
- Jabbour, C., & Santos, F. (2008). The central role of human resource management in the search for sustainable organizations. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(12), 2133–2154.
- Järlström, M., Saru, E., & Vanhala, S. (2018). Sustainable human resource management with salience of stakeholders: A top management perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 152(3), 703-724.
- Jones, T. M. (1995). Instrumental stakeholder theory: A synthesis of ethics and economics. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(2), 404-437.
- Kalleberg, A. L. (2009). Precarious work, insecure workers: Employment relations in transition. *American Sociological Review*, 74(1), 1–22.
- Kalleberg, A. L., & Hewison, K. (2013). Precarious work and the challenge for Asia. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(3), 271–288.
- Kalleberg, A. L., Reskin, B. F., & Hudson, K. (2000). Bad jobs in America: Standard and nonstandard employment relations and job quality in the United States. *American Sociological Review*, 256–278.
- Kang, S. C., Morris, S. S., & Snell, S. A. (2007). Relational archetypes, organizational learning, and value creation: Extending the human resource architecture. *Academy of management review*, 32(1), 236-256.
- Katz, L. F., & Krueger, A. B. (2019). The rise and nature of alternative work arrangements in the United States, 1995–2015. *ILR Review*, 72(2), 382–416.
- Kaufman, B. E. (2015). Evolution of strategic HRM as seen through two founding books: A 30th anniversary perspective on development of the field. *Human Resource Management*, 54(3), 389-407.
- Kaufman, B. E. (2020). The real problem: The deadly combination of psychologisation, scientism, and normative promotionalism takes strategic human resource management down a 30-year dead end. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 30(1), 49-72.

- Keegan, A., Bitterling, I., Sylva, H., & Hoeksema, L. (2018). Organizing the HRM function: Responses to paradoxes, variety, and dynamism. *Human Resource Management*, 57(5), 1111-1126.
- Knox, C. (2006). *A values based approach to Maori land development*. Otaki, New Zealand. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.552.6602&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Kolodinsky, R. W., Treadway, D. C., & Ferris, G. R. (2007). Political skill and influence effectiveness: Testing portions of an expanded Ferris and Judge (1991) model. *Human Relations*, 60(12), 1747-1777.
- Koopman, J., Scott, B. A., Matta, F. K., Conlon, D. E., & Dennerlein, T. (2019). Ethical leadership as a substitute for justice enactment: An information-processing perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 104(9), 1103.
- Leroy, H., Palanski, M. E., & Simons, T. (2012). Authentic leadership and behavioral integrity as drivers of follower commitment and performance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 107(3), 255–264.
- Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Meuser, J. D., Hu, J., Wu, J., & Liao, C. (2015). Servant leadership: Validation of a short form of the SL-28. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 26(2), 254-269.
- Linton, J. D., Klassen, R., & Jayaraman, V. (2007). Sustainable supply chains: An introduction. *Journal of operations management*, 25(6), 1075-1082.
- Lott, B. (2014). Social class myopia: The case of psychology and labor unions. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 14(1), 261–280.
- Mariappanadar, S. (2012). The harm indicators of negative externality of efficiency focused organizational practices. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 39, 209–220.
- Mitchell, J. R., Mitchell, R. K., Hunt, R. A., Townsend, D. M., & Lee, J. H. (2022). Stakeholder engagement, knowledge problems and ethical challenges. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 175(1), 75–94. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04550-0>
- Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R., & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *Academy of Management Review*, 22, 853–886.
- Moisander, J., Groß, C., & Eräranta, K. (2018). Mechanisms of biopower and neoliberal governmentality in precarious work: Mobilizing the dependent self-employed as independent business owners. *Human Relations*, 71(3), 375–398.

