Green Human Resource Management and Organizational Sustainability: The Mediating Role of Employee Pro-Environmental Behavior in Manufacturing Firms of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices and organizational sustainability in manufacturing firms in Pakistan, with employee pro-environmental behavior serving as a mediating mechanism. The study focuses on green recruitment and selection, green training and development, and green performance appraisal as key GHRM practices influencing sustainability outcomes. Drawing on the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, the study posits that environmentally oriented HR practices build valuable human capital that encourages pro-environmental behavior among employees, thereby enhancing organizational sustainability. Data were collected from 280 HR professionals and line managers using a structured questionnaire, and the proposed relationships were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that GHRM practices significantly and positively influence employee pro-environmental behavior, which in turn has a significant positive effect on organizational sustainability. The study contributes to the sustainability and human resource management literature by clarifying the behavioral pathway through which GHRM practices promote sustainable outcomes in a developing-country context.

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1.0 Introduction

Sustainability has become a very essential strategic issue of organizations in the world, especially in the manufacturing sectors where consumption of resources and the influence on the environment are high priorities. The increased focus on corporate social responsibility, environmental policies, as well as the expectations of all stakeholders, has compelled the involvement of ecological objectives in organizational activities. In this respect, Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has also been highlighted as one of the strategic initiatives geared to integrate sustainability in the human capital process, such as recruitment, training, development, and performance management. By ensuring the HR practices are aligned to the environmental goals, the firms are likely to develop a workforce that takes part in environmentally friendly activities and thus becomes part of the overall organizational sustainability goals (Singh, Ravesangar, Narayanan, & Singh, 2024). With manufacturing industries being a significant part of the economic process of developing economies, including Pakistan, the implementation of environmentally friendly HR practices is not only a compliance measure, but a strategic tool of long-term competitiveness and sustainability as well (Bohio, Shaikh, Amin, & Naeem, 2025).

Ecofriendly behavior of employees is a highly important mechanism where the GHRM practices can impact on the sustainability of an organization. This conduct involves the personal activities which help to conserve the environment such as energy saving activities, waste minimization and involvement to the sustainability programs. Although other studies have demonstrated the direct effect of the GHRM on the organizational performance, the behavioral channels through which the practices are translated into sustainable outputs have not been fully examined and this is especially so in the emerging economies. The interaction between the green recruitment, training and performance appraisal with the pro-environmental behavior of the employees can be conceptualized in relation to the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory that assumes that human capital is a strategic resource that can create competitive advantage (Sahan, Jaaffar, & Osabohien, 2025). HR practices that are environmentally oriented positively influence knowledge, skills and attitudes of employees so that they can behave in a manner that is geared towards the ecological sustainability thereby closing the gap between the strategic HR interventions and the definite organizational performances (Maheshwari, Kaur, & Renwick, 2024).

The conceptualisation of Green Human Resource Management presented in this study consists of three main practices as follows; green recruitment and selection, which involves attracting individuals that have values of environmental stewardship; green training and development, that involves developing the employees with the knowledge and competencies required to manage the environment; and green performance appraisal, which is the process of evaluating and rewarding individuals that demonstrate environmental stewardship-focused values. Organizational sustainability can be defined as the ability of the firm to sustain economic, social and environmental performance with time in a manner that ensures long term viability with the least ecological impact (Zhu, Du, Shahzad, & Wattoo, 2022). Employee pro-environmental behavior is an intermediate variable, which converts the strategic intentions of GHRM into executable practices that assist in supporting the sustainability. In theory, the correlation between

these variables implies that GHRM practices have a positive impact on employee pro-environmental behavior, which, consequently, leads to organizational sustainability. This conceptual connection is based on RBV, where human capital, as a result of strategic HR intervention, is a distinctive and valuable resource towards gaining sustainable competitive advantage (Bindeeba, Tukamushaba, Bakashaba, & Atuhaire, 2025).

Although sustainable human resource practices have gained more attention, there is still a lack of empirical studies that investigate the behavioral processes that mediate translation of GHRM into organizational sustainability especially in Pakistani manufacturing companies. The prevailing literature has been based mostly on the Western or developed-world context, which has restricted the scope of its application in the developing world where resource availability, regulations and organizational culture gives unique challenges. Moreover, albeit some research has investigated the direct impact of GHRM on environmental performance, the mediating capacity of employee pro-environmental behavior has been given little focus thus creating an illusion of the lack of knowledge on how HR practices can be effectively used to influence employees to engage in sustainability-oriented behavior (Gopalakrishna Pillai, Arasli, Haldorai, & Rahman, 2025). It is important to fill these gaps and create context-specific insights which can be used in theory and practice.

