

# Green Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Engagement: A Case Study of Leading Sustainable Organizations

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## Abstract

Sustainable enterprise practices have ended up increasingly crucial for organizations, and the position of human resource management (HRM) in riding these tasks is gaining a reputation. This study explores how sustainable agencies undertake green human resource management (GHRM) practices to sell employee engagement and delight. Through a case-look approach, the observer investigates the views of HR managers on the implementation of GHRM and its effect on painting practices and employee stories. The findings suggest that GHRM is a key strategy for aligning organizational goals with the private values of personnel, mainly to expand engagement, commitment, and process pleasure. The theoretical framework advanced in the take a look at highlights the significance of strategic control, sustainability possibilities, know-how, and workforce engagement as prerequisites for effective GHRM practices. The studies present valuable insights for the HRM network, demonstrating the significance of GHRM in riding sustainability and contributing to a competitive benefit for corporations. The take a look at's practical implications encompass the improvement of precise examples of leading green agencies and the HRM practices that have contributed to their success in this area.

**Keywords:** Green Human Resource Management, Employee Engagement, Leading Sustainable Organization

## 1. Introduction

Sustainability is an emerging issue for both international business and human resource management. Sustainable human resource management has brought about significant new opportunities and challenges for enterprises, and the in-depth study of sustainable human resource management is of great significance. Green Human Resource Management puts

forward the requirement of blending business sustainability with traditional Human Resource Management and emphasizes the 'greening' of all HRM practices. To address the evolving and changing responsibility of companies in terms of sustainability, human resources need to develop and adapt practices that help firms take care of the environment, especially because human resources are perceived as the center for integrating a new strategic focus on sustainability. (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021)

To explain this new approach, our research will build the concept to focus on two main practices, namely recruitment and selection and training and development. This chapter presents an in-depth overview of the research topic and provides a rationale for the importance and impact of green human resource management in the business sector undergoing sustainability transition. The structure of the study is also outlined at the end.

Nowadays, businesses are encountering increased pressures from stakeholders to address environmental concerns and act more responsibly towards the natural environment. In this context, business sustainability has become an emerging theme for both international business literature and human resource management literature. Sustainably oriented human resource management has brought significant new opportunities and challenges for today's enterprises. The in-depth study of sustainable human resource management is of great significance in helping organizations achieve business goals and social development. Influenced by these new challenges and opportunities, the concept of green human resource management has been introduced, which emphasizes the greening of all human resource management practices to blend sustainable business with traditional human resource management. The need to blend sustainable business with traditional pervasive jobs and practices is a hot research subject in business and management. (D'Souza, Ahmed, Khashru, Ahmed, Ratten, & Jayaratne, 2022).

### **1.1. Background and Rationale**

Globally, organizations are now demonstrating a commitment to social and environmental issues beyond traditional corporate social responsibility. Green overtures feel more in harmony with the natural environment and sustainable development than do CSR practices that are loosely related to core strategies and practices. The focal point of this manuscript is on business strategies that are meant for sustainability and how these practices have transformed the role of HRM in organizations. If the employees of an organization are engaged in sustainability concerns and strategies, then the organization itself is likely to benefit financially, reduce the environmental impact of its operations, and gain a competitive advantage as a preferred employer. To enhance this engagement, green HRM practices are required, and these will be the focus topic of this investigation (refer to figure 1). Employees play a pivotal role when it comes to achieving environmental sustainability; hence, every effort to signify their engagement would be useful. (Chatzopoulou, Manolopoulos, & Agapitou, 2022).



Figure 1: Green HRM and Organizational Sustainability

When organizations recognize the challenges posed by the exhaustion of natural reserves on different aspects of operation, Human Resources Management (HRM) instantly takes on greater significance for both strategy creation and execution. The HR function needs to work substantively with the sustainability strategy if organizations expect employees to be engaged and behave in a way that directly contributes to organizational goals. The link between HRM and environmental management has received split attention from scholars. Some organizations are bringing new dimensions to classic HRM practices in their roles as sustainable organizations. The focus is on organizations that possess some or many of the primordial stages of green efforts and green HRM practices, as we are interested in what happens to HRM in organizations where the green attitude is established. (Farrukh, Raza, Ansari, & Bhutta, 2022).

