

The Effect of Green Human Resource Management Practices on Firm Environmental Innovativeness in Malaysia: A Literature Review

Wu Hongfei*, Siti Noormi Alias, Ahmad Aizuddin Md Rami

Department of Professional Development and Continuing Education, Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Email: gs67099@student.upm.edu.my*, sitinoormi@upm.edu.my,
ahmadaizuddin@upm.edu.my

Abstract

Firm environmental innovativeness has attained increased importance particularly in the contemporary dynamical and competitive market. Companies have more competition than before today in the globalizing world. In the world today, most organizations are suffering the consequences of poor performance, low staff morale, and huge market competition due to poor or lack of effective innovative strategies. This study, through the lens of social learning theory, proposes that Green HRM practices contain recruitment, training, compensation, and performance assessment and their effect on firm environmental innovativeness.

Keywords

Firm environmental innovativeness, Social learning theory, Green HRM

Introduction

Background of the study

Firm environmental innovativeness has attained increased importance particularly in the contemporary dynamical and competitive market. Companies have more competition than before today in the globalizing world. Organizations need to possess innovative capacities to continue to face this increased competition and the rapidly changing environment. A new manifestation of innovation for organizations, which allows businesses to gain competitive advantage through innovative activities for themselves and society as a whole, is particularly necessary to meet environmental challenges (Gurău & Dana, 2018). Indeed, employees can

Submission: 15 October 2025; **Acceptance:** 4 December 2025 **Available online:** December 2025



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deliver these innovative capacities, whether related to processes or products. Hence, HRM is therefore crucial for the exertion of firm innovation (Kianto, Sáenz & Aramburu, 2017).

Many organizations, who have committed to environmental policy in order to drive their businesses towards the undefined aim of sustainability, have adopted the mantra of sustainable growth. Managers believe that environmental innovativeness is important to make enterprise sustainable (Gast, Gundolf & Cesinger, 2017). However, management cannot always be conscious of how new environmental concepts are promoted to help the organization meet sustainable environmental goals.

HRM practices are important environmental problem-solving resources for organizations (Bombiak & Marciniuk-Kluska, 2018). As an innovation, by definition, is referred to as creative ideas for individuals or teams, thus companies that want an innovative solution for enhancing their environmental performance need to develop effective structures to support the behavior of their employees. This may be possible by practicing Green HRM in an organization.

The term Green HRM has now become the buzzing word in the business field and, over time, is becoming more and more vital. This term is also embraced in the emerging research on environment studies since the awareness of innovation and technological sustainability is growing worldwide (Shen, Dumont & Deng, 2019). At present, Green HRM is not only an issue of environmental awareness but also of the economic and social wellbeing of both the organization and its staff. As a business approach, Green HRM emerges strongly together with other developments such as and Green spaces, Green banking, and Green finance, in the Green movement (Wagner, 2013).

Green HRM and its Significance

Green HRM is an articulate set of firm systemic practices inclusive of environment-related performance by (i) The selection of ideal applicants in accordance with environmental objectives (Jabbour & de Sousa Jabbour, 2016), (ii) provide Green skills and organizational opportunities to employees through Green training and involvement in Greening activities (Haddock-Millar et al., 2016), and (iii) enrich the motivation for contributing through compensation and environmental incentives to the Greening of the organization (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014).

Jiang, Lepak, Hu and Baer (2012) presented that Green HRM could results in an increased performance of Green employees in the workplace through the use of psychological and social transaction processes e.g. skill development and prospects for Green initiatives. Green HRM also could lead to changes in the performance of employees that go beyond Green behavior. These transformational changes will improve the innovativeness of a firm and would help in gaining a competitive edge.

Jackson et al., (2011) indicated that strategic integration of Green HRM has an effect on an organization to achieve environmental sustainability. Although organizations are in the consideration of 'Green', their acting Green' level may be dubious (Bangwal & Tiwari, 2015).

Jabbour (2011) highlighted its significance that manufacturing firms should systematically deliberate the configuration of HRM practices to put environmental management workers in control. He suggested that if environmental issues are not formally integrated into traditional HR practices, this can have a negative impact on team building, organizational culture, and innovative learning.

