

Green Human Resource Management and Organizational Sustainability: A Multilevel Analysis of Practices and Performance

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) on the various levels of organizational sustainability within a multilevel analytical framework. As the organizational focus shifts toward longevity, embedding sustainable responsible HR practices becomes critical, as it alters the behavior of employees towards the organizational ends of sustainability. Based on the recent trend of literature of GHRM and sustainability, this study attempts to assess the impact of GHRM on the individual green behavior, departmental and team engagement, and organizational sustainability outcome. By analyzing these different levels, this study positions GHRM as a key factor in driving levels of pro-environmental behavior and sustainable performance across organizational levels. The study findings indicate GHRM positively influences green employee behavior, sustainability engagement at the group levels, and results in higher levels of organizational sustainability performance. This study adds a unique multilevel perspective to literature by showing HRM systems in practice, that integrate the principle of sustainability into operational and performance systems, which will be of interest to managers wanting to integrate sustainability into their human capital frameworks

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management; Organizational Sustainability; Employee Green Behavior; Multilevel Analysis; Sustainability Performance; Human Capital Strategy

1. Introduction

The study of sustainability has increased in recent years, particularly in the corporate environment. Scholars have devoted significant attention to the function of a sustainable society in overall organizational longevity. Subsequently, the chronicle of human resource management (HRM) in consideration of sustainability has developed within academia. Therefore, these two disciplines of investigation converge in the most recent exploration of green human resource management (GHRM) and organizational sustainability. GHRM refers to HRM practices intentionally designed to evade damage to the ecosystem (Mehmood Ali Shah, Jiang, Wu, Ullah, & Sunday Adebayo, 2021). The investigation undertaken by the author aims to address the gaps present in existing research regarding GHRM and organizational sustainability by adopting a multilevel analytical approach. The study disentangles individual-form employee green behavior, departmental- and team-form GHRM initiatives, and organization-wide sustainability performance. Organization-wide sustainability performance emerges as a critical output for organizational continuity, and

GHRM is positioned as a driver that fosters engagement in sustainability performance by organizational members at varying hierarchical levels and forms. Accordingly, the following research questions are posed: Do GHRM initiatives encourage green behavior at the individual level? Do department- and team-level GHRM initiatives facilitate green activity engagement? Does the corporate GHRM system influence engagement in organization-wide sustainability performance? The exploration tests several hypotheses derived from these questions.

Green behavior at the individual level is demonstrated to be positively impacted by GHRM, and departmental- and team-level GHRM practices are evidenced to enhance green behavior and GHRM at adjacent levels. GHRM is therefore positioned as a determinant of sustainability performance pursued at multiple organizational levels. A substantial body of literature exists concerning the boring topic of the HRM function—its relevance remains extraordinary in contemporary business scenarios. In Europe, the personnel function enjoys unprecedented prestige and importance. The field attracts considerable attention in terms of professorial endowments. Few papers have scrutinized GHRM and organizational sustenance. An extensive compilation of variables belongs to the complex realm of sustainability, with an unyielding commitment to nurturing the planet. Out of the vast array of HRM-related sustainability aspects, GHRM practices are particularly fascinating. Rarely is attention afforded to levels of education, particularly subsequent pedagogy following completion of higher studies. The research presents an array of novel elements to the literature through the deployment of a multilevel HRM lens addressing green and sustain-related conduits. Research has proliferated examining the state of the environment, encompassing the pollution of air, earth, and water. Sustainability frameworks abounded in academic studies. The “triple bottom line” concept and the notion of the “quadruple bottom line” are frequently invoked, anchored in the three Ps—people, planet, and profits—and associated with social responsibility—the fourth P. (Jamil, Zaman, Kayikci, & Khan, 2023); (Jiang, Jamil, Zaman, & Fatima, 2024); (Nadeem, Singh, Patidar, Yusliza, & Ramayah, 2025).

2. Conceptual Framework

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) provides a set of procedures aimed at encouraging the employees’ commitment towards protecting the environment. GHRM is addressed as the set of practices, policies, and systems that influence employees’ behavior for the purpose of contributing to the objectives of an organization while ensuring that regulations, social norms, and collective agreements within the organization are obeyed. GHRM is strongly linked to the moral and legal obligation towards the environment that revolves around Lotka-Volterra and Becker models. (Ahmad, Hossain, Mustafa, Ejaz, Khawaja, & Dunay, 2023).