## 2. Literature Review

In today's competitive environment, every organization needs to be sensitive as well as responsive towards the environment. Human resources are a key driver of CSR strategies, as they act as an environmental bridge between the organization and its stakeholders. The addition of the environment in human resource management is referred to as Green HR. Green HR includes all those practices that help in achieving business environmental sustainability goals and objectives. It keeps employees engaged while making them satisfied with their jobs as well. HR initiatives are considered crucial to sustaining environmentally friendly working conditions and leading them towards environmentally friendly working practices at the individual, organizational, and inter-organizational levels. (Herrera & de las Heras-Rosas, 2020); (Malik, et al., 2021); (Stahl, Brewster, Collings, & Hajro, 2020); (Freitas, Caldeira-Oliveira, Teixeira, Stefanelli, & Teixeira, 2020)

Employee engagement results in a common platform for self and organizational sustainability in their existence and has been the main theme in the contemporary literature concerned with HRM. Engagement at work has become an important area of focus among

human resource researchers and practitioners (see figure 2). Employee engagement results in zeal in their performance, shows enthusiasm towards their jobs and tasks, ultimately achieving competitiveness to make the organization sustainable. This will take the modern-day organization into the next generation era, with their ideas, generation, refurbishment, and transformation for the employer in a new way. Different practices have been adopted to enhance employee engagement and to achieve various HRM outcomes efficiently and compete with other organizations having comparatively similar sets of goals in the industry. (Ahmed, Khan, Thitivesa, Siraphattada, & Phumdara, 2020); (Wood, Oh, Park, & Kim, 2020)

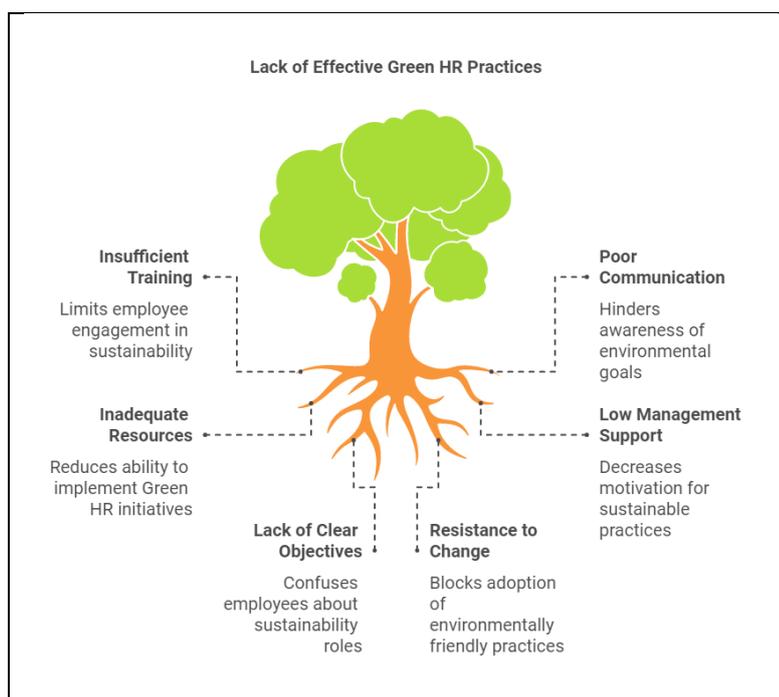


Figure 2; Lack of Effective HR practices

## 2.1. Green HRM Practices

Ever since the explosion of the concept of green human resource management (GHRM) with three-pronged environmental, social, and economic dimensions, the effect of organizations' green human resource management practices has been discussed at length within the context of a sustainable and motivated workforce. Yet, no concrete solution has emerged, leading to curiosity regarding the resource management strategies adopted by green organizations. The literature further predicts that the nature of GHRM practices would be quite idiosyncratic and largely depend on the green management practices of the particular organization. (Amjad, et al., 2021).