The given research problem is especially relevant to the case of the manufacturing industry in Pakistan where the processes of environmental degradation, poor use of resources and pressures of regulatory compliance require a sustainable approach to operations. The companies are also confronted with a twofold challenge to improve economic performance and at the same time to satisfy social and ecological expectations which implies demand on an integrated approach correlating human resource practices with environmental performance. The relevance of this paper is the possibility to present actionable knowledge on how GHRM practices may support employee behaviors that will help organizations to be sustainable. The study makes a contribution to the strategic HRM and sustainability body of literature and provides practical advice to managers interested in integrating environmental goals in HR practices by explaining the mediating power of pro-environmental behavior. Finally, the clarity of these relationships can assist organizations to develop a work force that can sustain it long term, which will improve organizational resilience, competitiveness and social legitimacy.

2.0 Literature Review

This paper is theoretically grounded on the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm that proclaims that sustainable competitive advantage is achieved through the firm having valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable resources, including human capital. In the framework of the Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), the employees are one of the most important strategic resources, their knowledge, skills, and attitudes can be molded into forms beneficial to the organization sustainability. According to RBV, organizations, by strategically investing in green based HR practices, including: green recruitment, green training and development and green performance appraisal, develop a non-copyable human capital that would develop pro-environmental behaviors (VERMA & SURI, 2025). By integrating the environmental goals in the

HR processes, the firms do not only transform the employees behaviours into the organizational goals, but also establish a sustainable resource base that leads to the long term ecological, economic and social sustainability (Madero-Gómez, Rubio Leal, Olivas-Luján, & Yusliza, 2023).

The interrelationships between GHRM practices, employee pro-environmental behaviour, and sustainability of organisations have been progressively studied empirically. It has been found out that green recruitment helps tie up people with environmentally sensitive principles, which is linked to increased participation in sustainability programs. The same scenario can be applied to green training programs, which also improve employees knowledge and competencies in environmentally friendly practices, which are transferred into behavioural changes that have a positive effect on organizational performance. Green performance appraisal also strengthens sustainable practices by associating the rewards and recognition with sustainable business practices that are environmentally friendly, which makes sustainability a part of organizational culture (Aggarwal & Agarwala, 2023). As the recent research in manufacturing and service industries of the developing nations has shown, GHRM practices do not just advance the environmental compliance, operational efficiency, but the reputation of the firm and its social legitimacy, which emphasizes their multidimensional usefulness. In addition, employee pro-environmental behavior has always been regarded as a decisive mediating factor that can affect sustainability outcomes in the relationship between GHRM and the latter, which highlights the significance of ensuring that HR strategies become evident and practical (Pham & Truong, 2025).

There are still some gaps in the context of the increasing body of literature. The bulk of research has been carried out in developed nations, which restricts the externalities of the results to emerging economies where the organizational culture, regulatory strictness, and access to resources vary considerably. Empirical findings on behavioral mechanisms by which the GHRM practices contribute to sustainability among Pakistani-based manufacturing firms are limited, as the sector has a high environmental footprint and is also experiencing changes in human resource practices (Gupta, Sinha, & Bhal, 2024). Moreover, although research has studied individual GHRM practices, there is a lack of studies that have incorporated green practices on recruitment, training, and performance appraisal into a whole framework. The mediating effect of employee pro-environmental behavior has not been thoroughly investigated, especially as regards to its capacity to convert HR interventions into quantifiable organizational sustainability results, and this is an important gap that needs to be filled through research (Christina, Alamelu, & Nigama, 2025).

Based on this theoretical and empirical premise, the current research hypothesizes that the practice of Green Human Resource Management has a positive impact on employee pro-environmental behavior which subsequently translates to organizational sustainability. In particular, it is anticipated that green recruitment and selection will help bring and maintain employees with high environmental values and eventually lead to behaviors that might help achieve the goal of sustainability. It is expected that green training and development will improve the level of knowledge and skills among employees to adopt eco-friendly practices that will support the environmentally responsible behaviors in the organization. It is assumed that green

performance appraisal will serve as a motivating and recognition factor of such behavior and will consolidate the connection between personal activity and organizational performance (Fawehinmi, Yusliza, Mohamad, Noor Faezah, & Muhammad, 2020). Therefore, the mediating mechanism is that employee pro-environmental behavior will help to translate the impact of GHRM practices into sustainable organizational performance. The study is based on these linkages as follows: GHRM practices have a positive effect on employee pro-environmental behavior, employee pro-environmental behavior has a positive effect on organizational sustainability, and employee pro-environmental behavior acts as a mediator between GHRM practices and organizational sustainability (Tessema, Yesilada, & Aghaei, 2025).

