

## **The Effect of Green HRM Practices on Sustainability: Evidence from Manufacturing Companies in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

*There is a growing need for the incorporation of environmental management into human resource management (HRM) that is to practice Green HRM in research. Present study aims to determine the connection between the green human resource factors like management commitment, employee empowerment, feedback & review, rewards and exit with sustainability through environmental management systems implementation. Data were collected by circulating self-administered questionnaires to 354 (males= 262, females= 92) employees of thirteen leading manufacturing organizations in Pakistan. Quantitative research methodology and convenience sampling technique were used. Data have been analyzed through descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regressions using SPSS. Results prove a significant effect of all GHRM dimensions on sustainability, and assert that manufacturing firms in a developing country like Pakistan should foster the green element in its HRM practices.*

**Keywords:** Green human resource management, sustainability, management commitment, employee empowerment, feedback & review, rewards, exit, ISO 14001.

## I. Introduction

Over the time, sharp business development has complexed the criterion of living at the cost of natural environment. Thus, with regard to environmental sustainability and business structure, numerous researchers indicate a growing need for management theory (Gladwin *et al.*, 1995; Jennings and Zandbergen, 1995; Shrivastava, 1995; Stuart, 1995). Idea of sustainability in environmental literature has various meanings, all of which describe need for stability among businesses along with the protection of natural environment, so that future generation can prosper (Jennings and Zandbergen, 1995; Shrivastava, 1995). Sustainable development is indeed mostly identified by referring to this creation of a balance between Profit, Planet and People (benefits- known as the “Triple bottom line”). It is seen by many as increasingly essential to creating shareholder value, as investors and employees look to organizations to be good corporate citizens. Sustainability can be achieved by meeting the needs of both, employees and the community.

Likewise, researchers argue that organizations’ human resource function can be influential in facilitating a comprehensive approach for creating a culture of sustainability (Wirtenberg, Harmon, Russell, & Fairfield, 2007). This strategy involves implementing changes to different functions of HR, such as top management commitment, employee empowerment, rewards, employee exit etc, which can be practiced via the integration of environmental management into HRM (Renwick, 2008; Stringer, 2009). In this regard, green HRM as a strategic need is the emerging topic in academic and practical research, where employees should be inspired, empowered, and environmentally aware of greening in order to carry out green initiatives. Green HRM refers to policies which promote sustainable use of resources within organizations (Mathapati, 2013; Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014). It involves undertaking environment friendly initiatives resulting in greater efficiency, lower costs, and better employee engagement and retention (Jackson, Renwick, Jabbour, & Muller-Camen, 2011; Kumari, 2012; Verma, 2015).

Because of the importance of green HRM and sustainability concept, organizations are progressively concerned with their execution (Jacob, 2012), as due to ambiguity, implementation of business green management schemes need high level of industrial and executive expertise (Renwick *et al.*, 2008). Literature indicates that firms have been working on product innovation for environmental sustainability (Callenbach *et al.*, 1993). However, area of green HRM is largely ignored, where, scholars have only conceptually studied green HRM in isolation (Berrone & Gomez-Mejia, 2009; Jabbour, Santos, & Nagano, 2010; Massoud, Daily, & Bishop, 2008), and its application or empirical evidence is laid back (Sayed, 2015; González-Benito & González-Benito, 2006; Daily *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, in order to know that how companies can utilize green HRM practices for stability, present study revolves around three major objectives within the framework of a developing country; Pakistan.

- To study the effect of green human resource management practices on sustainability of manufacturing companies employees.
- Elaborate study is to be conducted on several green practices and processes that can be integrated in organizations for structure a green workplace
- Identify the effect of GHRM practices on sustainability in the presence of control variables like age, gender, designation, education and length of employment.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **A. EMS and ISO 14001**

International Organization of Standardization describes EMS as that component of the complete managing structure which incorporates managerial arrangement, development deeds, accountabilities, policies, dealings, practices and assets for developing, executing, attaining, re-evaluating as well as sustaining an environmental strategy (Zuckerman, 2000). EMS explains how an organization can handle and direct its managerial schemes (Krut and Gleckman, 1998).

### **B. Human Resource Factors in an EMS**

HRM system refers to “a set of distinct but interrelated activities, purposes, and procedures that are engaged at attracting, training, and sustaining an organization’s human resources” (Lado and Wilson, 1994). Whereas, green HR is the use of HRM policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within the business organizations (Verma, 2015). By adopting EMS, organizations can get tangible and intangible profits such as: (a) declining of operative expenses (Kitazawa & Sarkis, 2000), (b) reducing fines with regard to green matters (Hunt and Auster, 1990), (c) developing of company’s image (Miles and Covin, 2000), (d) improving dynamic procedures (Sushi and Shoal, 2004), (e) attaining and sustaining environmentally accountable customers (Ginsberg and Bloom, 2004). Literature indicates that organizations contributing in EMS identify the soft elements which may be the significant business features touching environmental procedures (e.g. Govindarajulu & Daily, 2004; Daily, et al. 2003, 2007).

