

Green Human Resource Management as a Strategic Driver of Sustainable Organizational Performance: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This study examines Green Human Resource Management as a strategic driver of sustainable organizational performance through a literature review approach. The growing pressure for organizations to balance economic performance, environmental responsibility, and social accountability has increased the importance of integrating sustainability into internal management systems. Green Human Resource Management provides a relevant framework because it connects sustainability objectives with employee-related practices, including green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance management, green rewards, and employee involvement. This review synthesizes existing studies to explain how GHRM contributes to sustainable organizational outcomes by developing employee environmental awareness, strengthening green behaviour, supporting green innovation, and shaping sustainability-oriented organizational culture. The findings indicate that GHRM is not merely an administrative human resource function, but a strategic mechanism that enables organizations to transform environmental goals into daily workplace practices. The literature also shows that the relationship between GHRM and sustainable performance is often influenced by mediating factors such as green innovation, employee commitment, leadership support, and organizational culture. Therefore, the effectiveness of GHRM depends on the consistency of implementation, managerial commitment, and alignment with broader organizational strategy. This study concludes that organizations seeking long-term sustainability should integrate green principles into human resource policies and practices to improve environmental, social, and economic performance. The review also highlights the need for future research to examine GHRM across different sectors, organizational sizes, and national contexts, particularly through empirical and longitudinal studies that can provide stronger evidence of its long-term impact.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management, GHRM, Sustainable Organizational Performance, Green Innovation, Employee Green Behavior

Introduction

Sustainability has become a central concern in contemporary organizational management because firms are increasingly expected to generate economic value while also protecting the environment and contributing positively to society. This expectation is reflected in global sustainability agendas that emphasize sustainable economic growth, decent work, responsible production, climate action, and institutional accountability.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8, for example, promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth together with productive employment and decent work, while sustainability reporting frameworks such as the GRI Standards encourage organizations to disclose their economic, environmental, and social impacts transparently. In this context, sustainability is no longer viewed only as an environmental compliance issue, but

as a strategic organizational capability that must be embedded into policies, operations, culture, leadership, and human resource systems.

The United Nations Global Compact also emphasizes that responsible business should be grounded in human rights, labour, environmental responsibility, and anti-corruption principles, which further strengthens the relevance of human resource management in sustainability transformation. Green Human Resource Management, commonly referred to as GHRM, has emerged as an important concept within sustainable management because it connects environmental responsibility with the everyday management of employees.

GHRM refers to the integration of environmental objectives into human resource practices such as recruitment, selection, training, performance appraisal, compensation, employee involvement, and organizational culture (Jamil et al., 2023; Tsymbaliuk et al., 2023; Afzal et al., 2023). Earlier studies positioned GHRM as a response to the need for organizations to align people management with environmental management systems, while later studies expanded the discussion toward innovation, competitive advantage, employee green behaviour, and sustainable performance.

The growing body of research shows that sustainability cannot be achieved only through technology, regulation, or environmental reporting; it also depends on how employees are selected, trained, motivated, evaluated, and empowered to act in environmentally responsible ways. The strategic relevance of GHRM lies in its ability to transform sustainability from a formal corporate agenda into daily organizational behaviour. Green recruitment and selection help organizations attract individuals whose values are compatible with environmental responsibility, while green training develops the knowledge and skills employees need to reduce waste, conserve resources, and participate in environmental initiatives (Paillé, 2022; Jamil et al., 2023; Postema, 2025).

Green performance management links environmental goals with employee evaluation, and green rewards encourage employees to participate actively in sustainability practices. Recent empirical evidence also suggests that green rewards and green training may have particularly strong effects on organizational performance because they directly influence employee motivation and capability. A 2025 study in Bahrain's retail sector found that GHRM practices explained 40.8% of the variance in organizational performance, with green rewards and green training showing notable positive effects.

