# Relationship between socially responsible HRM practices and organizational trust: An empirical study

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**Abstract:** The objective of this study is to explore and examine the theoretical frameworks of socially responsible human resource management practices and trust in the organization. In addition, it seeks to know to what extent socially responsible HRM practices inspire and revive employee confidence in the organization. This study focused on a sample of 50 bank employees in the city of Agadir in Morocco. A cross-sectional research design was used to examine the relationship between socially responsible human resource management practices and trust. Data was collected using a personally administered questionnaire. The results of this study show that HRM practices compliant with legal requirements, as well as employee-oriented HRM practices are significantly related to trust. But HRM practices facilitation general CSR have no significant relationship with trust.

**Keywords:** Socially Responsible Human Resource Management (SR-HRM); Organizational trust; Moroccan banking sector.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the intensity of globalization and privatization has led to fundamental changes in the dynamics of the business environment. Improved global market access, superior logistics and enhanced competitiveness forces are the main results of this transformation, which are also the source of the great economic and political power of contemporary organizations. Organizations are now aware that this powerful economic and political power comes with a series of responsibilities and obligations, especially in light of issues related to business ethics, corporate social responsibility and sustainable development. To answer these questions, managers and decision-makers have begun to review their management practices.

The new contours of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development have begun to question human resource management (HRM) and have raised the question of redefining HRM as a socially responsible function (Barthe & Belabbes, 2016). Socially responsible human resources management (SR-HRM) develops as an idea fundamentally stemming from two fields of study, HRM and CSR. These two areas are undeniably linked since HRM-SR strategies are actually tailored to internal partners (employees) based on the basic principle of HRM which generally aims to advance and improve the well-being of employees.

It is well known that employees are the foundation of any socially responsible company, since they are part of the internal structure of companies, they can be responsible for carrying out the activities of the organization and, moreover, are the key element by which companies establish links with several other business partners (Estifo & al., 2019). SR-HRM practices do not simply attempt to provide employees with good working conditions based on legal requirements and regulations (e.g. minimum wage). Rather, they seek to proactively improve employees' work experiences and meet their personal and social expectations in an ethical and socially responsible manner (Omidi & Zotto , 2022).

Many researchers (Iqbal & al., 2019; Rawshdeh & al., 2019; He & al., 2020) have pointed out that SR-HRM practices and trust in the organization are ones of the essential factors associated with employees' positives attitudes and behaviors such as job satisfaction, high performance and low turnover in the workplace. However, trust in the organization is presented as a major component of social exchange, which is built in a process of sustainable and reciprocal exchange (Blau, 1964). Also, when trust levels are low, employees tend to be less creative, less open to ideas, and make less effort to achieve organizational goals (Mishra & Morrisey, 1990).

However, currently, SR-HRM practices are rarely emphasized and very limited in the literature. One of the major contributions of this study is that it fills the gap in SR-HRM practices as well as in the literature regarding the relationships between SR-HRM practices and employee trust in the organization. Our interest in the Moroccan banking sector is all the more relevant to carry out this research work as it is experiencing increasingly increased requirements in order to develop its socially responsible policies by paying increased attention to the social aspect and therefore to the employee stakeholder. The main objective of this study is to show the extent to which socially responsible human resource management practices inspire and are relevant to reviving employee trust in the organization.

# 2. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

## 2.1 Socially responsible HRM

The concept of socially responsible HRM has been the subject of several attempts at conceptualization which have not resulted in a consensus as to its precise definition. The following table presents a non-

exhaustive summary of the main definitions that we were able to identify from a review of the literature.