- Mrozowicki, A., Roosalu, T., & Senčar, T. B. (2013). Precarious work in the retail sector in Estonia, Poland and Slovenia: trade union responses in a time of economic crisis. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 19(2), 267-278.
- Muehlberger, U. (2007). Hierarchical forms of outsourcing and the creation of dependency. *Organization Studies*, 28, 709–727.
- Neirotti, P. (2020). Work intensification and employee involvement in lean production: new light on a classic dilemma. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 31(15), 1958-1983.
- Nolan, J., & Bott, G. (2018). Global supply chains and human rights: spotlight on forced labour and modern slavery practices. *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 24(1), 44-69.
- Nwankwo, S., & Richardson, B. (1996). Quality management through visionary leadership. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 6(4), 44-47. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09604529610120285>
- Palanski, M. E., & Yammarino, F. J. (2009). Integrity and leadership: A multi-level conceptual framework. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(3), 405–420.
- Pariona-Cabrera, P., Meacham, H., Tham, T. L., Cavanagh, J., Halvorsen, B., Holland, P., & Bartram, T. (2022). The buffering effects of psychological capital on the relationship between physical violence and mental health issues of nurses and personal care assistants working in aged care facilities. *Health Care Management Review*, 10-1097. doi: 10.1097/HMR.0000000000000348
- Patterson, F. (2001). Developments in work psychology: Emerging issues and future trends. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 74, 381-390.
- Petriglieri, G., Ashford, S. J., & Wrzesniewski, A. (2019). Agony and ecstasy in the gig economy: Cultivating holding environments for precarious and personalized work identities. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 64(1), 124–170.
- Pfajfar, G., Shoham, A., Małecka, A., & Zalaznik, M. (2022). Value of corporate social responsibility for multiple stakeholders and social impact—Relationship marketing perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 143, 46-61.
- Phillips, R. A. (1997). Stakeholder theory and a principle of fairness. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 7(1), 51–66.
- Phillips, R., Freeman, R. E., & Wicks, A. C. (2003). What stakeholder theory is not. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 13(4), 479–502.

- Quintana, L., Salas, C., Duarte, C., & Correa-Quezada, R. (2020). Regional inequality and labour precariousness: An empirical regional analysis for Brazil, Mexico and Ecuador. *Regional Science Policy & Practice*, *12*(1), 61–81.
- Rahaman, H. S., Stouten, J., Decoster, S., & Camps, J. (2022). Antecedents of employee thriving at work: The roles of formalization, ethical leadership, and interpersonal justice. *Applied Psychology*, *71*(1), 3-26.
- Ramus, C. A., & Steger, U. (2000). The roles of supervisory support behaviors and environmental policy in employee “Ecoinitiatives” at leading-edge European companies. *Academy of Management Journal*, *43*(4), 605–626.
- Renwick, D. W., Redman, T., & Maguire, S. (2013). Green human resource management: A review and research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *15*(1), 1-14.
- Renwick, D., Jabbour, C., Muller-Camen, M., Redman, T., & Wilkinson, A. (2016). Contemporary developments in green (environmental) HRM scholarship. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *27*(2), 114–128. doi:10.1080/09585192.2015.1105844.
- Rice, D. B., & Cotton-Nessler, N. (2022). I want to achieve my goals when I can? The interactive effect of leader organization-based self-esteem and political skill on goal-focused leadership. *Current Psychology*. doi: 10.1007/s12144-022-03429-9
- Robinson, W. (2005). Ethical considerations in flexible work arrangements. *Business and Society Review*, *110*(2), 213-224.
- Roehling, M. V., Posthuma, R. A., & Hickox, S. (2008). Foundations for understanding the legal environment of HRM in a global context. In J. Storey, P. Wright, & D. Ulrich (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Strategic Human Resource Management* (pp. 71–89). Routledge.
- Rothenberg, S., Hull, C. E., & Tang, Z. (2017). The impact of human resource management on corporate social performance strengths and concerns. *Business & Society*, *56*(3), 391–418.
- Rupp, D. E., Shapiro, D. L., Folger, R., Skarlicki, D. P., & Shao, R. (2017). A critical analysis of the conceptualization and measurement of organizational justice: Is it time for reassessment?. *Academy of Management Annals*, *11*(2), 919-959.