The link between GHRM and sustainable organizational performance is increasingly examined through the triple bottom line perspective, which views performance as a balance between economic, environmental, and social outcomes (Ahmad et al., 2025; Babu et al., 2026). From this perspective, sustainable performance is not limited to profitability or productivity; it also includes environmental performance, employee well-being, organizational legitimacy, innovation capacity, social responsibility, and long-term resilience.

GHRM contributes to these outcomes by developing green human capital, strengthening employee commitment, encouraging pro-environmental behaviour, and supporting green innovation (Aftab & Veneziani, 2024; Shahbaz & Malik, 2026), for instance, found that green innovation mediates the relationship between GHRM and environmental performance, suggesting that GHRM may not always influence performance directly but may operate through organizational learning, innovation, and behavioural mechanisms. found that GHRM promotes green competitive advantage through green product and process innovation.

Existing literature also indicates that GHRM is strongly connected to employee-level psychological and behavioural processes. Employees are not passive recipients of sustainability policies; they interpret, enact, and reproduce these policies through their daily

work behaviour. Studies show that GHRM can shape psychological green climate, employee green values, green commitment, green creativity, and workplace pro-environmental behaviour (Jnaneswar, 2023; Naz et al., 2023; Younis & Hussain, 2023).

The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity perspective is often used to explain this process because GHRM develops employees' ability through training, strengthens motivation through rewards and appraisal, and creates opportunities through participation and empowerment. This means that GHRM does not merely introduce "green" policies into HR departments; it creates an organizational system in which employees are able, willing, and allowed to contribute to sustainability goals.

However, despite the rapid growth of GHRM research, the literature remains fragmented in several ways. Some studies focus on environmental performance, others examine organizational performance, green innovation, employee behaviour, or competitive advantage, while still others emphasize sectoral or regional contexts such as manufacturing, hospitality, higher education, healthcare, retail, and small and medium enterprises.

A recent systematic review notes that GHRM research related to sustainability has expanded over the past decade, but there is still a need to clarify trends, antecedents, implementation levels, and sustainability linkages. This fragmentation makes a literature review valuable because it can synthesize the main findings, identify dominant themes, clarify theoretical and practical connections, and explain how GHRM functions as a strategic driver of sustainable organizational performance.

Therefore, this literature review is important because it positions GHRM as a strategic bridge between human resource management and sustainable organizational performance. Rather than viewing HRM as an administrative function, this study understands HRM as a core mechanism through which organizations build sustainability-oriented capabilities, behaviours, and cultures.

By synthesizing existing studies, this review contributes to a clearer understanding of how green recruitment, green training, green performance management, green rewards, employee involvement, leadership, organizational culture, and green innovation collectively support sustainable performance. The review also highlights that GHRM is most effective when it is integrated into broader organizational strategy, supported by leadership commitment, aligned with sustainability goals, and translated into measurable practices that influence employees' daily behaviour and long-term organizational outcomes.

Research Outline and Subchapters

This study is organized as a literature review that examines Green Human Resource Management as a strategic driver of sustainable organizational performance. The structure begins with an introduction that explains the background of the study, the importance of sustainability in contemporary organizations, the emergence of GHRM, and the relevance of examining GHRM from a strategic performance perspective. The introduction also establishes the academic and practical importance of reviewing the literature on GHRM because existing studies are growing rapidly but remain dispersed across different sectors, theories, methods, and performance outcomes.

The second part presents the methodology of the literature review. This section explains the research design, sources of literature, search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, screening process, quality appraisal, data extraction, and synthesis procedure. Since the study is not based on primary field data, the methodology focuses on how published literature was identified, selected, evaluated, and interpreted. The purpose of this section is to show that the

review was conducted systematically, transparently, and logically, so that the findings are trustworthy and academically defensible.

The third part presents the results and discussion. This section synthesizes the reviewed literature into major themes, including the conceptual development of GHRM, the main dimensions of GHRM practices, the mechanisms through which GHRM influences employee behaviour, the relationship between GHRM and sustainable organizational performance, the mediating role of green innovation and organizational culture, and the contextual factors that strengthen or weaken GHRM effectiveness. The discussion does not merely summarize prior studies; it interprets their meaning, compares findings, identifies patterns, and explains the strategic implications for organizations.