Furthermore, the report recommended that in the first place, the organizations must recruit potential candidates to meet the Green objectives of an organization (Figure 1). Once recruited, job descriptions are required to explain the environmental aspects of their task. At this level, sustainable development policies and Green targets need to be incorporated into the training function.

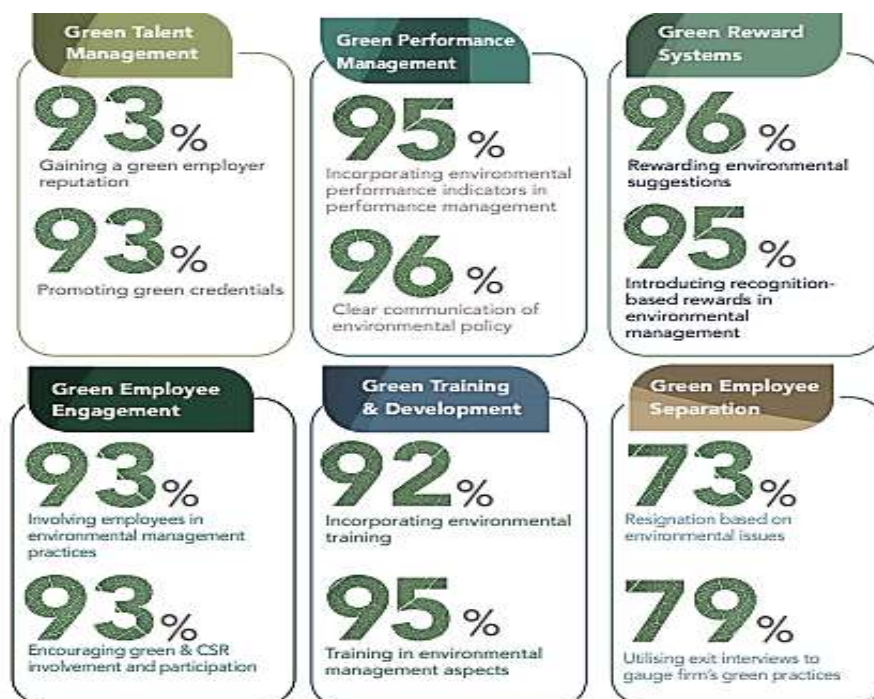


Figure 1:AIF Survey findings of Green HRM (2017)

Source: Chan (2017)

Green HRM is responsible for the establishment, recognition, and practice of Green workers, Green initiative, and its green objectives within HRM recruiting, recruitment, training, compensation, and growth and promotion processes for human capital companies (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014). It refers to strategies, procedures, and processes that make workers green for people, organizations, society, and nature.

The Importance of Green HRM

The 21st century is regarded as the century of multicultural and diverse emerging markets, which are scattered across the world (Singh et al., 2020). For several reasons, Green HRM has now become a necessity in organizations. One of them is the several harmful environmental

occurrences. Secondly, production firms use natural resources to manufacture materials or products, often contributing to industrial waste and environmental contamination. Third, the by-products of unsustainable use of natural resources that supply raw materials are deforestation, ecological instabilities, and global warming. (Sadhu et al., 2018). Hence, firms need to take initiatives with a focus on environment-friendly products and services. For this sake, the HRM department of an organization can play a vital role.

Green HRM constitutes a vital function for businesses and their success in the 21st-century competitive market. In the world today, most organizations are suffering the consequences of poor performance, low staff morale, and huge market competition due to poor or lack of effective innovative strategies (Chandrashekar & Mungila Hillemane, 2018). Green HRM practices by reaching the valuation of employees, which at best, may lead to innovation within an organization. Technological advancements after the industrial revolution demanded labor skills and made human capital an essential aspect of production. Human resources have become a feature of the whole company's workers that can improve an organization's innovation process. El-Kassar and Singh (2019) pointed to the importance of Green Human Resources for innovation management systems and found that human resources could stimulus organizational performance. Sourvinou and Filimonau (2018) stressed the significance of environmental knowledge of staff, their contribution to environment-related activities, training and development, and the motivation to successfully implement innovative environmental strategies. The negative environmental impacts may be minimized by environmental policies incorporated in organizational roles and procedures, industrial innovation, and enhanced environmental management systems. At an organizational level, it is also possible to deal with such concerns by shifting human capital criteria and integrating them into activities of HRM which are in line with the environmental policy and the market context (Zibarras & Coan, 2015).