Positive psychological capital, which is harbored by an individual, predicts employee engagement, which is known to be vital for an organization to achieve its sustainability goals. Our emerging HRM discourse continues to highlight the significance of high-commitment HR practices in green organizations, indicating that committed employees would spare no effort to further their organizations' environmental performance. Through this article, we present

findings of a qualitative study carried out in four leading sustainable organizations, each doing business in the field of hand-stamped apparel, industrial chemicals, resins, and chemicals. (Saleem, Isha, Yusop, Awan, & Naji, 2022)

## 2.2. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement represents a positive work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, referring to motivation, leading to behavior of expressing oneself physically, cognitive investment, and emotional connection. The three dimensions of employee engagement and "vigor" refer to employees' willingness to be involved in their work and the energy that they invest in it. "Dedication" refers to employees' ability to experience enthusiasm and a sense of challenge in their work. "Absorption" refers to employees' ability to become absorbed in their work to the detriment of all other dimensions of their lives because they are fully involved in what they are doing. (Hines, 2022)

Vigor builds from employees' physical energy, cognitive investment, and emotional attachment to their work role. In the long term, when employees are engaged with their work and committed to their organizations' values, they are likely to be responsible for promoting organizational values, leading to better organizational performance. They ensure better employee behaviors and attitudes, including organizational citizenship, increased productivity, and retention of employees. In contrast, research themes of employee engagement other than organizational performance include organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and employee well-being. Employee engagement is influenced by the company's response to the environmental challenges that the company faces. (Raza, Farrukh, Iqbal, Farhan, & Wu, 2021)

## 3. Research Methodology

The researcher has used the descriptive research design. The research was descriptive in nature since it was trying to establish the relationship that exists between green human resource management practices and employee engagement within the selected organizations. Descriptive research also tends to show the cause-and-effect relationship that exists between the independent and the dependent variables.

The population under study was all the leading sustainable organizations in Kenya, which are 11 organizations. The specific organizations were determined by the criteria that were being used to classify organizations as the most green organizations. A snowballing technique was used to obtain the point of contact in these organizations. Then, a structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Only those organizations that were participating in the sessions were sampled. Each organization had two representatives who were taken through the questionnaire in a single session. A pilot test was run, and thus, the tool was used to establish the validity and reliability of the instrument.

### 3.1. Case Study Approach

Green human resource management (GHRM) is about aligning organizational aims with the personal values of employees and gaining a competitive advantage through both process

and product or service innovations. This case study research investigates how sustainable organizations adopt green human resource management practices to promote engagement in their organizations. The findings suggest that employees gain great satisfaction by working in sustainable organizations and that GHRM has been the key to that satisfaction. Employees of sustainable organizations are involved in activities beyond job descriptions, creating happy workplaces that encourage efforts to improve productivity, which are desired by-products of their engagements. To this end, we design a model of employee engagement to explain how employees engage in corporate sustainability. This demonstration of sustainable organizations introduces three case studies; the following points are used to define a "sustainable organization": organizational values include sustainability; corporate activities related to sustainability efforts include contributing social involvement as a business skill, and a business model involves knowledge management with engagement; they provide strategic human resource management (HRM) that pays attention to capability building, sharing, or openness that supports the values of sustainability. These case companies cover different industries, such as IT services, natural foods retailing, and e-commerce. These cases have characteristic progressions in sustainability management as internal capability developments, vertical engagement, or challenging ability. (Jamal, Zahid, Martins, Mata, Rahman, & Mata, 201).

### 3.2. Data Collection Methods

The context of this research requires qualitative data from the managers and employees of the organizations. In designing a proper method for data collection in corporate organizations in Bangladesh, a mixed method has been used. Among different data collection methods, such as focus group discussion, the method included focus group discussion and questionnaire survey. As organizations were structured in a competitive manner and management governed them accordingly, staff usually had to show visible support and never criticized the management. Naturally, the top-level management becomes less communicative due to the fear of job insecurity of the staff. As a result, this study identified some leadership style obstacles like impersonality and risk. Therefore, we adopted the focus group discussion method to make the job easier. (Ramírez-Montoya & Lugo-Ocando, 2020)

The study conducted three focus group discussions for 120 minutes each. Each discussion involved seven to ten employees, with at least one third of them being managers. Each discussion group was audiotaped. There were three senior researchers, among whom one was from the respective organization. Results from the focus groups were used to develop a codebook to guide the coding of transcripts from more than twenty discussion sessions of eleven organizations. Since the interview method is more suitable for sensitive issues and for developing new ideas, the in-depth interview method has been adopted in this study as well. The in-depth interview method was conducted to supplement the limitations of the discussion facility. The long wait would not ensure gathering the necessary data. One hundred seventy-three corporate employees selected from eleven leading private sector organizations in Bangladesh constituted the sample for the study.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