- Scheibmayr, I., & Reichel, A. (2021). Beating the advertising drum for the employer: How legal context translates into good HRM practice. *Human Resource Management Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12413>
- Schoukens, P., & Barrio, A. (2017). The changing concept of work: When does typical work become atypical? *European Labour Law Journal*, 8(4), 306–332.
- Sharif, M. M., & Scandura, T. A. (2014). Do perceptions of ethical conduct matter during organizational change? Ethical leadership and employee involvement. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 124(2), 185-196.
- Simons, T. (2002). Behavioral integrity: The perceived alignment between managers' words and deeds as a research focus. *Organization Science*, 13(1), 18–35.
- Simons, T., Leroy, H., Collewaert, V., & Masschelein, S. (2015). How leader alignment of words and deeds affects followers: A meta-analysis of behavioral integrity research. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 132(4), 831–844.
- Solinger, O. N., Jansen, P. G., & Cornelissen, J. P. (2020). The emergence of moral leadership. *Academy of Management Review*, 45(3), 504–527.
- Stahl, G. K., Brewster, C. J., Collings, D. G., & Hajro, A. (2020). Enhancing the role of human resource management in corporate sustainability and social responsibility: A multi-stakeholder, multidimensional approach to HRM. *Human Resource Management Review*, 30(3), 100708.
- Tian, A. W., Cordery, J., & Gamble, J. (2016). Staying and performing: How human resource management practices increase job embeddedness and performance. *Personnel Review*, 45(5), 947-968.
- Tims, M., Bakker, A. B., & Xanthopoulou, D. (2011). Do transformational leaders enhance their followers' daily work engagement? *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(1), 121–131.
- Treviño, L. K., Brown, M., & Hartman, L. P. (2003). A qualitative investigation of perceived executive ethical leadership: Perceptions from inside and outside the executive suite. *Human Relations*, 56(1), 5–37.
- Treviño, L.K. and Nelson, K.A. 2014. *Managing business ethics: straight talk about how to do it right* (6th edn.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.
- Turnbull, P. J., & Wass, V. (2015). Normalizing extreme work in the Police Service? Austerity and the inspecting ranks. *Organization*, 22(4), 512-529.
- Ulrich, D., & Brockbank, W. (2005). *The HR value proposition*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

- Usman, M., Ali, M., Yousaf, Z., Anwar, F., Waqas, M., & Khan, M. A. S. (2020). The relationship between laissez-faire leadership and burnout: Mediation through work alienation and the moderating role of political skill. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 37(4), 423-434.
- Usman, M., Ali, M., Soetan, G. T., Ayoko, O. B., & Berber, A. (2022a). Seeing others' side to serve: understanding how and when servant leadership impacts employee knowledge-hiding behaviors. *Human Relations*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267221125353>
- Usman, M., Rofcanin, Y., Ali, M., Ogbonnaya, C., & Babalola, M. T. (2022b). Toward a more sustainable environment: Understanding why and when green training promotes employees' eco-friendly behaviors outside of work. *Human Resource Management*.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22148>
- Vosko, L. (2010). *Managing the margins: Gender, citizenship, and the international regulation of precarious employment*. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press.
- Voegtlin, C., & Greenwood, M. (2016). Corporate social responsibility and human resource management: A systematic review and conceptual analysis. *Human Resource Management Review*, 26(3), 181-197.
- Wankhade, P., Stokes, P., Tarba, S., & Rodgers, P. (2020). Work intensification and ambidexterity-the notions of extreme and 'everyday' experiences in emergency contexts: surfacing dynamics in the ambulance service. *Public Management Review*, 22(1), 48-74.
- Wehrmeyer, W. (Ed.). (2017). *Greening people: Human resources and environmental management*. Routledge.
- Wikhamn, W. (2019). Innovation, sustainable HRM and customer satisfaction. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 76, 102-110.
- Wood, D. J., Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R., & Bryan, L. M. (2018). Stakeholder identification and salience after 20 years: Progress, problems, and prospects. *Business & Society*, 1-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650318816522>
- Zhang, S., & Tu, Y. (2018). Cross-domain effects of ethical leadership on employee family and life satisfaction: The moderating role of family-supportive supervisor behaviors. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 152(4), 1085-1097.

Zhao, H., Zhou, Q., He, P., & Jiang, C. (2021). How and when does socially responsible HRM affect employees' organizational citizenship behaviors toward the environment?. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 169, 371-385.