The final part may present the conclusion and recommendations. This section summarizes the key insights of the literature review and emphasizes that GHRM should be understood as a strategic organizational capability rather than a symbolic environmental initiative. It may also suggest future research directions, such as the need for more longitudinal studies, cross-sector comparisons, developing-country perspectives, and stronger measurement of social and economic sustainability outcomes.

Methods

This study employed a literature review design to synthesize existing scholarly knowledge on Green Human Resource Management and its contribution to sustainable organizational performance. A literature review is appropriate for this study because the research does not aim to collect primary data from respondents, but to examine, compare, and interpret previous studies in order to build a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Literature review methodology is especially useful in business and management research because knowledge in these fields often develops across diverse disciplines, sectors, theories, and methodological traditions. Explains that literature reviews are increasingly important because business research is expanding rapidly and becoming fragmented, making systematic synthesis necessary to assess collective evidence and identify research gaps.

The review was designed as an integrative literature review with systematic elements. This means that the study combined structured search and selection procedures with thematic interpretation of the selected literature. The systematic element was used to improve transparency and reduce researcher bias, while the integrative element was used to allow conceptual interpretation across different types of studies. This approach is suitable because GHRM research includes conceptual papers, empirical studies, systematic reviews, bibliometric analyses, and sector-specific investigations. Systematic review principles can help produce a more reliable knowledge base by making review procedures explicit and transparent.

The literature search focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, review papers, and relevant scholarly publications discussing Green Human Resource Management, sustainable organizational performance, environmental performance, green innovation, employee green behaviour, organizational sustainability, and green competitive advantage. The main search terms used included “Green Human Resource Management,” “GHRM,” “sustainable organizational performance,” “environmental performance,” “green innovation,” “employee green behaviour,” “green HRM practices,” “organizational sustainability,” and “green competitive advantage.” These terms were combined using Boolean operators such as AND and OR to capture studies that directly connected GHRM with sustainability-related outcomes.

The inclusion criteria were established to ensure that the reviewed literature was relevant to the purpose of the study. Articles were included when they discussed GHRM as a central concept, examined at least one GHRM practice or dimension, linked GHRM with organizational,

environmental, social, economic, behavioural, or innovation-related outcomes, and were published in scholarly or academically credible sources. Priority was given to studies published from 2010 onward because GHRM became more clearly developed in the literature during this period, although foundational studies were also included where necessary. Studies were excluded when they discussed general HRM without a green or sustainability focus, addressed environmental management without any connection to human resource practices, lacked sufficient academic relevance, or were unrelated to organizational performance.

The screening process was carried out in stages. First, titles and abstracts were examined to determine whether the publications were relevant to the study topic. Second, the full texts or extended article information were reviewed to assess whether the articles directly addressed the relationship between GHRM and sustainability-related outcomes. Third, the selected studies were categorized according to their main focus, such as green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance management, green rewards, employee green behaviour, green innovation, environmental performance, sustainable performance, and organizational culture. PRISMA 2020 was used as a guiding reference for transparent reporting because it provides a structured checklist and flow-based logic for identifying, selecting, and reporting review evidence.

Data extraction was conducted by identifying the author, year of publication, research context, research design, theoretical perspective, GHRM dimensions, performance outcomes, mediating or moderating variables, and main findings of each study. This extraction process made it possible to compare studies systematically and identify recurring patterns across the literature. For example, some studies emphasized the role of green training and green rewards, while others highlighted green innovation, employee green behaviour, leadership, or organizational culture as mechanisms linking GHRM to performance.