The authors	Definitions of SR-HRM
Cacioppe & al. (2008)	Refers to the efforts of companies "to work with their employees, their families, local communities and nation states to improve the quality of life in a way that is both ethical and sustainable in relation to society and to the environment".
Gond & Igalens (2008)	A HR department that wants to be socially responsible must be seen as an entity that regulates power relations between stakeholders and the company.
Barthe & Belabbes (2016)	"Socially responsible HRM" is one that, while being concerned with the development and sustainability of the company in compliance with regulations, adapts its practices according to the needs and expectations of each employee. It offers him better equity, as well as an optimization of the quality of his job and the work he does, all of which is part of a lasting employment relationship.
Barrena- Martínez & al. (2017)	"We define socially responsible human resource policies as policies that companies incorporate into their human resource management area on a voluntary basis and with a dual objective: (1) to address the ethical, social and human concerns of their employees, to promote the satisfaction and proper development of its employees in the company; and (2) add value to companies in terms of their human capital. »
Attouch & Idouaarabe (2020)	Socially responsible HRM refers to a range of practices that go beyond legal obligations, and whose main purpose is the continuous satisfaction of the implicit and explicit expectations and requirements of employees.
Beaupres & al. (2008)	Socially responsible HRM appears as "that which consists, through various policies and practices, in protecting employees, in recognizing their value (potential, skills, and contributions) and in making it grow".
Shen & Benson (2016)	"Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) directed towards employees, underpins the successful implementation of CSR".
Kundu & Gahlawat (2015)	A set of HR activities designed to strengthen the participatory role of employees in CSR while considering them both as transmitters and recipients of CSR practices.
Morjane & Aitsoudane (2021)	A management system that brings together the foundations of the strategy, policies and actions of all companies wishing to engage in a responsible approach to human capital.

#### Source: Authors

In their study, Shen and Zhu (2011), described SR-HRM in three main segments, namely human resource management related to compliance with labor laws, employee-oriented human resource management facilitation general CSR:

(i) Human resources management focused on legal compliance; ensuring compliance with regulations relating to workers' rights, it mainly includes fairness, health and safety, working hours, minimum wage and the prevention of child labor and forced labor.

(ii) Employee-oriented human resource management addresses the wishes of workers for personal development, which includes training, feedback, coaching, professional and administrative advancement, as well as the use of democracy in the workplace, including worker involvement, participation and collective decision-making.

(iii) Human resource management facilitation general CSR involves the use of HRM policies as well as practices that generally engage companies and employees in general CSR efforts, including helping to improve communities, reducing environmental contamination, alleviating poverty and controlling environmental destruction (Estifo et al., 2019).

## 2.2 Organizational trust

Trust has been studied in multiple disciplines (organizational science, sociology, psychology) and has focused on individual, group, firm, and interfirm levels (Rousseau & al., 1998). In organizational science, trust is considered an important variable, as it relates to an employee's belief that the underlying actions of his organization will benefit or benefit him, or at least not harm his interests (Robinson, 1996). In organizational settings, trust fosters cooperative behavior, facilitates network-based organizational forms, reduces conflict, reduces transaction costs, facilitates the rapid formation of ad hoc working groups, and facilitates effective responses to crises (Rousseau & al., 1998).

Organizational trust can be expressed as a web of organizational relationships and behaviors composed of the trust of organizational members towards administrators and organizations in relationships and interactions within the organization (Tschannen -Moran, 2001). Organizational trust refers to behaving towards each other in an open, honest, caring and realistic manner in relationships and interactions within the organization and being ready to be informed of the objectives, standards and core values (Mishra, 1996). According to Wech (2002), trust is explained as a psychological element comprising positive feelings related to the thoughts and behaviors of individuals towards each other (Wech, 2002). Organizational trust refers to the fact that employees are certain of the procedures and policies that are likely to affect the organization, even under risky conditions, and that they have positive expectations related to these procedures and policies (Cemaloğlu & Kılıç, 2012).

One of the main issues with trust is the lack of agreement on its conceptualization due to its domainspecific nature (Simpson, 2007; Tzafrir, 2005). In the organizational context, many researchers have recognized and made a distinction regarding the multiple forms of trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Different situations of interactions or exchanges require different levels or types of conceptualizations of trust. It can be examined under three subheadings: trust in the organization; trust in the manager; trust in colleagues (Sener, 2017), a combination of these three concepts is called organizational trust.