4.1. Introduction While organizations have been making efforts to introduce policies and practices to support employees, locate and cultivate employee competencies, and promote their loyalty, concerns about the extent to which these practices contribute to employee fulfillment and help expand organizational responsiveness have grown. This is compounded by concerns about whether organizations contribute to societal good and seek to play a more proactive part in the face of current challenges such as global warming. As a consequence, there are calls for exploring innovative people management practices and their impact on employee experiences and fulfillment. This chapter explores the emerging paradigm of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices and their influence on employee engagement within a subset of human organizations that are actively engaged in reshaping their mixed market growth and profit orientation through the adoption of creative strategic Human Resources (HR) practices that are sustainable, ethical, and diverse. The aim of this study is to explore HR managers' views and perspectives about new practices to advance the analysis of GHRM, to understand how such practices shape work practices on the ground, as well as employee experiences of these.

Pattern Analysis—Themes This section illustrates the process of our thematic analysis of in-depth qualitative interview data from 12 organizations' HR managers. Specifically, it describes the coded themes drawn from the Qualitative Data Analysis software reports generated from the transcribed paper-based interview scripts for themes, employed for organizing the content of the study through a more focused and structured framework. Furthermore, it highlights categories exploring the HR managers' perspective on formal GHRM intervention activities and practices, their positive and negative impacts on employee behavior, and the reasons why these emerge as they do. The section then demonstrates the patterns of meaning related to the HRM activities for showing care and respect for employees (with society and the natural environment) encoded for this chapter, which stands for the study as a whole. We later use these coding results to elaborate, confirm, and communicate the main objectives of the study. (Basnyat & Clarence Lao, 2020).

### 4.1. Overview of Sustainable Organizations Studied

There are six organizations chosen for the case study of sustainability practices, out of the 11 initially identified sustainable organizations. Three organizations are from the public sector and three from the private sector. The public sector organization consists of government agencies, and the private sector organization chosen mostly consists of autonomous government-linked companies and private organizations that have achieved sustainable awards, recognition, and require annual sustainability report submission. The reason for the choice of the public sector is that it has a ripple effect on society, and the private sector plays a dual role in employment. The private organization not only performs its economic function by providing employment opportunities but also serves as an agent by implementing social responsibility initiatives. Additionally, the identification of the practices of the leading sustainable organizations in both public and private sectors is important, as it will serve as a model for small and medium enterprises to develop and leverage their

sustainability agenda. (Errida & Lotfi, 2021).

Before the case studies begin, a prior or pilot study is conducted on three organizations: two public organizations and one private organization. The names, addresses, industries, number of employees, and estimated percentage of staff that have undergone appropriate training to enable them to undertake their roles are presented. The six sustainable organizations chosen out of the 11 initially identified sustainable organizations are both government ministries, a water supply corporation, and a university. The three government-linked companies are an energy company, a project management company, and a chemical company. The six organizations are chosen based on the sustainability awards received and/or inclusion in the annual sustainable report. The top five organizations in the category of leading sustainable organizations from the Excellence and Working Environment Workplace Assessment Report are chosen for the case study. The choice of these six organizations serves as a testament to the Triple P Humane Theory, i.e., organizations that have achieved sustainability performance contribute to Sustainable Development, People, and Prosperity. These organizations have a good understanding of what the processes require and are able to comprehend the purpose of the overall GHRM strategy. (Machado, Dias, & Fonseca, 2021).

#### **4.2. Impact of Green HRM Practices on Employee Engagement**

Green HRM practices may benefit employees and employers. Several academics and practitioners have studied green HRM and highlighted its impact on overall organizational performance and sustainability. Organizations spearheading sustainable human resource practices need to consider and evaluate green HRM on an employee level. Furthermore, organizations should develop an understanding of how green HRM influences employee engagement, which is the focal concern of this research. (Ababneh, 2021).