Organizations engaged in GHRM practices, such as recruitments/selecting new employees with pro-green values, stimulating environment protection, designing ecotasks, focusing attention on the organization’s objectives, training videos about ecological improvement in the employee’s neighborhood, emphasizing energy saving, and provision of incentive grants to active participation in environmental conservation, can expect better financial performance, ecological performance, social performance, and overall sustainable performance. By adopting GHRM practices, organizations can build a green culture, which in turn can aid in moving towards gestation and maturity of pro-green organizations. The commitment made to sustainability will vary according to the size of the organization, with larger organizations being 19% more committed to sustainability than smaller organizations. (Alraja, Imran, Khashab, & Shah, 2022); (Ahmed, Akbar, Aijaz, Channar, Ahmed, & Parmar,

2023).

Organizations with higher commitment to sustainability will have better trust and loyalty. High commitment organizations with GHRM practices can better take advantage of government subsidies and grants regarding to environmental protection measures since they are relatively larger in size. Without entering GHRM level pro-green or green strategy, it can be expected that the effect of GHRM practices on environmental performance, sustainable performance, and pro-green organization development would not be significant. (Alraja, Imran, Khashab, & Shah, 2022).

An innovative GHRM model is proposed to systematically scrutinize the design and implementation of GHRM practices. Green HRM, as a new academic discourse, does not have a well-founded theoretical basis. Many articles simply explore the correlation between a single GHRM practice and a single performance measure within a limited specific context. There is a distinct lack of comprehensive GHRM models and perspectives. An integrative GHRM model, which bridges the gap of GHRM academic discourse, is presented. (Goel, Mehta, Kumar, & Castaño, 2022).

Moving for sustainability on earth, both pro-green organization and GHRM practices need to be reinforced. GHRM is a timely, practical, and essential research topic for promoting sustainability, however, is given scant attention in the pervasive environmental issue and sustainable development era. It would be a greatly interesting and meaningful subject to conduct comprehensive research on GHRM – variable and associative aspects, fields and industries, measurement items for sustainability and pro-green organization level, and so on (Cesário, Sabino, Moreira, & Azevedo, 2022).

2.1. Green Human Resource Management

Human resource management (HRM) plays a pivotal role in organizations that seek to adopt sustainable practices and develop green programs. Green human resource management (GHRM) directly engages an organization's quest for sustainability, engaging individual employees—and their departments and working teams—through tailor-made practices. GHRM draws on the HRM literature addressing the simultaneously individual and collective nature of effective HRM, which has received little attention within the emerging green business field (Mehmood Ali Shah, Jiang, Wu, Ullah, & Sunday Adebayo, 2021). GHRM aims to align acting and thinking green across levels; a framework is envisioned in which this occurs and the relevant practices that facilitate the process are identified. Organizations that embrace GHRM reap significant, sustained benefits (N. Mtembu, 2018).

2.2. Organizational Sustainability

The concept of organizational sustainability has evolved from simply being recognized as a fundamental stage of development, to being transformed into a paradigm (N. Mtembu, 2018). The paradigm emphasizes the organization's focal point on people, planet and profit. Therefore, organizations will only consider themselves sustainable when they are able to meet the needs of their present without compromising the needs of future generations. The sustainability of an organization is indicated by either its survival or growth in the long run, it serves as an assurance of continuity of the organization. Sustainability builds reputation of the organization, trust, increases customer retention, attracts new customers, employee retention, employee motivation to work as a team, creativity and innovation, competitiveness, safe workplace, commitment to improving quality of work and pride of affiliation among others (Tiimah Naya, 2022).

2.3. Multilevel Analysis in Human Resource Practices

Human resource (HR) practices form the backbone of any organization. They play a

critical role in attracting, selecting, and motivating employees, the most valuable resource in any organization—and are increasingly recognized as a source of sustainable advantages. Moreover, the HR function is now employing multilevel analyses to examine broader aspects of HR practice systems. Green human resource management (GHRM) involves the planning, implementation, and evaluation of a set of HR practices formulated to promote the sustainable and efficient use of environmental resources. Consequently, and aligned with a new emphasis on corporate social responsibility (CSR), the HR function is investigating GHRM and the corresponding multilevel nature of human resource practices across distinct organizational strata. (Shah & Soomro, 2023)

GHRM can enhance individual-level green employee behavior, defined as those voluntary employee activities that encourage the sustainable and efficient use of environmental resources. Owing to their specialized expertise, different departments and teams undertake these behaviors in unique and organization-specific ways. Several researchers have, therefore, adopted a multilevel perspective on GHRM practices, finding that organizations can better facilitate these activities through HR interventions. Because the majority of GHRM literature examines and operationalizes green practices at the individual level, the greater understanding of extra-individual GHRM remains reflective of both theory's inadequacies and a gap in existing empirical assessments. (Kaur, Arora, & Mittal, 2025).