- Employees' trust in their managers (line managers) is considered as part of the trust of individuals in the organizational structure in each other. For this reason, an individual's trust in their manager is shaped by the ethics and fairness shown by their manager (Koç & Yazıcıoğlu, 2011). The importance of trust in managers has been widely studied in the management literature, especially in leadership studies.
- Employees' trust in their peers is described as the set of beliefs that their colleagues are qualified, fair and trustworthy and that they would behave ethically (Semercioğlu, 2012). One of the reasons why trust in co-workers has attracted attention is the widespread transformation

of work environments, such as the introduction of IT in companies, such as the emergence of the work team in the early 1990s (Ingraham & Jones 1999).

• Trust in the organization, on the other hand, is described as the employees' belief that the organization is structured to ensure success. As employees view managers as the representatives of the organization, they can transfer their trust in their manager to the entire organization. For this reason, employees' trust in their organization is related to the trust they place in their managers, but it is ranked separately (Sevinç, 2013). In our present study we will focus on trust in the organization.

## 2.3 Socially responsible HRM and organizational trust

For nearly 20 years, HRM has been identified as one of the most influential organizational contexts for exploring trust (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Trust is pervasive in almost all areas of human resources: training and development, compensation, promotion, job duties, job security, performance evaluation and feedback, among others (Tyler, 2003).

HRM researchers have identified the relationship between HRM approaches and organizational trust. For example, Macky and Boxall (2007) expressed that the adoption by the organization of mobilizing HRM practices generates increased confidence insofar as employees perceive that such an action demonstrates managerial competence, reduces their perceptions of vulnerability or threat.

In their study, Vanhala and Ahteela (2011) affirmed the importance of HRM practices in improving the level of employees trust in their organization. HRM practices are perceived by employees as advantages, they stimulate confidence in the employees themselves (Tzafir, 2006). Gould-Williams (2003) also found that HRM is an important predictor of employee trust in the organization. Searle et al. (2011) claimed that high-involvement HR systems affect employees' perceptions of the trustworthiness of their organization.

HRM practices are critical to building and maintaining trust in organizations because they create relationships, interactions and are a means of transmitting messages between the organization and the employees (Tzafrir, Eitam-Meilik, 2005). Schuler and his colleagues (2001) state that one of the fundamental challenges of HRM practices is to create a positive cycle of trust in the organization. The role of HRM practices in establishing trust also derives from the fact that within an HRM system, trust is an essential element of the organization.

Searle and Skinner (2011) suggest that HR practices such as recruitment, early socialization, promotion and career progression, training and development, leadership and communication can be used to facilitate and reinforce the development of organizational trust. For his part, Bigoulare (2014), distinguished the practices of participation, employability and the practices of remuneration and organizational justice as practices allowing the development of organizational trust among employees.

Thus, according to Pivato & al., (2008), trust is the first and closest result of a company's CSR activities. Balmer & al., (2007) predicted that organizations that integrate CSR into their activities are generally perceived as "trustees" of the interests and rights of all their stakeholders, are they employees or customers, since these stakeholders are expected to focus on the actions of organizations related to ethics. Along the same lines, Hansen & al. (2011) suggested that employees develop trust in their organizations when they find them socially responsible. Farooq & al., (2014) also claimed that "employee CSR" is the strongest predictor of employee trust in their organization.

Employees who perceive that their organization's HRM practices are intended to take care of their wellbeing will have greater trust in their organization and higher affective commitment (Whitener 2001), and will be less likely to leave the organization (Allen & al., 2003). As a result, based on Blau's social exchange theory (1964) and Gouldner's norm reciprocity theory (1960), employees tend to exchange and reciprocate positive attitudes such as confidence in the organization when it meets their expectations and needs.