The synthesis process used thematic analysis. The selected literature was grouped into major themes based on conceptual similarity and relevance to the study objective. These themes included the evolution of GHRM, core GHRM practices, employee-level mechanisms, organizational-level mechanisms, sustainable performance outcomes, and research gaps. Instead of treating each article separately, the synthesis compared findings across studies to develop a broader interpretation of how GHRM functions as a strategic driver of sustainable organizational performance. This method allowed the study to move beyond description and provide analytical discussion.

To improve the credibility of the review, the study considered the quality and relevance of the selected literature. Greater weight was given to peer-reviewed articles, highly cited foundational studies, recent systematic reviews, and empirical studies with clear research designs. However, conceptual studies were also considered important because they help explain the theoretical development of GHRM and its relationship with strategic HRM, environmental management, and sustainability. The review also considered recent studies to ensure that the discussion reflects current academic developments, especially because GHRM research has expanded significantly in recent years.

Results and Discussion

To strengthen the results and discussion, the synthesized findings of the reviewed literature are also presented in table form. The table summarizes the dominant themes identified from the literature, the main evidence supporting each theme, and the strategic meaning of each finding for sustainable organizational performance.

Table 1. Synthesis of Literature Review Findings on GHRM and Sustainable Organizational Performance

No.	Theme	Synthesized Result	Supporting Literature	Strategic Meaning for Sustainable Performance
1	Conceptual development of GHRM	GHRM has developed from a narrow environmental-support function into a strategic HRM approach that integrates environmental objectives into recruitment, training, appraisal, rewards, and employee involvement.	Jamil et al. (2023); Tsymbaliuk et al. (2023); Afzal et al. (2023)	This finding strengthens the argument that HRM functions as a strategic mechanism for embedding sustainability into organizational systems.
2	Green recruitment and selection	Green recruitment and selection help organizations attract candidates whose values, awareness, and competencies are aligned with environmental responsibility and sustainability-oriented work practices.	Paillé (2022); Jamil et al. (2023); Postema (2025)	Organizations can build green human capital from the beginning of the employment cycle, making sustainability easier to implement in daily operations.
3	Green training and development	Green training develops employees' environmental knowledge, technical skills, and awareness of resource efficiency, waste reduction, energy conservation, and sustainable work behaviour.	Aftab & Veneziani (2024); Jamil et al. (2023); Afzal et al. (2023)	Training increases employees' ability to participate in sustainability initiatives and supports continuous environmental improvement.
4	Green performance management and rewards	Performance appraisal and reward systems encourage employees to take green targets seriously by linking sustainability indicators with evaluation, recognition, and incentives.	Afzal et al. (2023); Shahbaz & Malik (2026); Sharif & Malik (2025)	These practices strengthen employee motivation and accountability, making sustainability measurable and behaviorally reinforced.
5	Employee green behaviour and psychological climate	GHRM shapes in-role and extra-role green behaviour by developing a psychological green climate, employee green commitment, and willingness to engage in	Li et al. (2023); Jnaneswar (2023); Naz et al. (2023)	Sustainability goals become visible in daily workplace behaviour, including saving resources, reducing waste, recycling, and

		pro-environmental actions.		suggesting green improvements.
6	Green innovation and competitive advantage	The reviewed studies indicate that GHRM can strengthen green innovation by encouraging employees to generate environmentally friendly ideas, processes, services, and products.	Sarmad et al. (2023); Sharif & Malik (2025); Younis & Hussain (2023)	Green innovation enables organizations to improve environmental performance while also supporting differentiation, competitiveness, and long-term resilience.
7	Sustainable organizational performance	Overall, the literature supports a positive link between GHRM and sustainable organizational performance through environmental performance, employee engagement, operational efficiency, organizational reputation, and long-term capability.	Aftab & Veneziani (2024); Ahmad Giran et al. (2025); Babu et al. (2026)	GHRM contributes to the triple bottom line by supporting environmental, social, and economic outcomes in an integrated manner.

