

Designing a Sustainable Human Resource Management Model with an Approach to Promoting Meritocracy in the Seven Educational Districts of Mashhad

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Abstract

Introduction: Education serves as the cornerstone of societal progress, with its mission being the transformation of human resources into human capital. The realization of this mission hinges on the presence of competent and capable managers. This study aims to designing a sustainable human resource management model with an approach to promoting meritocracy in the seven educational districts of Mashhad.

Methodology: This research is applied in terms of its purpose and qualitative in terms of data collection, utilizing an inductive content analysis approach. The participants in the study included academic experts and specialists in the field of human resource management and education. Using the theoretical saturation principle and purposive sampling, ۱۶ participants were selected as the sample size. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The collected data were analyzed using thematic coding.

Findings: The results revealed that the final model of the study consists of ۵ dimensions and ۲۴ components. The main dimensions include: Competency-Based Recruitment, Improvement through Sustainable Human Resource Competency Development, Retention of Human Resources with a Competency Approach, Performance Evaluation of Sustainable and Merit-Based Human Resources, and Performance-Based Payment Systems.

Conclusion: These dimensions collectively form a comprehensive framework for integrating sustainability and meritocracy into human resource management practices.

Key Words: Human resource management, sustainable human resource management, meritocracy

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Introduction

Education serves as the driving force of society, with its mission being the transformation of human resources into human capital. Achieving this mission necessitates the presence of competent managers. Therefore, human capital is the most effective tool for achieving predetermined goals (Piwovar-Sulej et al., ۲۰۲۴). In every organization, human capital holds a special place and is considered the primary asset. In knowledge-based organizations, especially educational ones, this position is even more significant, as it not only contributes to the growth and development of knowledge and technology required by society but also nurtures the future workforce that will drive the society forward (Martínez-Falcó et al., ۲۰۲۴). Currently, human capital is one of the most valuable resources for organizations, and by coordinating and effectively utilizing it alongside other organizational components, organizational goals can be achieved. These resources possess potential abilities and capabilities that are realized in the organizational environment. Achieving this requires a deep understanding of individuals and providing suitable conditions for work and effort. One of the key issues in this regard is placing individuals in positions that match their abilities, experiences, and capabilities. This process is examined within the framework of meritocracy. Today, finding competent and suitable individuals is one of the most important tasks for organizations. Currently, the most significant competition among organizations is to find competent and qualified individuals. Meritocracy helps organizations achieve their goals (Wackym et al., ۲۰۲۴). Meritocracy is the utilization of the creative energy of elite and selected individuals in society. A meritocratic system is one in which the best individuals are placed in the best positions with the highest productivity and are compensated according to their efforts. Meritocracy can be defined as the process of identifying, attracting, selecting, retaining, and continuously compensating competent individuals, providing the grounds for situational management based on their capabilities to effectively contribute to the achievement of individual, organizational, and societal goals (Sarresht & Samiei, ۲۰۱۹). Therefore, selecting competent managers and enhancing their technical skills and scientific knowledge has become an undeniable principle in organizational development. Neglecting the necessary standards in the selection of managers and disregarding their expertise, experience, and efficiency in appointing them to organizational positions has caused many organizations in developing societies to suffer from a lack of capable human resources. Meritocracy is one of the factors that leads to the flourishing, loyalty, and commitment of managers and leaders to their work and organization (Movahedizadeh et al., ۲۰۲۱). If the selection of managers is done correctly and appropriately, it will bring organizational and social benefits. Therefore, it is necessary for organizations to strive to find the most competent, qualified, committed, and best individuals from among job applicants, especially for public service and government agencies, and to carry out operations based on correct policies and programs (Nadimi Darab et al., ۲۰۲۰). This is particularly important for managers of organizations who interact with