Role of Green HRM on Firm Environmental Innovativeness

Innovation is a process involving dynamic and creative ideas or actions in a firm being created, adopted, and carried out (Yusof et al., 2014). From the following three perspectives, researchers study innovation: i) innovation in technology and management, ii) innovation in product and process, and iii) innovation radical and progressive. Improved products, services supplied and processes of production relate to technical innovation, while administrative innovation is a result of changes to organizational structure and administrative procedures through HRM (Jiang, Wang & Zhao, 2012). While product innovation denotes the new product and service delivery, whereas process innovation involves implementing a new manufacturing process or improving current processes (Laursen & Foss, 2003). To maintain financial growth momentum, the Malaysian Government needs to forge ahead with greater bold measures for the long-term benefit of Malaysians. SMEs are the most vigorous entities that contribute considerably to developing Malaysia's economy. Malaysian Government has to encourage entrepreneurs, to move towards an innovation-centered economy.

Many empirical studies have demonstrated how effective HRM practices maintain a competitive advantage, innovation, and business performance. Renwick, Redman and Maguire (2013) argued that innovation in technology is impacted by Green HRM that can lead to superior business performance. The positive relation between Green training and non-material incentives and technological innovation is also found in previous literature (Rajiani, MusA & Hardjono, 2016). Green HRM training is also the most directly linked to the product, process, and administrative innovation (El-Kassar & Singh, 2019). While Green performance assessment has been a positive influence on administrative innovation (Arulrajah, Opatha & Nawaratne, 2016). Given the importance of Green HRM practices, an organization can achieve superior innovation performance.

Green innovations and technologies are increasingly being implemented which shows that key drivers to support such activities in an organizational context are important to address. Recent studies include the view of Green products by stakeholders and demands in the global market for Green products and services as indicators to the successful implementation of organizational innovation strategy (Dangelico, 2017). But technological challenges are increasing, as firms are interested in introducing innovation and sustainable practices within and outside the organizations. HRM, especially Green HRM practices, address such challenges to achieve firms' environmental innovativeness.

Theoretical Underpinning

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

The relation between human capital and a firm's success, productivity, and creativity are not new and are focused on emerging HRM and Strategy literature (Barney, 1991; Takeuchi et al., 2007). The firm's resource-based views (RBV) show that competitive advantages and success rely on how companies utilize their important, rare, and hard-to-imitate strategic resources in a market environment (Barney, 1991; Bingham & Eisenhardt, 2008). Moreover, when the vital resources are precious and costly for the rivals to reproduce or replace them, the firm can sustain superior success and competitive advantage by utilizing its resources (Bingham & Eisenhardt, 2008).

While applying RBV to the HRM-innovative relation, prior literature considered that managers and employees constitute critical resources like any other business, the main aim of which is to create, encourage, and give opportunities for high job behavior for environmental innovation (Paillé et al., 2014). Several previous authors suggested that human resources meet the above RBV requirements for creating and promoting increased environmental creativity because human capital is habitually embedded in the multi-faceted welfare structures of companies and makes human capital sufficiently useful for a specific business as for its competitors in the markets (Takeuchi et al., 2007).

The RBV transforms human capital into the strategic advantage of companies through imaginative and inventive behavior. It stresses the role of human capital in establishing direct and efficient ties with the internal and external stakeholders of an organization (Cooperman & Brost, 2011). Therefore, strategic environmental planning depends on particular organizational skills and on the willingness of a company to use them routinely and to sustain them over time (Wernerfelt, 1984). Applied to the environment, achieving a higher level of internal environmental competency is a function of an organization is necessary environmental abilities e.g. pollution control (Darnall & Edwards, 2006; Bhupendra & Sangle, 2015). The reliability of these skills depends on the continuous improvement of an employee's internal operations (Sarkis et al., 2010).