3.0 Methodology

The current research was based on quantitative research design to investigate the connection between Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practice and organizational sustainability with an employee pro-environmental behavior as an intermediary variable in manufacturing companies in Pakistan. The research had a basis of positivist philosophy of research, where objectivity is important, where empirical measurement and testing of hypotheses are vital in determining the causal relationship existing between variables. The approach of following this philosophy enabled the ability to systematically gather and analyze the data statistically and guarantee the credibility and externalizability of the results. The study design was cross-sectional, which means that the data were collected at one moment and the current perceptions and behaviours of the employees regarding the environmentally oriented HR practices as well as their influence on the sustainability results were evaluated.

The study population was HR professionals, line managers and employees of manufacturing firms in the major industrial cities of Pakistan such as Lahore, Faisalabad, Karachi and Islamabad. The selection of these participants is due to the fact that they are directly concerned with, or placed in the path of HR practices and sustainability initiatives in organizations. Given the breadth of the manufacturing industry and resource available, 280 respondents were picked to collect the data. In the research, a purposive sampling method was used to make sure that the respondents had the proper knowledge and experience in respect of organizational sustainability and GHRM practices. Such a non-probability method of selection was considered suitable because of the specificity of the targeted respondents since it provided the opportunity to include all individuals capable of giving meaningful and informed feedback on the constructs being investigated.

The structured questionnaire, which was created on the basis of the validated scales available in the existing literature, was used to collect the data about the green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance appraisal, and employee pro-environmental behavior and organizational sustainability. Both physical and electronic administration of the questionnaire was also used to maximize the number of responses as well as to cover the participants in various geographical areas. The five point Likert scale was used to determine the level of agreement or disagreement with statements to make perceptions, behaviors and attitudes to be measured quantitatively. Before the actual survey, a pilot run was done on 30 respondents to determine the instrument clarity, reliability and validity, and it was slightly modified to create

better understanding and consistency.

To analyze data, the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used with SmartPLS 4.0. This method was chosen as it is strong to operate complex models, small to medium number of samples and reflective and formative constructs. The analysis process involved evaluation of the measurement model on reliability and validity such as composite reliability, Cronbach alpha, average variance extracted and the discriminant validity based on the HTMT criterion. This was followed by analysis of the structural model to test the given hypothesized relationships, path coefficients, t-values, p-values and effect sizes (f2) were provided. The results of mediation analysis were used to conclude the indirect influence of GHRM practices on the sustainability of organization via the pro-environmental behavior of employees by means of bootstrapping procedures with 5, 000 resamples in order to guarantee the strength of the findings.

The ethical issues were followed to the letter during the research. The participants were given information about the aim of this study, told that their answers could be kept confidential and anonymous and the right to withdraw at any point without penalties. Nevertheless, an informed consent was provided before the collection of the data, and this study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards of social science studies. Precaution was observed to ensure that there was no coercion and the data was kept in a safe place so that an unauthorized person would not access it. Along with an appropriate research design, validated measurement tool, and strong data analysis methods, the study guaranteed the credibility, reliability, and ethical integrity of its findings, which offer valuable information on the role of GHRM practices in facilitating organizational sustainability via pro-environmental behavior of employees in Pakistani manufacturing firms.

4.0 Findings and Results
4.1 Reliability Analysis Table

Table 4.1 Reliability Analysis Table

Construct	Alpha Cronbach's	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE	Decision
Green Recruitment & Selection (GRS)	0.812	0.876	0.605	Reliable
Green Training & Development (GTD)	0.825	0.882	0.612	Reliable
Green Performance Appraisal (GPA)	0.798	0.857	0.589	Reliable
Employee Pro-Environmental Behavior (EPEB)	0.841	0.897	0.621	Reliable
Organizational Sustainability (OS)	0.864	0.912	0.658	Reliable

4.2 Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Table 4.2 Discriminant Validity

Construct	GRS	GTD	GPA	EPEB	OS
GRS	1				
GTD	0.684	1			
GPA	0.652	0.671	1		
EPEB	0.598	0.621	0.645	1	
OS	0.532	0.564	0.587	0.712	1

The discriminant validity comparison between the HTMT criterion implies that each of the constructs of the study is unique and measures different facets of the model. The correlations among the inter-constructs demonstrate moderate relations between Green Recruitment and Selection (GRS), Green Training and Development (GTD), Green Performance Appraisal (GPA), Employee Pro-Environmental Behavior (EPEB) and Organizational Sustainability (OS), the value is between 0.417 and 0.712. The highest correlation (0.712) is EPEB and OS with the latter indicating a strong theoretical dependency with the result of employee pro-environmental behavior having a significant impact on sustainability, although still below the 0.85 threshold, which proves that the constructs are not overlapping. Altogether, these findings provide sufficient levels of discriminant validity so that each construct measures different dimensions in the framework and underlines that the structural model is reliable enough to test a hypothesis.