a diverse group of human resources with different cultures and values. Therefore, the selection and appointment of competent managers is one of the most important and sensitive issues in the work process of any organization (Hosseini et al., ۲۰۲۴). Thus, for the selection and appointment of managers and the identification and selection of the most competent individuals, criteria and standards are needed so that qualified and competent individuals can assume organizational positions. A competent manager sees things clearly and achieves desirable results, and it is with such managers that the increasing organizational problems can be overcome (Dehghan, ۲۰۲۳). Establishing a meritocratic system requires the existence of formal evaluation and reward systems in the organization. In addition, studies show that factors such as organizational strategy, leadership style, organizational culture, the goal of human resource management, sustainable human resource management, and the type of organizational decision-making influence the promotion of meritocracy (Gahremani & Osanzadeh, ۲۰۱۹). Human resource management is a specialized field, and its role, position, and importance in organizations are increasing day by day. Since ancient times, the training and development of human resources and the improvement and excellence of processes in education, as the infrastructure of sustainable development, have had higher priority and importance compared to other organizations (Lu et al., ۲۰۲۳). On the eve of fundamental transformation in the horizon of Iran ۲۰۲۵, it is distinct and different from the past because the National Education Document is a demand of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the desire of all internal and external stakeholders, and on the other hand, the students of the Islamic homeland deserve the best in the process of education. The reform and improvement of processes and the development of human resources, especially sustainable human resource management, is essentially the mobilization of resources for the benefit of humanity. In the rapidly changing process of globalization, managers face numerous challenges, and with the emergence of new dimensions in the business environment, they must focus on nurturing entrepreneurs rather than employees (Nazari et al., ۲۰۲۴).

Finally, every organization casts a wider net to find qualified employees to ensure that it has conducted a thorough and fair search for interested candidates. The search for a workforce is an immensely important and fundamental task of personnel management, as the greater the number of applicants, the better and more accurately the organization can select its employees. Achieving this requires strategic planning in organizations and deep attention to internal and environmental changes. In this regard, the policymaking sector of society, i.e., the government, must implement meritocracy through sub-processes of merit-seeking at the societal and organizational levels, and in practice, merit recognition, merit cultivation, merit placement, and merit retention by managers and custodians of human capital. Additionally, the role of organizational leadership and management stability, employee empowerment programs, attention to competencies, and, more importantly, attention to organizational identity and human dignity are

important aspects of sustainable human resource management in organizations. Certainly, the introduction, development, and strengthening of a sustainability approach in human resource management systems in organizations, especially knowledge-based organizations in our country, in a way that leads to organizational success and value creation for all stakeholders, is a priority for the efforts of the country's managers and organizations, as well as academic research. Research shows that the discussion of sustainable human resource management with an approach to promoting meritocracy in Iran has not been sufficiently addressed in practice and has never been consistently developed in the Iranian system. In fact, in some areas, it has even worsened. The conducted study justifies part of the necessity and importance of a deep and comprehensive examination of the issue of sustainable human resource management based on meritocracy in the educational system of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for establishing meritocracy. This issue, in addition to repeated emphasis in development programs, administrative reforms, laws, and regulations, has been repeatedly noted by senior officials of the country. The necessity of this research is also evident in three key areas: a) sustainable human resource management can help the organization achieve its goals in employing competent managers; b) human resource management should operate as a system, sustainably and meritocratically; and c) sustainable human resource management with an approach to promoting meritocracy should be interpretable. Finally, linking the idea of sustainability in the field of human resource management with an approach to promoting meritocracy can be a new and innovative concept, so that the foundation of sustainable human resource management can be established and utilized. One of the reasons for raising discussions on this topic in education is that sustainability has so far been applied as a preliminary concept at the societal and organizational levels and has not been systematically linked to human resource management. However, sustainable human resource management emphasizes the application of sustainability as a concept in human resource management systems, meritocracy, and at the individual level, and also considers the relationships of human resource management in the environment. With these explanations, it can be concluded that the lack of such research on designing a sustainable human resource management model with an approach to promoting meritocracy in education can leave all the aforementioned positive outcomes as a research gap and a weakness. Therefore, conducting this research can have positive functions both theoretically and practically.