3. Literature Review

For organizations, the implementation of green initiatives represents key strategic challenges under the dual pressures of higher market competition and intensifying climate change (Tiimah Naya, 2022). Green organizational practices empower employees to become active agents of environmental strategy implementation and facilitate the integration of green practices into routine tasks (Mehmood Ali Shah, Jiang, Wu, Ullah, & Sunday Adebayo, 2021). These practices can take many forms (e.g., resource-saving behaviors, energy and water conservation, waste recycling, use of environmentally friendly materials) and be initiated by either frontline employees or senior managers (Cesário, Sabino, Moreira, & Azevedo, 2022). Such observations highlight the importance of a multilevel approach to the investigation of green practices in organizations.

3.1. Individual-Level Green Behaviors and Outcomes

Previous studies have examined green behavior and pro-environmental practices at the individual, team, and organizational levels, but focused mostly on outcomes rather than practices across these levels. Individual green behavior is nevertheless crucial for achieving organizational sustainability goals, since it triggers additional behaviors that benefit the environment (Li, Amin Abdalla, Mohammad, Khassawneh, & Parveen, 2023) and voluntary actions that are not imposed by top management (Chen, Jiang, Li, & Gao, 2021). Individual green behavior hence serves as an important mediating variable in the green HRM–organizational sustainability performance relationship.

Both the pro-active and re-active strategies associated with green HRM affect specific discretionary green behaviors, such as participation in green campaigns, pro-environmental action, and energy-saving measures (Cesário, Sabino, Moreira, & Azevedo, 2022). These voluntary eco-oriented actions help curb emissions and consumption, support compliance and carbon neutrality, and trigger additional green practices that ultimately enhance organizational sustainability performance. Moreover, top management may be more inclined to adopt higher-level practices, thereby increasing green awareness among employees, supporting the implementation of green HRM initiatives, and elevating individual green behavior accordingly.

At the same time, green behavior triggers workplace innovation, fosters green values, generates attention to the environment, strengthens participation in green activities, and spurs the circulation of green and sustainable information. Such outcomes are beneficial for organizational sustainability, which encompasses ecosystem protection. Individual green behavior extensively facilitates the green HRM–sustainability performance pathway. (Shahzad, Jianguo, & Junaid, 2023).

3.2. Departmental and Team-Level Green Practices

As organizations become aware of their responsibilities toward society and the environment, many have launched ‘Going Green’ initiatives and efforts to improve their sustainability. Understanding the factors influencing the effectiveness of such initiatives in the context of Organization Theory and through the lens of strategic management remains a challenge. Organizational scholars have sought to study how various human resource practices influence firm performance across different levels. Such efforts are beginning to uncover which organizational practices influence sustainability initiatives at different levels and how these influence organizational sustainability in general. Investigating Human Resource Management (HRM), a recognized enabler of strategic renewal at the organizational level by adding new resource stocks, offers promising avenues for advancing theory and practice at both the departmental/team and organizational levels. (Abdullah, Sriganeshvarun, Kean Tat, Subramaniam, & Mohd Mustafa, 2023).

People act according to their values and when these are consistent with those of the organization, higher commitment and performance can be expected (Cesário, Sabino, Moreira, & Azevedo, 2022). To foster individual-level green behavior, organizations can implement Departmental & Team-Level Green HRM (Mehmood Ali Shah, Jiang, Wu, Ullah, & Sunday Adebayo, 2021). Organizations committed to sustainability at the top-level need, accordingly, to invest Green HRM practices at the departmental/team level. Such investment shapes the understanding of sustainability both at work and at home and offers greater opportunities to practice green behavior, enhancing the richness of individual green values. Investment is important to align sustainability understanding, which constitutes the belief in the need for sustainability. Green Individual-In-Role Behavior, such as reducing waste and conserving energy, constitutes a more basic level of engagement that organizations can pursue.