Based on the synthesis in Table 1, the main result of this literature review is that GHRM influences sustainable organizational performance through an integrated chain of human resource practices and organizational mechanisms. Green recruitment and training mainly build employee ability, green performance management and rewards strengthen motivation, while employee involvement creates opportunities for participation. When these practices are supported by leadership and a green organizational culture, they encourage green behaviour and green innovation, which then contribute to environmental performance, social responsibility, operational efficiency, and long-term organizational competitiveness.

Conceptual Development of Green Human Resource Management

The reviewed literature shows that GHRM has developed from a narrow environmental management concern into a broader strategic human resource approach. Early discussions emphasized the role of HRM in supporting environmental management systems through employee training, awareness, communication, and participation. Over time, the concept expanded to include green recruitment, green selection, green performance appraisal, green compensation, green employee involvement, green leadership, and green organizational culture. This development indicates that GHRM is no longer limited to encouraging employees to save energy or reduce waste; it is now understood as a strategic system that aligns people management with sustainability objectives.

This conceptual development is important because it changes the position of HRM within sustainability strategy. Traditional environmental management often focuses on technology, compliance, production processes, and reporting. GHRM adds a people-centered dimension by emphasizing that environmental strategies require employee knowledge, motivation, commitment, and participation. Without employee involvement, sustainability policies may remain symbolic or disconnected from daily work practices. Therefore, the literature suggests

that GHRM acts as an internal mechanism that translates sustainability goals into employee behaviour and organizational routines.

The literature consistently identifies several core GHRM practices. Green recruitment and selection are used to attract and hire employees who possess environmental awareness or values compatible with sustainability. This practice helps organizations build a workforce that is more likely to support green initiatives. Green training and development are also central because employees need knowledge, technical skills, and behavioural guidance to contribute to environmental goals. Training may include waste reduction, energy conservation, environmental compliance, sustainable production, green service delivery, and climate-related awareness.

Green performance management links environmental objectives to employee evaluation. This practice makes sustainability measurable by integrating green indicators into performance appraisal systems. Green rewards and compensation motivate employees to participate in environmental initiatives by recognizing and rewarding green behaviour, innovation, or performance. Green employee involvement allows employees to contribute ideas, participate in sustainability teams, and support continuous improvement. Together, these practices create a coherent HR system that develops green ability, strengthens green motivation, and provides green opportunity.

The reviewed studies suggest that these practices are more effective when implemented as an integrated bundle rather than as isolated activities. For example, training may increase knowledge, but without rewards or managerial support, employees may not be motivated to apply what they have learned. Similarly, green recruitment may attract environmentally aware employees, but without a supportive organizational culture, their values may not translate into action. Therefore, the strategic value of GHRM depends on internal consistency among HR practices.

Mechanisms Linking GHRM to Sustainable Performance

The results of the literature review show that GHRM influences sustainable organizational performance through several mechanisms. The first mechanism is employee green behaviour. When employees are trained, motivated, and supported, they are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviour such as reducing resource use, preventing waste, supporting recycling, and suggesting environmental improvements. Li et al. (2023) found that GHRM affects both in-role and extra-role green behaviour through psychological green climate and employee green values. This indicates that GHRM works not only through formal job responsibilities but also through voluntary employee actions.

The second mechanism is green innovation. Several studies indicate that GHRM supports innovation by developing employee knowledge, encouraging creativity, and creating a culture that supports environmentally friendly ideas. Sharif & Malik (2025) found that green innovation mediates the influence of GHRM on environmental performance, meaning that GHRM may improve performance by enabling employees and organizations to create greener products, processes, and practices. Sarmad et al. (2023) similarly found that GHRM promotes green competitive advantage through green product and process innovation. This suggests that GHRM is not only a behavioural tool but also an innovation driver.

The third mechanism is organizational culture. GHRM can strengthen a green organizational culture by embedding sustainability values into recruitment, training, evaluation, rewards, communication, and leadership practices. A green culture makes environmental responsibility part of organizational identity rather than a temporary program. When employees perceive that the organization genuinely values sustainability, they are more likely to internalize green goals

and behave consistently with them. This is important because sustainable performance requires long-term cultural alignment, not only short-term environmental campaigns.