Table 1. Means and correlations

Constructs	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.HR manager ethical leadership	3.47	.97								
2. Sustainable HRM	3.57	1.03	.35**							
3. Precarious work	3.22	1.07	-.24**	-.34**						
4. HR Manager political skill	3.43	.99	.05	.24**	.03					
5. Servant leadership	3.47	1.19	.50**	.44**	-.09	.12				
6. Age	39.34	6.89	.10	-.09	-.05	.06	.04			
7. Gender	1.36	.48	-.05	.00	.08	.08	.04	.01		
8. Education	1.55	.50	.02	-.04	.02	.05	.01	.05	.03	
9. Tenure	4.93	2.72	.05	.02	-.01	-.03	.05	.20*	.03	-.02

Notes. *p <.05. **p <.01. Sample size (N) = 260.

Table 2. Discriminant validity and convergent validity

Construct	1	2	3	4	α	AVE	MSV	ASV
1. HR Manager Ethical leadership	.79				.94	.62	.14	.09
2. Sustainable HRM	.37	.84			.89	.72	.15	.10
3. Precarious work	-.27	-.39	.83		.90	.70	.15	.07
4. HR Manager political skill	.26	.02	.02	.77	.90	.60	.07	.02

Notes. N = 260. AVE = Average variance extracted. MSV = Maximum shared variance. ASV = Average shared variance. Bolded values on the diagonals of columns 2 to 5 are the square root values of AVE.

Table 3. Hypotheses results

	B	SE
Total effect		
HR Manager Ethical leadership → Precarious work	-.24**	.06
Direct paths		
HR Manager Ethical leadership → Precarious work	-.13*	.06
HR Manager Ethical leadership → Sustainable HRM	.43**	.07
Sustainable HRM → Precarious work	-.26**	.06
Indirect paths		
HR Manager Ethical leadership → Sustainable HRM → Precarious work	-.11**	.03
Moderated paths		
HR Manager Ethical leadership * HR Manager political skill → Sustainable HRM	.28**	.07
HR Manager Ethical leadership * HR Manager political skill → Sustainable HRM → Precarious work	-.07**	.02

Notes: **p <.01. Sample size (N) = 260 (bootstrapping by specifying a sample of size 5,000).