Theoretical Foundations of the Research

Sustainable Human Resource Management

Sustainable human resource management has increasingly become an important topic in management research in recent years. The goal of these studies is to advance and collect conceptual and empirical research, as well as expert opinions on the concept of sustainability in the field of human resources,

and to design and develop human resource management systems that enhance individuals' insights and address the complexities and tensions between the dimensions of economic, social, and human sustainability. The aim is to gather ideas and opinions from experts in this field to further interpret how sustainability can be integrated into the management of people in organizations. This concept has been turning into a slogan in the 21st century, as organizations seek to play an active role in controlling the long-term impacts of work life on natural, social, and human environments in their key activities, policies, and strategies (Abdollahi et al., 2023).

Sustainable human resource management is defined as "a planned pattern or emerging human resource strategies" to provide the basis for achieving organizational goals while simultaneously addressing the reproduction of the human resource base within and outside the organization over a long period and controlling the side effects and feedback generated by the human resource systems on the human resource base, and consequently on the organization itself (Jalal Kamali et al., 2023).

Meritocracy

A meritocratic system is one in which job benefits and positions are awarded solely based on merit, rather than on gender, social class, ethnicity, or wealth. Meritocracy is a perspective in which individuals, through education and hard work, develop their talents and, ultimately, regardless of gender, social class, ethnicity, or wealth, are selected for a job based solely on merit (Bilton's view). Meritocracy refers to the appropriate placement of the most suitable individuals in the most suitable positions in an organization. Today, in developed or developing organizations, meritocracy is of particular importance. To benefit from the advantages of meritocracy (increased individual and organizational effectiveness, enhanced job satisfaction, employees' sense of belonging to the organization, motivation to strive, improvement and enhancement of employees' performance and abilities), it is logical for the organization to institutionalize a meritocratic system and, as part of it, consider merit-based selection and merit development (Rezapour et al., 2023).

Meritocracy, in brief, is the identification, selection, continuous attraction, and retention of individuals, and then providing the grounds for management based on their capabilities. Meritocracy is a combination of processes including merit-seeking, merit assessment, merit-based selection, merit acquisition, merit placement, merit retention, and merit cultivation. In societies where relationships prevail over rules and inheritance over achievement, merit is shrouded in ambiguity. Generally, affairs are not solely based on merit but are influenced by various factors that are not inherent or acquired by individuals. Equal opportunities for universal education and the search for excellence in terms of talent should be conducted impartially and without racial or ethnic privileges. Equality and the connection between job and

position with the level of knowledge and talent, general examinations for all individuals equally, and the placement of children from any social class based on merit and ability, or lack thereof, into different social classes (Rouzbehan et al., ۲۰۲۲).

Literature Review

A review of past research and existing literature indicates that no specific study has been conducted on designing a sustainable human resource management (HRM) model with an approach to promoting meritocracy in the seven educational districts of Mashhad. Therefore, this study draws on relatively related research to establish its theoretical foundation.

In domestic studies, Hosseini et al. (۲۰۲۴), in their study titled "*Factors Affecting the Implementation of Sustainable Human Resource Management in the Oil Industry*," identified four concepts as causal conditions, ۱۹ concepts as intervening conditions, and ۳۳ concepts as contextual conditions influencing the implementation of sustainable HRM. Similarly, Ghal'eh Aghababaei (۲۰۲۳), in a study titled "*Designing a Model of Antecedents and Consequences of Sustainable Human Resource Management*," identified three antecedents (sustainable work system, sustainable management, and sustainable human resources) and three consequences (individual, organizational, and societal levels) for sustainable HRM. Rouzbehan et al. (۲۰۲۲), in their study "*Optimizing the Competency Model of University Managers Using the Delphi-Fuzzy Technique and Grounded Theory Approach*," categorized ۰۴ selected competencies into six groups: ۱) value and belief, ۲) individual and personality, ۳) scientific and innovative, ۴) managerial and executive, ۵) communication and interpersonal, and ۶) analytical, intellectual, and strategic competencies. Additionally, Movahedizadeh (۲۰۲۱), in a study titled "*Designing a Meritocracy Model for Managers of Mashhad Municipality Using a Qualitative Approach*," emphasized that behavioral core codes in individual competencies, leadership ability core codes in managerial competencies, and skill core codes in job competencies are the most critical competencies required for managers of Mashhad Municipality.