4.3 Multicollinearity (VIF)

Table 4.3 Multicollinearity

Predictor	VIF	Decision
Green Recruitment & Selection (GRS)	1.842	No multicollinearity
Green Training & Development (GTD)	1.791	No multicollinearity
Green Performance Appraisal (GPA)	1.723	No multicollinearity

The multicollinearity test on the predictor variables shows that all independent constructs have low multicollinearity and therefore the structural model estimates are stable and reliable. The values of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of Green Recruitment and Selection (1.842), Green Training and Development (1.791), and Green Performance Appraisal (1.723) are considerably lower than the traditionally accepted ratio of 5, which indicates the absence of oversaturation of the relationships among the predictors. This means that every GHRM practice will explain differences in the pro-environmental behavior of employees and organizational sustainability in a unique way and the regression estimates will not be biased by the multicollinearity. This in turn validates the fact that the model can be used in structural equation modeling and that one is certain that the interpretation of the path coefficients and testing of hypothesized relationships is valid.

4.4 Model Fit Table (PLS-SEM)

Table 4.4 Model Fit Table

Fit Index	Value	Threshold	Decision
SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual)	0.065	< 0.08	Good fit
NFI (Normed Fit Index)	0.912	> 0.9	Acceptable fit
RMS_theta	0.112	< 0.12	Acceptable fit

The model fit test shows that the structural model has a good to adequate fit with the data used. The value of SRMR of 0.065 is lower than the suggested value of 0.08 indicating that there is a good approximate between the estimated and actual correlation in the model. The minimum value of 0.9 is much higher than the Normed Fit Index (NFI) of 0.912 and hence the model fits much better than a null or baseline model. Also, the RMS_theta of 0.112 is lower than the value of 0.12, which proves the acceptable fit of the model, in the form of the residual correlations between the reflective constructs. The combination of the above fit indices simply confirms the appropriateness of the proposed PLS-SEM model in testing hypotheses and conducting structural relationship studies.

4.5 Structural Equation Modeling (Path Coefficients)

Table 4.5 Structural Equation Modeling

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	f²	Decision
H1	GRS → EPEB	0.312	5.824	<0.001	0.112	Supported
H2	GTD → EPEB	0.347	6.231	<0.001	0.138	Supported
H3	GPA → EPEB	0.291	5.012	<0.001	0.118	Supported
H4	EPEB → OS	0.428	7.214	<0.001	0.176	Supported
H5	GRS → OS (direct)	0.198	3.126	0.002	0.065	Supported
H6	GTD → OS (direct)	0.212	3.451	0.001	0.072	Supported
H7	GPA → OS (direct)	0.176	2.854	0.004	0.054	Supported
H8	GRS → EPEB → OS (mediation)	0.134	4.012	<0.001	0.068	Partial Mediation
H9	GTD → EPEB → OS (mediation)	0.149	4.412	<0.001	0.074	Partial Mediation
H10	GPA → EPEB → OS (mediation)	0.124	3.724	<0.001	0.062	Partial Mediation

The findings of the structural model indicate that all the hypothesized relationships are statistically significant and they all are consistent with the theoretical assumptions, which prove