A number of authors have applied the RBV to the field of HRM (Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001; Whitfield, 2019; Kaufman, 2015), but still, only a few who tested it in the field of Green HRM. The authors who applied in strategic HRM suggest that the knowledge, skills, and activities of the workforce are core resources that contribute to the firm's competitive advantage. In the same way, this study conceptualizes that Green recruitment and selection, Green training, Green compensation, and Green performance assessment are the primary resources that are supportive for the firm's environmental innovativeness. The significance of Green HRM in accomplishing the environmental innovativeness goal of an organization has received substantial attention in the RBV literature. As described by Holcomb et al. (2009) and Chesbrough, Lettl, and Ritter (2018), the way a firm's resources are created and deployed within organizations depends on the way in which they are generated by the use of resources. Thus, in the context of Green HRM, different Green practices are needed in order to create environmental innovation through human capital development.

Literature Review

Green HRM Practices

Previous scholars have argued that a spectrum that encompasses all practices – role analysis, job requirements, recruitment and selection, training and growth, success and evaluation, and incentives – is frequently studied in terms of how HRM can be greened (Yadav & Ramaswamy, 2020). As mentioned by Renwick et al. (2016), the recent studies are exploring green HR structures and individual workers' conduct, multi-level dynamism, and new theoretical direction. Green HRM has been presented and enhanced in many ways in past research, including Green HR procedures, large contextual problems, and the performance impact of Green HRM.

The studies have suggested that HRM is able to play an important part by hiring workers based on suitable requirements, improving training and employee capacity to navigate the workplace, and implement new performance monitoring and compensation programs in order to promote reforms to the Green HRM. According to Renwick et al. (2013), "Green HRM practices start at the point of entry of the employee and continue to the point of exit". In emerging markets

sustainable management of human resources, processes, and resources is no more a simple task and companies should always build a sustainable infrastructure to take advantage of the philosophical approach of “mind-share” and “market share” (El-Kassar & Singh, 2019).

General activities of HRM were integrated with Green aspects; thus in each HRM procedure, in order to prevent misunderstanding, the word 'Green' was introduced (Renwick et al. 2013). The point is that Green HRM has a central position and allows other mechanisms to sustain the competitive advantage in several different ways (Jabbour & de Sousa Jabbour, 2016). For example, in a study conducted by El-Kassar and Singh (2019), the direct influence of environmental performance on competitive edge for companies with lower human resources practice was found to be more significant. Furthermore, the findings show that companies with proven HR practices have a more integrated competitive advantage by incorporating better environmental innovation and business efficiency.

Guerci and his colleagues (2016) said that recruitment of green workers attracts skilled Green staff. Some researchers have offered the impact of some other Green HRM practices, such as Green compensation and Green performance assessment can help organizations to achieve sustainability through the improved process for the products and services. Tang and al. (2018) proposed that Green HR activities could promote the environmental elements of the social goals of organizations.

1. Green Recruitment and Selection

Green recruitment and selection means a paper-free, with minimally environmental impact hiring process. It demonstrates with the applicants seeking to recruit the company's unwavering dedication to the environment. Firms must concentrate on recruiting workers ready to take part in environmental protection activities (Renwick et al., 2013). These newly working workers, therefore, recognize the environmental ethos of a company and respect the environmental values (Wehrmeyer, 1996). In addition, the reputation of the firm as an efficient and effective green business increases the possibility of attracting quality workers as a “Green employer of choice” (Jackson et al., 2011).

Liu and Xie (2013) stressed that “organizations with Green image, environmental policy, and environmental performance could be published in their recruitment advertisement to attract the most suitable talents for their job vacancies”. The work description is inclusive of explanation and highlights the environmental aspect of the job, what the employee should expect from the job, and what expertise and skills the employee require to accomplish the environmental activities indicated (Renwick et al., 2013). In the Green recruitment process, which is in selecting the most suitable Green job opening applicants, the attractiveness of a pool of qualified environmental applicants is therefore of high importance.