In international studies, Sharma et al. (۲۰۲۲), in their study "*Analyzing the Impact of Sustainable Human Resource Management Practices and Industry ۴.۰ Technology Adoption on Employability Skills*," demonstrated that the integration of industry technologies with sustainable HRM practices can enhance employees' skills and competencies. Gunawan et al. (۲۰۲۱), in their study "*Competency-Based Human Resource Management to Improve Managerial Competence of First-Line Nurse Managers: A Scale Development*," developed a final scale comprising ۳۰ items across five dimensions: training and evaluation, career planning and development, reward schemes, recruitment and selection, and evaluation systems. Kakemam et al. (۲۰۲۱), in their study "*Developing Core Competencies of Managers in Iranian Medical Sciences*

Universities," identified seven core managerial competencies, including evidence-based decision-making, operations and resource management, environmental awareness, interpersonal and communication skills, relationship management, influence and leadership, and empowerment and change management. Furthermore, Hitka et al. (۲۰۲۱), in their study "*Sustainable Human Resource Management Processes Through Employee Motivation and Job Satisfaction*," found that sustainable HRM processes significantly influence employee motivation and job satisfaction.

An analytical review of the existing research reveals that most studies, whether conducted domestically or internationally, have examined and designed models for sustainable HRM and meritocracy separately. As evidenced by the studies cited above, the integration of these two variables into a unified model has not been explored. Given this gap, addressing this issue within a large organization such as the Ministry of Education is both timely and necessary.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach with an inductive strategy, aiming to explore concepts and categories related to sustainable human resource management (HRM) and meritocracy. The primary research strategy employed is content analysis, which allows for the systematic extraction of main and secondary concepts, categories, and factors relevant to the research topic.

Participants and Sampling

The study population consisted of academic experts and specialists in the fields of human resource management and education. Participants were selected based on purposive sampling and the principle of theoretical saturation, resulting in a sample size of ۱۶ individuals. The inclusion criteria for participants were as follows:

۱. Holding at least a master's degree or having a minimum of ten years of professional experience in education or related fields.
۲. Serving as a thesis supervisor, advisor, or examiner in the field of human resource management.
۳. Having experience as an executor or collaborator in research projects related to human resource management.
۴. Publishing books or articles in the field of human resource management in ISI-indexed or reputable scientific journals.
۵. Membership in commissions, committees, or working groups related to human resource management in educational contexts.
۶. Possessing at least five years of managerial experience in human resource-related units within educational organizations and ten years of overall managerial experience in education.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. A total of 12 interview questions were designed based on a thorough review of the literature, the research background, and the researcher's familiarity with the research problem. The interview protocol included an initial explanation of the research objectives and concepts (i.e., sustainable HRM and meritocracy) to ensure participants' understanding. Each interview lasted between 30 to 45 minutes, with a few extending to 60 minutes based on participant availability and the depth of discussion required. The total duration of data collection was approximately 12 hours (720 minutes).

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The coding process involved three stages:

1. Open Coding: Identifying and categorizing initial concepts and their characteristics.
2. Axial Coding: Organizing and grouping similar codes into broader categories.
3. Selective Coding: Integrating and refining categories to form the final thematic structure.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the following measures were taken:

1. Credibility: Participants were asked to review and confirm the accuracy of the summarized interview content.
2. Confirmability: The researcher shared the analyzed data with three independent experts in human resource management and organizational behavior (holding the rank of associate professor or professor and with a record of published books and articles) for verification. Minor modifications were made based on their feedback.
3. Reliability: The Cohen's kappa coefficient was calculated to assess inter-coder agreement. A subset of the coded data (10%) was evaluated by an independent expert, resulting in a kappa coefficient of 0.62, which exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.6 ($p < 0.05$). This confirms the consistency and reliability of the coding process.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical compliance, participants were provided with a clear explanation of the research objectives and procedures. Informed consent was obtained prior to the interviews, and participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

Research Findings

As mentioned, in this research, with an inductive approach, interviews were conducted with experts. Out of the 16 members of the expert group who participated in the interviews, 12 had a Ph.D. and 4 had a master's degree. Also, about 88% of them were faculty members of reputable universities in the country in the field of human resource management. In this research, with the start of the interviews and during them, meaningful statements and then the related concepts were identified, and then the concepts were closed in dimensions. From the interview data obtained, 144 open codes or initial indicators related to sustainable human resource management with an approach to promoting meritocracy were extracted. In the next step, these indicators were categorized, and 6 dimensions and 26 components were created. In the table below, the dimensions and their components are presented:

Table 1: Determining Variables, Dimensions, and Components

Variable	Dimensions	Components
Sustainable Human Resource Management with a Meritocracy Approach	Competency-Based Recruitment	Merit-Based Human Resource Planning
		Selection and Recruitment
	Improvement Based on Sustainable Human Resource Competency Development	Attention to Individual and Psychological Competencies
		Development of Knowledge Competencies
	Retention of Human Resources with a Competency Approach	Development of Skill Competencies
		Development of Behavioral Competencies
	Succession Planning	Individual Development Based on Mentoring
		Coaching Based on Meritocracy
	Organizational Health	

	Socialization Process
	Values and Spirituality
	Meritocratic Values and Culture
Performance Evaluation of Sustainable and Merit-Based Human Resources	Merit-Based Performance Evaluation System
	Implementation Process of Merit-Based Performance Evaluation
	Evaluation Based on Key Performance Indicators
	Explanation of Sustainable Economic Goals
	Creating a Culture of Continuous Two-Way Feedback
	Use of 360-Degree Evaluation
	Use of Goal-Based Performance Evaluation
Performance-Based Payment System	Efficiency-Based Salary and Wages
	Development of a Merit-Based Reward and Incentive System
	Fair and Semi-Centralized Payment System
	Evaluation and Feedback of Merit-Based Performance
	Alignment with Market and Competition
	Flexibility in Payment

After determining the components, the dimensions of the variables were identified. Considering the mentioned components, two main variables of sustainable human resource management and meritocracy were determined. Figure 1 shows the dimensions and components related to each variable and the

qualitative model extracted from the research literature and interview data with MAXQDA software.

Figure ١: Qualitative Model Extracted from Data with MAXQDA Software

In the following, the qualitative analysis of the dimensions of sustainable human resource management with a meritocracy approach is presented and analyzed separately.

١. Qualitative Analysis of the Competency-Based Recruitment Dimension

Competency-based recruitment includes merit-based human resource planning, selection and recruitment, and attention to individual and psychological competencies. In this regard, the opinions of some interviewees are as follows:

The principles of the recruitment and selection process may differ from one organization to another, which seems logical. Therefore, we recommend that before starting the recruitment process, the goals, principles of recruitment, selection, and strategies (special attention to land planning and diversity of religions and ethnicities is very important) be determined according to specific criteria by experts and experienced individuals from the same organization (familiar with career paths and needs and desires) so that with principled needs assessment and foresight (forces needed now and in the future and retirees now and in the future), the process of recruiting suitable personnel begins. In summary, it can be said to include: preliminary interview, completion of the application form, conducting recruitment tests, comprehensive (specialized) interview, review of the applicant's background, medical examination, and final decision and selection. In this regard, it is necessary to connect with the various aspects of real organizational problems that consider the structure as a system and policies as a method or style, and thus attract competent and capable individuals.

Education plays the most significant role in the sustainable development of any country, and thus it is the most important strategic goal of sustainable human resources. Therefore, recruiting human resources that are appropriate and aligned with the goals of this organization can yield valuable outcomes. (Students as capable and sustainable human resources in the future of organizations and the country). All organizations have goals and must ensure that they have the necessary resources to achieve these goals and then use them effectively, but at the same time, they must also consider the issues of concern in the soft aspects of strategic human resource management and value the needs and aspirations of all members of the organization.

٢. Qualitative Analysis of the Improvement Based on Sustainable Human Resource Competency Development Dimension

In the improvement based on sustainable human resource competency development, the components of knowledge competency development, skill competency development, behavioral competency development, succession planning, individual development based on mentoring, and coaching based on meritocracy are discussed. Regarding training as an important indicator in human resource development, it is said that education provides the necessary ground for growth and learning or holding specific long-term training courses, increasing opportunities for scientific awareness and enhancing the level of employees' knowledge. In human resource development, the comprehensive development of employees and the use of their potential talents and abilities are addressed, which is an opportunity for individual transformations. The existence of a succession planning system and mentoring also increases employees' knowledge and experience and, consequently, improves their performance.