the strong position of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices in facilitating employee pro-environmental behavior and organizational sustainability. To be more precise, green recruitment and selection (b = 0.312, t = 5.824), green training and development (b = 0.347, t = 6.231), and green performance appraisal (b = 0.291, t = 5.012) positively and significantly affect employee pro-environmental behavior, which explains that the HR practices strategically designed have a positive and significant impact on shaping sustainable employee behavior. Respectively, employee pro-environmental behavior positively and significantly impacts organizational sustainability (b = 0.428, t = 7.214), which proves that behavioral engagement is a key channel through which HR strategies can be transformed into sustainability. The direct routes of GHRM practices to organizational sustainability are also important though with lower effect sizes, meaning that HR practices have a direct and indirect effect on organizational sustainability. The mediation analysis also indicates that the relationship between each GHRM practice and sustainable performance is partially mediated by employee pro-environmental behavior (b = 0.124 to 0.149, t -values exceeding 3.7), and hence the behavioral channel is also critical yet not the only avenue through which GHRM can impact sustainable performance. By and large, these results support the theoretical conceptualization through the Resource-Based View, which demonstrates how environmentally-driven HR activities help to develop human capital that can increase organizational sustainability in the long run.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The result of the research is good empirical evidence to support the beneficial effect of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices in influencing employee pro-environmental behavior and organizational sustainability in the manufacturing companies of Pakistan. Precisely, green recruitment and selection, green training and development, and green performance appraisal were identified to contribute largely to the engagement of employees in the involvement of environmentally responsible behaviors. This is similar to the Resource-Based View (RBV) that highlights the fact that human capital formed through strategically developed HR practices is a resource of value and inimitability that can create a competitive advantage that is sustainable. Recruiting staff who align with the organization's environmental principles, providing a training program and skills, and rewarding the ecologically-friendly performance, companies would develop an employee base, which will actively improve the sustainability goals. These findings highlight the fact that, beyond being symbolic, the incorporation of environmental aspects in HR processes is operationally effective, and represents strategic intention in terms of behavioral outcomes that can be measured.

The study also demonstrates the mediating critical importance of employee pro-environmental behavior in connecting the GHRM practices and organizational sustainability. Although the effects of GHRM practices on sustainability are direct, the mediation effects are found to be very high, which means that the environmentally oriented behaviors of employees represent a primary path in which the HR strategies are transformed into practical sustainability outcomes. By internalizing environmental values, employees tend to engage in energy-focused and waste reduction and organizational activities that preserve resources, which will improve the total ecological, social, and economic result. The results are especially useful when it comes to the

Pakistani manufacturing companies where the enforcement of regulations and the level of sustainability awareness are changing, indicating that behavioral mechanisms are critical in the operationalization of the environmental goals. The partial mediation effect also indicates that even though employee behavior is primary, GHRM practices might be relevant to the sustainability as well, via the organizational processes, policies and culture.

Finally, this paper confirms that GHRM practices are strategic resources that facilitate the sustainability of the organization, and employee pro-environmental behavior is a key behavioral channel. As the empirical findings testify, companies can help make their operations sustainable over the long term by incorporating environmental goals in the recruitment, training, and performance management procedures and promoting employee involvement in environmentally friendly activities. The current research adds to the body of knowledge by applying the concept of RBV to the development of HRM concept in a developing country to show that human capital enriched with environmental knowledge and competencies forms a source of competitive advantage. The results provide a good grounds to support the thesis statement that sustainability is a group action and action strategy, as opposed to being a managerial or regulatory directive.

Some of the recommendations that can be made on the results are to the managers and policymakers. Organizations need to actively incorporate green requirements in the recruitment and selection strategies to hire employees who believe in sustainability. The green training program must be created in such a way that the employees are constantly educated on improving their knowledge, competencies, and awareness on environmental practices, and instil a culture of sustainability. Reward systems and performance appraisal must also clearly identify and reward pro-environmental actions and this will help to reinforce engagement of employees towards sustainable activities. Organizations should also promote channels on involvement of employees into environmental programs like energy saving campaigns, waste minimization programs, and sustainability committees to enhance behavioral commitment and operationalization of sustainability objectives. Organizational commitment to ecological and social responsibility may be improved more by the policy frameworks that promote and facilitate GHRM adoption.

This study has some implications both in theory and in practice. Theoretically, it contributes to the literature on GHRM and sustainability by reportedly having employee pro-environmental behavior as a mediating variable between HR practices and organizational sustainability, thus operationalizing RBV in the environmental setting. In practical terms, the study offers practical information to managers who want to incorporate environmental purpose into HR systems and proves that long-term ecological, social, and economic consequences can be achieved through sustainable human capital development. To the policymakers, the findings determine the need to build sustainable HRM framework especially in the developing economies so that organizations do not only adhere to environmental rules but also develop behavioral change that can advance national and global sustainability objectives. Finally, the paper highlights that, strategically using human capital by environmentally oriented practices of HR can provide quantifiable changes in the organizational sustainability, competitive advantage, and social legitimacy.

Contribution

Hafiz Saad Khan: Problem Identification and Theoretical Framework

Muhammad Mubushar: Data Analysis, Supervision and Drafting

Seerat Fatima: Methodology and Revision

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest in this article's research, authorship,and publication.

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