#### 2.3.1 Legal compliance HRM practices and organizational trust

HRM legal compliance requires companies to follow local labor laws and comply with the standards set by the International Labor Organization (ILO). HRM practices that comply with legal requirements primarily involve equal opportunity, health and safety, working hours, minimum wage, and the use of child labor and forced labor (Rowan, 2000; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002; Shen and Zhu 2011). In the study conducted by Kundu and Gahlawat (2016) with 563 employees from 204 local and international organizations operating in India to assess the effects of HRM-SR practices on employee attitudes at work, namely trust, motivation and affective commitment, the results revealed that HRM practices that comply with legal requirements positively impact organizational trust. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: HRM practices that comply with legal requirements build employee trust in the organization.

## 2.3.2 Employee-oriented HRM practices and organizational trust

When employees perceive that employee-oriented HRM practices are well implemented within the organization, they are more likely to feel supported, concerned and treated morally and ethically, and therefore perceive the benevolence and integrity of the organization. These perceptions, according to Mayer and al. (1995), encourage employees to take risks, to be vulnerable to the organization and, ultimately, to trust it. Hu and Jiang (2016), developed and tested an integrative model that implicates the mediating role of organizational trust in the relationship between employee-focused HRM and expressive behavior. The results of the study carried out among 251 employees of various professions in China, showed that HRM-EA is positively and significantly related to organizational trust. The results of this study reveal a relatively new mediator, namely organizational trust, for linking CSR-related HR practices to positive employee behaviors. Therefore, it is proposed that:

#### Hypothesis 2: Employee-oriented HRM practices build their trust in the organization.

## 2.3.3 Employee-oriented HRM practices and organizational trust

HRM enabling general CSR encompasses practices that help companies engage in general CSR initiatives (Shen and Zhu, 2011). HRM has been considered to have an important role in implementing the organization's sustainable strategy and CSR initiatives (Bučiūnienė and Kazlauskaitė, 2012). Employees view the organization's CSR activities as an important signal of organizational values and ethics, providing a trustworthy image of an organization (Rupp and al. 2006). In the book "And trust Brothel? ", Rostchild (2014, p. 248) presents CSR as the new lever to create trust. Rawshdeh et al., (2019), examined the relationship between HRM practices facilitating CSR initiatives on organizational trust. The results of the study conducted among 420 employees in the Klang region Valley in Malaysia, have shown that the adoption of HRM practices that facilitate CSR initiatives can strengthen employee confidence in their organizations operating in India, confirmed the positive impact of HRM practices facilitating CSR initiatives on employees' trust in their organization. It is thus proposed that:

Hypothesis 3: HRM practices facilitation general CSR build employee trust in the organization.

The theoretical model presented below (Figure 1) is derived from previous studies conducted on the subject in question. This model presents the variables examined in this research and their relationships.



Figure 1: conceptual model

## 3. Collection of data

The data was collected using a structured questionnaire from employees of banks located in the city of Agadir in Morocco. The self-administration process was used during the data collection period. The questionnaire consists of three types of questions. First, questions about employee perceptions of SR-HRM practices. Next, questions about trust in the organization, followed by a series of demographic questions. Respondents were purposely selected from bank employees. However, this study is concerned that bankers are time-limited and purposive sampling is adequate for this research. A total of 50 usable responses were obtained.

Of the 50 people interviewed, 85% were men and 75% were between 26 and 40 years old. About 84% of respondents have completed higher education. The highest percentage, around 51%, is for customer advisors, followed by the second highest, 35%, for cashiers. The percentage of respondents who have worked for the organization for less than five years is 53%, while that of those who have worked for ten years is around 33%. On average, respondents are highly educated and experienced in their organization.

## 4. Variable measures

The measures and research instruments for this study were drawn from the existing literature on the subject and from the most relevant but also the most expert researchers in the field. Three dimensions of SR-HRM (Legal compliance HRM, Employee-oriented HRM and General CSR facilitation HRM) were measured using respectively 6 items, 4 items and 3 items developed by Shen and Zhu (2011). A five-point Likert scale "ranging from strongly agree = 5 to strongly disagree =1, will be used. Trust in the organization was measured using the 7 items developed by Robinson and Rousseau (1994). Five-point Likert scale "ranging from strongly agree = 5 to strongly disagree = 1, will be used.