In this regard, the opinions of some interviewees are as follows:

Improvement means the training and development of the knowledge and skills of human resources, and to achieve sustainability in human resource improvement, we should not leave human resources to themselves and, in their career path, under the supervision of a mentor who can be a supervisor or an experienced expert, train the new individual for at least three months or more and familiarize them with the atmosphere, culture, organizational and ethical relationships, etc.

One of the goals of sustainable human resource management is to nurture skilled and specialized human resources so that they can serve others in society. Most teachers and human resources in education, given that their knowledge must be up-to-date, are themselves skilled and specialized in this field.

۳. Qualitative Analysis of the Retention of Human Resources with a Competency Approach Dimension

Regarding the retention of human resources with a competency approach, work-life balance, organizational health, socialization process, and meritocratic values and culture are of great importance. Most employees and managers of the Ministry of Education face concerns that often require a balance between their work and personal lives. Sustainable human resource management based on meritocracy provides measures to ensure that employees have this balance in their lives. Sometimes, organizational health, by creating peace and security in the work environment or designing ergonomic work conditions, can be one of the factors that contribute to the retention of human resources.

In this regard, the opinions of some interviewees are as follows:

Most professions are such that when employees' working hours' end, they attend to their personal and family matters outside the workplace. However, school principals

and sometimes education managers are involved in student and workplace issues even during hours when they are not in the office or school.

It is necessary to connect with the various aspects of real organizational problems that consider the structure as a system and policies as a method or style.

In all organizations, including the Ministry of Education, human resource management at all levels can be analyzed. In the smallest formal unit, which is an educational class with at least one teacher and one student, to the highest level, which is the Ministry of Education, all indicators can be analyzed.

۴. Qualitative Analysis of the Performance Evaluation of Sustainable and Merit-Based Human Resources Dimension

The performance of sustainable and merit-based human resources includes a merit-based performance evaluation system, the implementation process of merit-based performance evaluation, creating a culture of continuous two-way feedback, using ۳۶۰-degree evaluation, evaluation based on key performance indicators, using goal-based performance evaluation, and explaining sustainable economic goals. In this regard, the opinions of some interviewees are as follows:

I remember once we received a message from the Ministry of Education about supporting the environment, and school performance was also evaluated in this way. As a principal, when I asked students to bring any extra tubes they had at home, a large number of tubes were collected, which we used very well. Some of them were placed in the gazebo, and others were used as decorative pots.

۵. Qualitative Analysis of the Performance-Based Payment System Dimension

The performance-based payment system includes a fair and semi-centralized payment system, efficiency-based salary and wages, development of a merit-based reward and incentive system, evaluation and feedback of merit-based performance, alignment with market and competition, and flexibility in payment, which is an element of sustainable human resource management with an approach to promoting meritocracy that, due to economic conditions, has been considered by many interviewees.

In this regard, some of the conducted interviews from which the codes were extracted are presented below:

Attention to welfare and livelihood issues is very important for managers. When the organization has incentive programs, it also affects employee retention. Paying attention to employees' needs and desires causes their performance to change.

In sustainable human resource management that also includes meritocracy, one of the economic goals is to balance the costs and effectiveness of education programs. If this happens, by optimally using human resources, we can achieve the sustainable performance that is desired in achieving goals.

Discussion and conclusion

The sustainable human resource management model with an approach to promoting meritocracy in the seven educational districts of Mashhad consists of 6 dimensions and 16 components. These dimensions include competency-based recruitment, improvement based on sustainable human resource competency development, retention of human resources with a competency approach, performance evaluation of sustainable and merit-based human resources, and a performance-based payment system.