Several organizations are considered leading organizations and pioneers in the field of sustainable practices, and their employees are considered to be highly engaged. An examination of the HRM practices implemented by these organizations reveals that employee engagement seems positively associated with green HRM practices. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, literature on the impact of green HRM practices on employee engagement is still scarce. This empirical research is predominantly carried out in the developed Western world and has yet to pay attention to other parts of the world. Since literature focusing on sustainable and green HRM practices, especially in Asia, is scarce, the researcher will explore the relationship between green HRM practices and employee engagement in chosen leading sustainable companies. Hence, the research question is formulated as below. (Aboramadan, 2022).

### **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The theoretical framework based on the review of the literature contributed to an effective evaluation of the effort implemented by companies in green HRM practices in compliance with the four distinguished HRD prerequisites: strategic management, sustainability opportunities, knowledge, and staff engagement. To summarize, the data analysis has shown that these practices lead to the transformation of staff engagement (commitment, efficient internal communication, job satisfaction, and task performance). The

research is significant as it demonstrates the importance of green HRM and makes a positive contribution to the HRM community by providing specific examples of leading green companies and the HRM practices contributing to achieving this position for each company. Employers and managers need to reconsider how they view the relationship of employment and the new, more sustainable business environment. Continuous dialogue and the adaptation of all practices to these new rules are prerequisites for competitiveness. In addition, the limitations of the research conducted drive us to propose the concept for other researchers for further contribution. This research should be repeated but accommodating a greater number of organizations and staff from all levels of the hierarchy, in all regions and business sectors. The involvement of human resource professionals and organizational decision-makers in ongoing discussions regarding the impact of HRM on green business and sustainable workforce development is demanded.

### **5.1. Key Findings and Implications**

This section records and discusses the key findings and implications of the specific study and further provides a comprehensive comparison of these with the existing findings in the acknowledged literature. The research identified that leading Indian organizations have adopted several proactive and reactive GHM practices to ensure the diverging needs of their employees. Several interesting insights were deciphered concerning the policy and best practice framework of sustainable Indian enterprises in the context of GHM, most crucially, in the area of employee engagement. Based on the green and non-green organization distinction, although the results reveal differences in approach and intensity, relative to earlier comparative studies in HR, CSR, and other related domains, the extant academically low-key emerging economies' perspective has been predominantly either developing and disciplinary or sector and industry-centric.

The case study concludes that GHM can transform traditional HR policies and practices into a significant competitive advantage in contemporary times. The best practices of the leading organizations, as evidenced through the in-depth interviews, do not await government initiatives on CSR and other regulatory bodies before they can establish sound HR systems. Indeed, contrary to the consensus over the significance associated with this body of knowledge, the present study exposed some key differences relative to green and non-green organizations, and these are seen to be largely based on the emphasis provided to the ideological and transformative role of HR. In addition, various differences also emerged on the employer-employee interface in HR management and especially in the consequential area of employee engagement. These results extend earlier studies and shed light on the shortcomings of the seminal and contemporary literature.

### **5.2. Recommendations for Organizations**

Work-life balance practices on both organizational and individual levels emerged as more relevant than practices on other levels in terms of an association with employee engagement. The individual level was also highlighted in an overview of the six major organizational antecedents of burnout. This work proposes an extension of work from this individual perspective to an organizational level. To that end, for organizations to foster

employee engagement, they are suggested to design a set of converging work-life balance practices to create an environment that promotes personal resources and organizational commitment. This is expected to increase employee engagement, helping organizations to enhance their sustainability efforts.

Specifically, organizations are recommended to provide their employees with organizational support such as sharing information and documentation, coaching, and flexibility. Shared information was found to conserve employees' personal resources such as time and motivational efforts. It may lessen the burden of presenteeism arising from the extent to which working under daily demands threatens their well-being and reduces their person-related resources. Information sharing may be related to social learning theory in an organizational context. Coaching is a potential way to build a mentoring relationship, in which trust can help employees concentrate on tasks without the fear of exclusion. For activities related to family days or celebrations, most of the units within these corporations only required confirmation of attendance by email. Flexible leaves and schedules were shown to have a positive effect on personal resources. In so doing, organizations conserve valuable personal resources available for engagement and creativity that can be converted to attain organizational goals. Scenarios for the implementation of these practices are discussed in the sections of current practices and impact.

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