## 5. Test of reliability, validity and identification of factors

Reliability analysis is used to characterize measurement scales composed of various items (e.g. questions in the case of a questionnaire). The procedure used calculates several measures that allow evaluating the reliability of the scale and also provides information on the relationships between the different elements. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of the internal consistency of a test or, in other words, a measure of the reliability of the scale. This index (represented by the Greek letter "á") is the mathematical equivalent of estimating the average of all correlations between two equal parts of the scale. It is recommended that the minimum alpha coefficient be between 0.65 and 0.8 (or higher); those below 0.5 are usually unacceptable. This study measures reliability by testing the alpha coefficient of key variables.

Validity refers to the extent to which indicators accurately measure what they are intended to measure. Construct validity, content validity, face validity, and convergent validity are used to estimate the extent to which key research variables are related to each other. Content validity is understood through face validity and consensus validity. It consists in ensuring that the scale is meaningful and that it can be judged as relevant and judged as relevant and approximating reality (Lacity and Jansen, 1994). From a theoretical point of view theoretical point of view, a tool for measuring a given construct has content validity if the items it a representative sample of the universe of items that represent the entire domain of the construct. Assessing content validity therefore consists of answering a specific question Are the items used representative of the content of the universe of the construct to be measured?

According to Charles (1969), in the psychological aspects of construct validity, a convergent validity test refers to concepts and measures that are believed to be related. Convergent validity refers to the degree to which two construct measures that should theoretically be related are in fact related. Construct validity demonstrates the extent to which items on a scale measure the same construct. Exploratory factor analysis was used to identify underlying concepts and explore relationships between key research variables.

## 6. Results

A varimax rotation with the Kaiser-Mayer Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was calculated to determine the appropriateness of using the factor analysis procedure. A number of steps were used to finalize the factors. Factors with an eigenvalue of only 1.0 were retained. Factors Factors with an eigenvalue less than 1.0 were considered insignificant and were excluded from this research. A total of five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were identified. Considering the five conditions of confidence considered in this study, the combined results of the factor analysis indicate that all the items are correctly loaded on the expected factors. Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was used to obtain the rotational component matrix. Varimax rotation was used to conceptualize and simplify the factor matrix. The result of the factor analysis is presented in Table 2.

	component			
	Legal compliance HRM	Employee- oriented HRM	General CSR facilitation HRM	
My firm ensures equal opportunity in HRM	0.602	0.014	-0.099	
Employees in my firm are paid above minimum wages and based on their performance	0.773	-0.106	-0.066	
Working hours in my firm do not exceed the maximum that the labour law permits	0.757	-0.041	-0.099	
My firm does not employ child labour or forced labour	0.851	-0.033	-0.105	
My firm has clear and detailed regulations on occupational health and safety	0.695	-0.067	0.110	
My firm appoints staff monitoring labour standards in business partners; for example, suppliers and contractors	0.839	0.841	0.064	
My firm adopts flexible working hours and employment programs achieving work-life balance	-0.090	0.617	0.005	
Employees participate in decisions making and total quality management	-0.098	0.837	-0.004	
Unions can represent and protect workers' rights and can be involved in determining labour terms	-0.022	0.724	-0.176	
My firm provides adequate training and development opportunities to employees	0.005	0.713	-0.198	
My firm appoints adequate staff implementing general CSR initiatives	-0.099	-0.127	0.674	
My firm rewards employees who contribute to charity, communities and other CSR activities	-0.048	-0.066	0.656	
My firm gives priority in employment to candidates who are in difficulty and who are local	-0.083	-0.117	0.747	

## **Table 2:** Results of factor analysis

Table 3 presents reliability and other descriptive statistics. Respondents to this study placed the highest importance on the training and development and recruitment and selection variables. On the other hand, the highest variance is explained by HRM complying with legal requirements (42.474%). Employee-oriented HRM explains 24.162% of the variance, HRM facilitation general CSR explains 7.560% of the variance. All factors are significant in the reliability test. The statistics were checked using Cronbach's Alpha are greater than 0.7 as suggested by Nunnally (1978).