### **C. Management Commitment and Sustainability**

Significance of management commitment for successful environmental management leading to organizational sustainability has been highlighted by numerous authors (Kitazawa & Sarkis, 2000; Wee & Quazi, 2005). They state that in order to maintain the successful implementation of environmental standards, cultural change is fundamental (Kitazawa & Sarkis, 2000). Top management’s commitment allows assurance of resources such as time, capital and workforce that in turn could help EMS implementation (Zutshi & Sohal, 2003; 2004). A solid part in the environmental management literature relates to the fact that efficient results are gained not just by making variations to assembly method, goods or raw substance, but also by altering the business values such that firms have extremely rooted standards, which maintain long-standing sustainability (Kitazawa and Sarkis 2000). Thus, first hypothesis is established as:

H1: Management commitment has a significant effect on sustainability.

### **D. Employee Empowerment and Sustainability**

Employee empowerment is “the value of giving employees both the capability and the dependability to take dynamic steps to highlight difficulties in the operational environment that effect quality or consumer service and to compact successfully with them” (Leitch *et al.*, 1995, p. 27). To execute the firm’s aim to be financially strong and ecologically accountable, empowered workers are not only preferable but also vital (Enander and Pannullo, 1990). Specifically, empowerment has been related to the assistance of individual views, self-discipline and problem handling abilities (Korukonda, et al., 1999). In this regard, environmental literature provides that authorized employees will have a huge influence on environmental development (Enander & Pannullo, 1990;

Wee & Quazi; 2005). On the other hand, when individuals contribute in the change processes, environmental strategies can be successfully applied (Kaur, 2011). Therefore, employee involvement (EI) as a result of their empowerment is essential to the successful function of EMS. In capacity to be winning and vital during the EMS implementation; empowerment of employees is a key dimension (Cheremisinoff & Haddadin, 2006). Hence, second hypothesis is formulated as:

H2: Employee empowerment has a significant effect on sustainability.

### **E. Feedback & Review and Sustainability**

Chinander (2001) emphasized that several environmental management programs remain unproductive to pressure the significance of feedback on green matters regardless of the importance of feedback on personnel and managerial performance. The scarcity of transparency may reduce employee contribution in environmental effort with regard to green objectives and green responsibilities (Ramus, 2001). Environmental audit is a further type of review and basis of feedback (Govindarajulu & Daily, 2004). Extent studies effectively recognize the support of feedback, and verify that with the trend of feedback, both managers and workers are well conscious of their duties and communication needs. Conclusively, they protect and improve the development of environmental management and green advancement in a business (Chinander, 2001; Cherian & Jacob, 2012). Therefore, third hypothesis is developed as:

H3: Feedback and review has a significant effect on sustainability.

### **F. Rewards and Sustainability**

In the shape of financial and non-financial rewards and appreciation awards, environmental rewards can be implemented (Daily, et al. 2003, 2007; Govindarajulu & Daily, 2004; Ramus, 2001; Ramus & Steger, 2000). It is recommended that if compensation system and green rewards are associated to the procedure of HRM, then a green system in business can be flourished. Managers can inspire the green performance among the employees through integrating features of green management in the reward program (Ahmad, 2015). Likewise, by linking the salary to eco-performance, a flexible salary component can be added to the reward system. For instance, while executing a green idea, a part of the investments that enlarged from its outcomes can be repaid back to the team or the worker who recommended the suggestion (Mandip, 2012). Research has exposed that compensation systems can inspire and support employees to be environmentally accountable (Patton & Daley, 1998). HRM has to play a fundamental role in making environment management realized in companies, as well as in taking the direction in executing Green HR procedures as component of the greater part (Prasad, 2013). In summary the literature recommend that organizations should confirm that suitable rewards system subsists to maintain and encourage required employee behaviours in the organization devoted towards achieving their sustainable environmental goals (Kaur, 2011). Therefore, fourth hypothesis is stated as:

H4: Rewards has a significant effect on sustainability.