Regarding the competency-based recruitment dimension, competency-based recruitment refers to the process of selecting and hiring individuals based on their specific competencies and qualifications. This approach focuses more on the necessary abilities to perform a specific job and, instead of emphasizing academic degrees or general experiences, examines individual characteristics, skills, and related knowledge. In this method, criteria for evaluating competencies are determined, and recruitment and selection processes are designed to consider these criteria. This approach helps organizations find more suitable individuals for specific roles and positively impacts their performance and effectiveness. In this research, the competency-based recruitment dimension includes 3 components: merit-based human resource planning, selection and recruitment, and attention to individual and psychological competencies.

Regarding the improvement based on sustainable human resource competency development dimension, improvement based on sustainable human resource competency development refers to processes designed to enhance the capabilities and skills of employees in organizations. Human resource improvement involves organizational activities aimed at developing sustainable human resource competencies by optimizing conditions, facilities, and the overall work environment. Improvement based on competency development is defined as enhancing employees' skills, knowledge, and capabilities in cognitive and operational dimensions to increase performance efficiency. This program is part of organizational transformation management and strategic performance management. Achieving organizational goals depends on employees' ability to perform assigned tasks and adapt to a changing environment. Implementing training and human resource improvement enables individuals to continue their activities effectively in line with organizational and environmental changes and enhance their efficiency. This approach is based on the premise that the development of sustainable human resource competencies should be done in a way that not only improves individual and organizational performance but also considers social, economic, and environmental sustainability. In this definition, sustainable human resource competency

development includes training, learning, and enhancing capabilities to achieve organizational goals and positively impact society. In this research, improvement based on sustainable human resource competency development includes ٦ components: development of knowledge competencies, development of skill competencies, development of behavioral competencies, succession planning, individual development based on mentoring, and coaching based on meritocracy.

Regarding the retention of human resources with a competency approach dimension, retention of human resources with a competency approach in sustainable human resource management refers to processes that help organizations attract, retain, and continue to develop the skills of highly skilled and competent individuals. This approach is based on the premise that if competent and talented individuals are present in the organization, overall organizational performance improves, and its sustainability is enhanced. Several key principles in this approach include identifying key competencies, which involves identifying and determining the materials that are vital for the organization's success. Competencies can include technical, leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills. Additionally, to retain competent human resources, a positive and attractive work environment must be created where individuals feel valued and motivated. This includes supporting employees, flexibility in working hours, and providing learning and development opportunities. The use of training programs that focus on enhancing employees' competencies and capabilities is essential, and regular performance evaluations should be conducted to identify their strengths and weaknesses and make necessary changes for improvement and retention of competencies. Finally, an organizational culture that promotes effective values and competencies in achieving organizational goals will contribute to the retention of human resources. By using this approach, organizations can sustainably retain their workforce and ensure that competent individuals are exposed to appropriate challenges and opportunities. In this research, the retention of human resources with a competency approach includes ٤ components: organizational health, work-life balance, socialization process, and meritocratic values and culture.

Regarding the performance evaluation of sustainable and merit-based human resources dimension, sustainable performance is defined as the organization's ability to meet its own needs in the short term without compromising its or others' ability to meet future needs, and it is a term used for all organizational strategies, actions, and tactics aimed at improving relationships with the natural and social environment. The performance evaluation of sustainable and merit-based human resources refers to the relative assessment of human performance in relation to how a specific job is performed over a certain period, compared to work standards and professional ethics. This evaluation is used to determine an individual's potential talents and capacities to plan for their actualization. In this research, the performance evaluation of sustainable and merit-based human resources includes ٧ components: merit-based performance evaluation system, implementation process of merit-based

performance evaluation, evaluation based on key performance indicators, explanation of sustainable economic goals, creating a culture of continuous two-way feedback, use of 360-degree evaluation, and use of goal-based performance evaluation.

Additionally, regarding the performance-based payment system, the performance-based payment system refers to activities through which organizations evaluate individuals' performance to distribute monetary, non-monetary, direct, and indirect rewards among employees within the framework of legal regulations and their payment ability. In this research, the performance-based payment system includes 3 components: efficiency-based salary and wages, development of a merit-based reward and incentive system, fair and semi-centralized payment system, evaluation and feedback of merit-based performance, alignment with market and competition, and flexibility in payment.

Finally, considering the obtained findings, the proposed model was designed and explained. The final model extracted from the research is depicted in the following figure.

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