Yusliza, Othman and Jabbour (2017) argued that job candidates would like to be encouraged to provide their voice to Greens recruitment and selection, demonstrating their preference for environmental concerns that would enable them to make their highest possible commitment in the recruitment process to the environmental management of their organization. Research

demonstrates that empowerment in the workplace has a huge effect on recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction factors. Bangwal and Tiwari (2015) argued to minimize the waste of paper, fuel usage, and interview travel by completing paper-free recruitment by means of digital methods such as online application forms, online interviews, or telephonic interviews. These procedures minimize the rate of deterioration of the ecosystem. Recruitment activities will help to enhance sustainability by making sure that new recruitment workers comprehend environmental values and culture very clearly.

Organizations should also understand the incorporation of environmental factors into job analysis and task design whether “the ideal candidate has environmental competencies that are useful to the firm as well as fulfilling the specific job criteria” (Wehrmeyer, 1996). The screening methods must also ensure that candidates with a high commitment to the environment are able to distinguish when compared with other applicants (Jabbour, Santos & Nagano, 2008). Siyambalapitiya et al. (2018) stressed that the “environmental signals should be alarmed at the early stages of the selection process”. Therefore, organizations may help improve their Green programs by recruiting and selecting environmentally aware workers, instead of investing in offering training to the current employees regarding environmental awareness.

2. Green Training

In order to attain significant advantages of human resource management, businesses pursuing sustainable growth have to assist workers to develop specialized skills and know-how in green issues which is referred to as Green training (Liu et al., 2020). Green training means “a type of training related to relevant environmental topics, which enables all staff to integrate the firm’s performance with environmental issues” (Teixeira et al., 2016). It is an ongoing educational process intended to upgrade the knowledge and skills of workers which is highly important for an organization as well as for employees for sustainable environmental growth. (Pinzone et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2020).

Organizations are focusing on green training to achieve certain desired outcomes including corporate green activities, green procurement, and green supply chain management. Green training has been significantly associated with particular desired outcomes of organizations, including corporate Green practices (Liu et al., 2020). Because of the possible value of aligning workers' career paths with corporate priorities (Chudzikowski et al. 2020), researchers concentrate on environmental innovativeness as one of the significant outcomes for employers (Pinzone et al., 2019).

Fernandez et al. (2003) emphasized the need for improved awareness and understanding about business methods and tools in environmental protection activities by organizations. As identified by some scholars, environmental awareness is, therefore, a prerequisite to solving environmental problems (Renwick et al., 2015). Besides, Green training can empower employees by highlighting the “value of environmental management; train them in working systems that conserve energy, reduce waste, and diffuse environmental awareness within the organization; and provide an opportunity to involve employees in environmental problem

solving” (Zoogah, 2011). The effectiveness of environmental management programs, therefore, requires the whole staff to be trained adequately. These training would be the fundamental to any successful activity of environmental management. Therefore, not only employees on work in environmental programs, which is regarded as a factor to enhance environmental efficiency, should all employees undergo environmental training (Jabbour & Santos, 2008).

Mishra (2017) asserted that the aim of HRM's Green Training and Development is to increase staff's understanding and expertise on environmental concerns, create a constructive approach to environmental issues, and enhance energy conservation and waste reduction skills. One of the most critical facets of human resources is environmental training. Bohdanowicz (2006) suggested that it is necessary for organizations to develop sustainability through awareness regarding the environment to all employees by conducting conferences, seminars, and workshops. Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) proposed that training programs are the strategies that concentrate on the development of creative and innovative ways to boost employees' abilities, skills, and attitudes. The key dimensions of Green HRM are environmental-based education, training, and development. It is very challenging to attain the target environmental performance of the enterprise without the appropriate awareness and training at the workplace.

Renwick, Redman, and Maguire (2013) declared that “training is widely seen in the literature as a key Green HRM intervention, not least in order to heighten staff awareness of the environmental impact of their organization’s activities to equip staff with core skills, such as how to collect relevant waste data and to raise the level of eco-literacy and environmental innovativeness for the manufacturing processes.” Well-trained and environmentally conscious workers at the frontline are suitable for recognizing and pursuing creative ways to support the organization as well as society with safe environments.