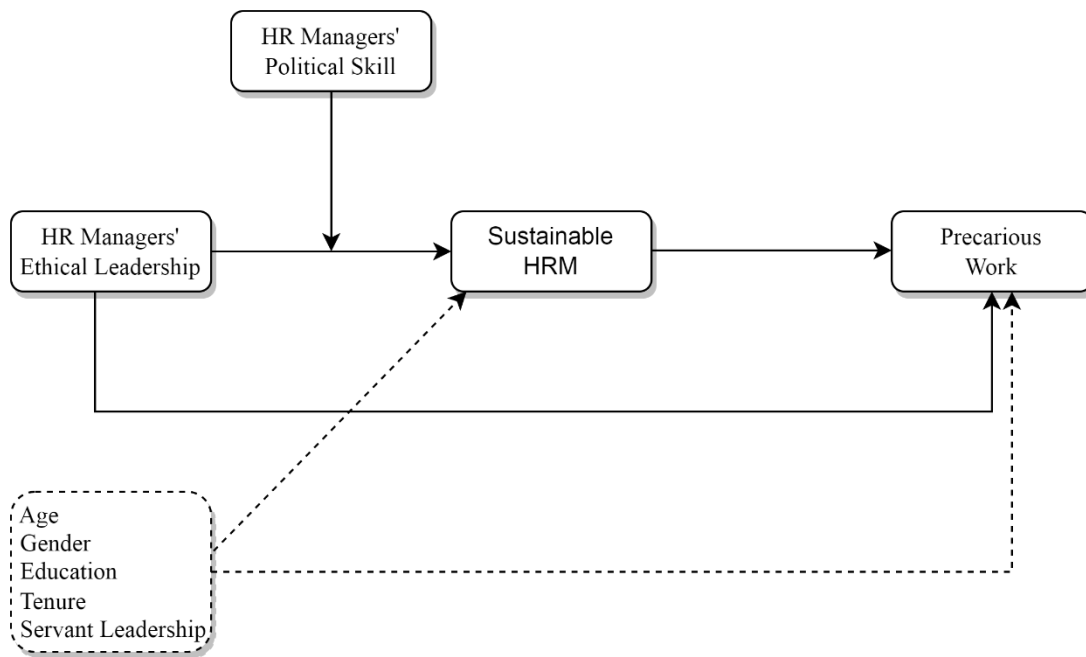


Figure 1. The proposed model

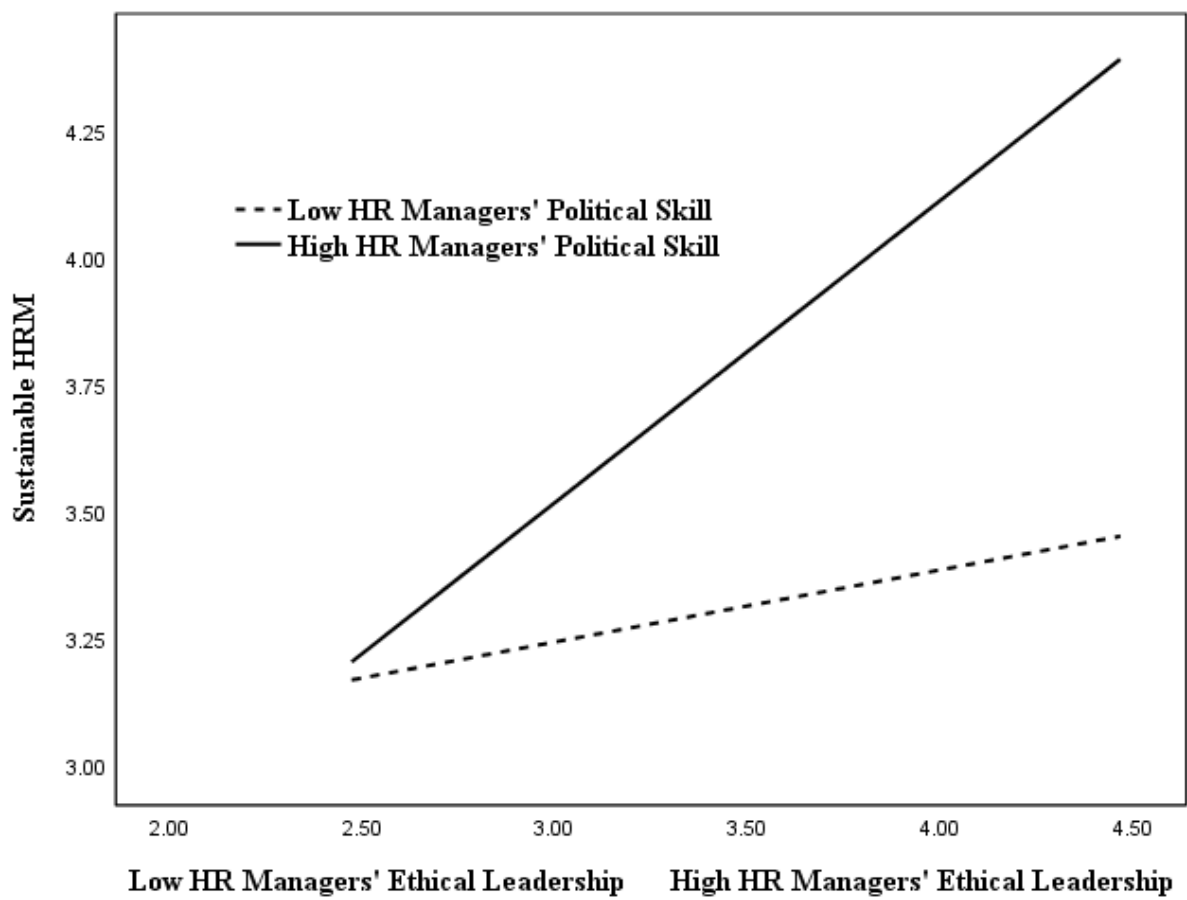


Figure 2. Leader political skill as a moderator of the relationship between ethical leadership and sustainable HRM