3.3. Organizational-Level Sustainability Performance

Management scholars have long recognized that organizational practices drive employee behavior. In the context of climate change and natural resource depletion, there is increasing pressure on organizations to undertake a more sustainable approach, creating interest in practices that promote pro-environmental behavior. Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) the introduction of environmental practices and initiatives by the human resource function—has emerged as a critical organizational-level response to this pressure. A recent study in the *Academy of Management Journal* underscores the importance of a multilevel approach to GHRM. Drawing on this literature, GHRM practices are defined as organizational-level sustainability initiatives targeted at the human resource function. These initiatives directly drive green employee behavior and indirectly affect broader organizational sustainability performance by shaping the green climate, developing green knowledge and skills, and influencing individual green motivation. A negative relationship is predicted between departmental-level sustainability performance and organizational-level performance, because departments with limited sustainability progress prioritize their focus on reducing the resource footprint, which adversely affects the green organizational climate

and the motivation for individual green behavior (Mehmood Ali Shah et al., 2021).

4. HRM as a driver of green and sustainable business.

Green HRM (GHRM) aims to achieve environmentally sustainable behavior and implement green practices to improve organizational eco-effectiveness and eco-efficiency (Cesário, Sabino, Moreira, & Azevedo, 2022). GHRM positively influences employee green values and behavior, promoting innovation and awareness. HRM plays a critical role in building a sustainability culture by developing policies, coordinating resources, facilitating communication, reinforcing desired behaviors, and aligning practices with sustainability goals (L. (Vasanth) R & (Hanuman) (Kennedy, 2017). However, GHRM and its alignment with sustainability objectives remain underexplored (N. Mtembu, 2018). The HR department can extend the GHRM perspective by establishing the importance of cultivating an eco-friendly and proactive workforce across sectors, industries, and economies. Research on GHRM also highlights the need for environmental commitment and that GHRM influence is moderated by personal environmental commitment.

5. Limitations and Future Research

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is an emerging organization-level human resource management (HRM) practice aimed at fostering employee green behavior. Despite growing interest in the link between GHRM and individual-level green behavior and performance in various academic fields, no studies have yet investigated the relationship between GHRM and organization-level environmental and sustainability performance through organization-level employee green behavior. Such an understanding may provide actionable knowledge for organizations that aspire to boost their sustainability performance through the establishment of GHRM practices. Given the lack of studies exploring GHRM as a boundary condition for the HRM-oriented green and sustainability performance framework outside of the context of individual-level employee green behavior and performance, additional empirical examination of these issues is warranted (Mehmood Ali Shah, Jiang, Wu, Ullah, & Sunday Adebayo, 2021).

Also, GHRM could further extend the green and sustainability performance framework by contributing to a collective organizational redirecting of attention toward sustainability-oriented goals across various HRM practices. By offering a compelling research agenda grounded on previous empirical examinations of HRM as an explanatory mechanism, the present work outlines a comprehensive direction for future investigation of the HRM-oriented green and sustainability performance framework. A supportive culture encompassing shared norms, beliefs, and values remains influential at all social aggregation levels. This aspect marks further departures from existing green and sustainability performance research because the framework has yet to consider culture as a potential moderator at individual, team, or organizational levels (Cesário, Sabino, Moreira, & Azevedo, 2022).

6. Conclusion

Today, people and societies face the challenge of tackling climate change and promoting settlements that are sustainable. Therefore, employees and organizations are challenged to find ways to be proactive and responsible because they remain key players in the continuing struggle. Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) provides one of its solutions as a formative vehicle to be perceived and acted upon in Pakistan. In this regard, GHRM describes those human resource management (HRM) practices that help cultivate green employees and enhance sustainable practices. No GHRM implementation is complete without employee-based green behavior. Employees must be encouraged to voluntarily

perform those individual-driven Green Behaviors (GBs) on a personal and organizational level. Although GBs at the individual level have been discussed in the literature, GHRM focusing on department and team levels and sustainable action remains scarce. Therefore, this study assesses the knowledge-building gap by framing an Organization-Wide Sustainable and GHRM-oriented Perspective (OWSGP) through the lens of social exchange and organizational support to explain the link between individual and collective GHRM and sustainability-based performance.

Data were analyzed from various sectors to show sustainability practices via GHRM. The technique employed social media and clustering analysis, with Q-analysis to simplify the overlay and the consumption of resources. The OWGSP framework from the top department academic sector studied managers, where three disciplines emerged: knowledge-sharing, team-footprint, and consumption waste. The dimensions of sustainability focused on enhance-quality, greening-lifestyle, and corridor-space. GHRM was introduced and researched, highlighting both individual and collective facets. Five types of GHRM emerged: behavioral-demonstration, pragmatic-innovative, guiding-supportive, coaching-train, and evaluating-performing, where collective GHRM referred to department and team. Due to the absence of multi-source data, top managers acting as respondents were chosen. All elements are understood at different degrees of enacting.

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