The reviewed literature generally supports the view that GHRM contributes positively to sustainable organizational performance. Environmental performance is the most frequently examined outcome, including reduced waste, improved resource efficiency, lower emissions, stronger environmental compliance, and better environmental reputation. However, the literature increasingly links GHRM to broader performance outcomes, including employee engagement, innovation, organizational reputation, operational efficiency, competitive advantage, and long-term financial performance.

The relationship between GHRM and performance is not always direct. Some studies show that GHRM improves performance through mediating variables such as green innovation, employee green behaviour, green commitment, green human capital, and organizational culture. This means that organizations should not expect GHRM practices to automatically produce sustainable performance unless those practices successfully influence employee attitudes, behaviour, and organizational capabilities. The evidence from Bahrain's retail sector, for example, shows that green recruitment, training, and rewards positively influence organizational performance, while green performance management may not always be significant depending on the context. This finding highlights the importance of implementation quality and contextual fit.

From a strategic perspective, GHRM supports sustainable performance by aligning human capital with sustainability goals. Employees become a source of green capability when they possess the knowledge, motivation, and opportunity to contribute to environmental and social objectives. This aligns with the resource-based view, which suggests that valuable, rare, inimitable, and well-organized internal resources can support competitive advantage. In the context of sustainability, green human capital, green culture, and green innovation can become strategic resources that competitors cannot easily copy.

Contextual Factors Affecting GHRM Effectiveness

The effectiveness of GHRM depends on several contextual factors. Leadership support is one of the most important factors because leaders provide direction, allocate resources, and signal whether sustainability is genuinely valued. Green transformational leadership can strengthen the impact of GHRM by inspiring employees to support environmental goals and by integrating sustainability into organizational vision. Organizational size, industry type, regulatory pressure, national culture, market expectations, and stakeholder demands may also influence how GHRM is implemented and how strongly it affects performance.

Sectoral differences are also important. Manufacturing organizations may emphasize waste reduction, energy efficiency, green supply chains, and process innovation, while service organizations may focus more on employee behaviour, customer-facing sustainability practices, green service delivery, and reputation. Higher education, healthcare, hospitality, and retail sectors each have different sustainability pressures, which means GHRM practices should be adapted to organizational context. This explains why some GHRM practices may be highly effective in one sector but less significant in another.

Although GHRM research has grown significantly, several gaps remain. First, much of the literature focuses on environmental performance, while social and economic dimensions of sustainable performance receive less attention. Since sustainable organizational performance includes environmental, social, and economic outcomes, future research should examine how GHRM affects employee well-being, inclusion, decent work, ethical behaviour, productivity, and long-term financial resilience.

Second, many studies use cross-sectional designs, which limits understanding of how GHRM influences performance over time. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine whether GHRM produces lasting sustainability outcomes or only short-term behavioural improvements. Third, many studies rely on self-reported survey data, which may create bias. Future research could combine survey data with objective sustainability indicators, financial data, environmental reports, or case-based evidence.

Fourth, more research is needed in developing economies and underrepresented sectors. GHRM implementation may differ across countries because of differences in regulation, institutional pressure, labour markets, organizational culture, and sustainability awareness. Finally, future research should examine the possible negative or unintended effects of GHRM, such as greenwashing, employee pressure, symbolic implementation, or inconsistency between stated sustainability values and actual HR practices.

Conclusion

This literature review shows that Green Human Resource Management is a strategic driver of sustainable organizational performance because it connects sustainability goals with employee behaviour, organizational culture, and long-term capability. Through green recruitment, training, performance management, rewards, and employee involvement, organizations can develop environmentally aware employees who support green innovation, resource efficiency, and responsible business practices. The review also indicates that GHRM is most effective when it is integrated into organizational strategy and supported by leadership commitment. Therefore, GHRM should not be viewed merely as an administrative HR practice, but as an essential approach for achieving environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

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