3. Green Compensation

Among Green HRM practices, “financial rewards may be one of the strongest motivators for inducing employees to participate in environmental improvement efforts” (Govindarajulu & Daily, 2004), and monetary incentives are “effective in motivating employees to generate eco-initiatives” (Ramus, 2002). Integration of environmental measures, particularly minimum regulations and principles for environmental performance pay, is a clear indicator of the success in all areas of an environmentally friendly business (Siyambalapitiya, Zhang & Liu, 2018). Another form of compensation is a bonus, which, as observed by Mandip (2012), is based on the “eco-performance” of employees.

Das (2016) used the financial and non-financial rewards for achievements of organizational sustainability in the business organization. Financial incentives that contribute to environmental protection may be awarded as an increase in pay, bonus, and cash incentive, while special leave, gifts to workers and their family members may be offered non-monetary rewards. The organizational sustainability of organizations is exceedingly reliant on the Green reward management system within a business organization. Providing incentives to encourage the employees of the organization to support flexible schedules and telecommuting, recycle

and waste management, and reduce long-distance business travel may consider as Green incentive schemes.

4. Green Performance Assessment

The topics covered in Green performance evaluation would include environmental incidents, the take-up of environmental responsibilities, and the success in communicating environmental concerns and company policy (Wehmeyer, 1996). Similarly, the same Green evaluation system was encouraged by Renwick et al. (2013). Haddock-Millar et al. (2016) also discussed the idea of a manager is responsible for environmental assessment.

Mishra (2017) stressed that the organizational performance appraisal strategy is helping to analyze an employee's current effectiveness, find gaps and start exploring improvisation measures and set future objectives. Other than this, performance management is considered to be one of the main practices in human resources to promote organizational environmental innovation. Green performance assessment can be substantial as when a person's behavior is assessed, its apparent value is increased and efforts are expanded to comply with that value. Therefore, it is facilitated to adopt green behaviors in the performance assessment system.

Das (2016) noted that it is very hard to ascertain employees' environmental performance within an organization. A system for performance assessment to complement Green HR practices is necessary for standardizing environment goals. The system of assessment can be started by integrating the performance evaluation to the roles and activities of the business description in order to attain the green targets. Measurement of employees' Green job performance is one of Green HRM's key tasks.

Kloot and Martin (2000) concluded that performance improvement is the mechanism by which workers improve their capabilities to effectively contribute to achieving the organizational targets effectively. The Green Trend is also affected in a possible beneficial direction by environmental management impacting global business strategies. Green monitoring is made up of sustainability considerations and the company's policies in a better way. It also focuses on the utilization of environmental liabilities. In their research, Zeng et al. (2011) found that environmental management is protected from damages as HR administrators incorporate environmental efficiency into Performance Management Processes.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Green HRM involves undertaking environmentally friendly efforts leading to greater efficiency, lower costs and improved engagement and retention of employees for the green goals of a firm. Green HR policies are focused on individual and collective green behavior functionality. These policies are developed with an aim to enhance a corporate culture that concerns environmental issues. Green HRM contributes to the environmental conduct of employees in a firm that can bring innovative production processes.

However, nowadays, the successful development and execution of green HRM practices are challenging for the firms due to the shifting working environment. So growing the companies' environmental innovation is inevitable and non-negligible by improving green HRM practices (Mousa & Othman, 2020). Previous researchers argued that the human capital of an organization significantly affects overall growth and sustainability. Accordingly, the green attitude and behavior of employees implemented by HRM can be helpful for bringing innovativeness for environmental concerns.

Organizations in the current era, due to the global climatic changes and natural resource scarcity, are in need to become innovative as well responsible for environmental sustainability. Employees, being integral internal resources, can play an important role to infuse environmental innovativeness through green innovative behaviors. For this sake, the present study suggested that green HRM practices should be aligned with the environmental strategy of the organization. In particular, SMEs should aspire by the green procedure in recruiting and selecting the right people with correct environmental values, to gain green skills, and to improve environment-related innovation. Afterward, HRM should make sure that when workers employ green skills and expertise at work their environmental efforts are documented, that their performance is recognized and rewarded for such green actions. This study also suggested that organizational innovative culture is supportive to achieve environmental innovativeness through green HRM practices.

Acknowledgment

The researcher acknowledged all individuals and organizations involved in this research for their guidance, feedback, and support throughout the research process. Their expertise was valuable in the development of this work. No funding for this study received, and the results have not been published in any other sources.

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