Factors	Average	Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
Legal compliance HRM	5.20	42.474	0.779
Employee-oriented HRM	5.85	24.162	0.751
General CSR facilitation HRM	5.71	7.560	0.856
Trust in Organization	5.35	0.850	

**Table 3:** Reliability, mean and explained variance

Table 4 presents the results of the regression analysis of the three independent factors with trust in the organization as the dependent variable. The R-square is 0.675, which is considered adequate for the study. With the exception of HRM facilitation general CSR, the other two factors are significant at the 5% confidence level. The ranking of factors according to the normalized beta coefficient – employee-oriented HRM – has the greatest influence on trust in the organization (beta = 0.501). Legal compliance HRM ranks second with a beta coefficient of 0.385. The statistical results can summarize that, according to the average score in Table 3 and the standardized beta coefficient in Table 4, trust in the organization (dependent variable) is influenced the most by the employee-oriented HRM factor matrix.

Model	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig .
	В	standard error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	8,052	0.917		8,785	0.000
Legal compliance HRM	0.459	0.056	0.501	8,278	0.000
employee- oriented HRM	0.535	0.087	0.385	6,117	0.000
General CSR facilitation HRM	-0.053	0.108	-0.033	-0.491	0.624

a. Dependent variable: Trust in the organization

## Table 4: Regression results

# 7. Discussions

This article seeks to know to what extent socially responsible HRM practices inspire and are relevant in rekindling employee confidence in the organization. Furthermore, it explores the relationships between socially responsible HRM practices and trust in the organization. A total of 40 employees were chosen from bank branches located in the city of Agadir in Morocco. The results show that the three factors; legal compliance HRM, HRM oriented towards employees and General CSR facilitation HRM are correlated with employees' trust in the organization.

This study combined three socially responsible HRM practices into a single regression model to examine the overall effect on employee trust in the organization. The result demonstrates that the study hypotheses, with the exception of HRM facilitating general CSR, are significant at the 5% confidence level. Therefore, the regression result supports Hypothesis 1, and is consistent with the study, indicating that HRM complies with legal requirements primarily involving equal opportunity, health and safety, working hours, minimum wage and the use of child labor and forced labor builds employee trust in their organizations (Kundu and Gahlawat, 2016).

H2 proposes that HRM which consists of providing employees with adequate training and development opportunities, providing them with feedback and introducing flexible working arrangements, and which encourages employees to participate in decision-making processes by adopting the workplace democracy and power sharing can build trust in the organization. The results support this proposition and are consistent with the literature (Hu and Jiang, 2016). In the case of H3, the regression result shows that there is no significant or negative relationship between HRM facilitation general CSR and trust in the organization. However, although the conceptual literature empirical study on the relationship between HRM facilitation general CSR and trust in the organization.

## 8. Conclusion

The objective of this study is to determine the extent to which socially responsible human resources management practices inspire and contribute to rekindling employee confidence in the organization. Also, explore and identify the relationships between SR-HRM practices and trust in the organization. Primarily, the research was carried out within the theoretical framework that was based on the previous literature review. In addition, the result of the multiple regression analysis indicates that HRM compliant with legal requirements and employee-oriented HRM are significant elements of trust in the organization. The model explains 65% of the variance, which strongly suggests positive relationships between HRM-SR practices and trust in the organization in the work environment. Therefore, research suggests that employee trust in the organization is very important in SR-HRM practices to achieve organizational goals.

Also, this study has limitations in that the sample size is relatively small, and concerns a limited geographic area restricts the generalizability of the results. Future research in this area can be strengthened by increasing the sample size and focusing on different financial institutions as a field of study. In addition, they could assess or attempt to discover the relationship between SR-HRM practices and other relevant factors such as performance appraisal, employee involvement, communication and information sharing, and other organizational outcome factors such as turnover, absenteeism, job satisfaction, affective commitment, and sustainable performance.

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