### **G. Exit and Sustainability**

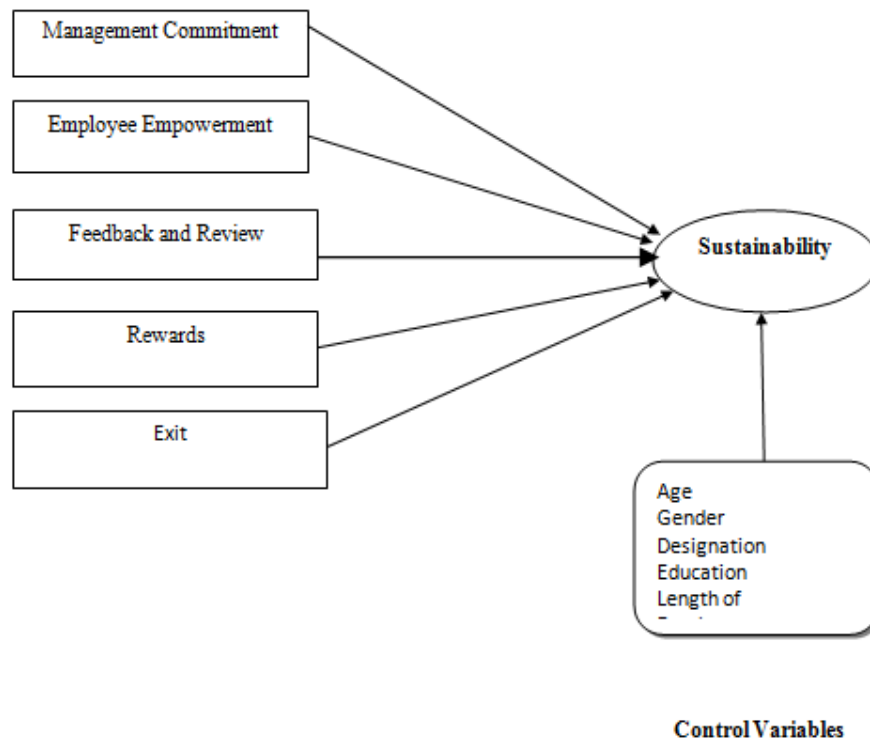
Regarding employee exits, where removal from office happens, then HR executives should find out the reason (Wehrmeyer, 1996: 15). Moreover, in firms the whistle-blowing green workers (that underline immoral acts) are seen like a threat, because there is no lawful safety for them. They could be discharged for violence of

privacy (Oates, 1996: 136). Exit interview and whistleblower accounts to gauge from greenness (Sayed, 2015). Thus, fifth hypothesis is:  
H5: Employee exit has a significant effect on sustainability.

### III. Methodology

Based upon the above discussed literature, our conceptual framework is demonstrated below in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework  
Factors of Green Human Resource Management**



#### A. Sampling and Procedure

This research has focused on employees working in firms manufacturing consumer supplies in Pakistan; such as food stuff, home care products, personal care products etc. Inhabitants of Pakistan offer an attractive market for these companies. Thus, most companies are large sized firms, having above 500 employees, and operate across the country. Using convenience sampling, thirteen ISO certified companies have been selected as sample based upon their environmental performance and sustainability. Convenient sampling method effectively signifies the features of target population and delivers the information in cost effective manners. Moreover, the preceding literature also supports the convenient sampling method (Elmayer, 2007; Caro, 2008). Furthermore, data was collected from employees of these firms after permission and support. Questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter to avoid any bias. Completion of data

collection took place in around nine weeks. 550 questionnaires were distributed and 405 responses were received. 51 questionnaires were dropped due to missing data and remaining 354 were used for final data analysis (response rate of 63%).

### B. Measurements

For measurement of variables, established questionnaire were retrieved. Several items were changed from their original scales to accommodate the present context of study. Nine items for management commitment, eight for employee empowerment, eight for feedback and review and eight items for rewards were used, They were adopted from (Kaur, 2011). Moreover, five items for employee exit were incorporated (Renwick, Redman & Maguire, 2008), whereas responses on sustainable business practices are measured through twenty one items (Raderbauer, 2011). All variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree* to 5=*strongly agree*).

### IV. Results and Discussion

Demographic characteristics such as age, gender, job title, educational level and length of employment were considered as control variables. Furthermore, all necessary tests for checking the linearity, normality, autocorrelation, Heteroskedasticity, detection of outliers and multicollinearity (Anderson, Sweeney and Williams, 1990) were conducted on data and were proved satisfactory for further analysis. We calculated the degree of multicollinearity among independent variables using both the tolerance value and the variance inflation factors (VIF). The tolerance values for all five independent variables (five components of GHRM) were greater than the cut-off point of 0.10 (Cohen, 2003), and VIF values between 1.1 and 1.4, which indicated the absence of any serious multicollinearity problem.

However, issue existed between feedback & review and rewards with correlation value 0.712. Thus, to get accurate output, step-wise regression (Motulsky, 2012) has been used to re-relate the variables by eliminating one of the two highly correlated variables (Table 3). Cronbach's alpha for management commitment, employee empowerment, feedback & review, rewards, exit and sustainability are  $\alpha=0.906$ ,  $\alpha=0.793$ ,  $\alpha=0.852$ ,  $\alpha=0.831$ ,  $\alpha=0.795$ ,  $\alpha=0.902$  respectively which show adequate reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Moreover, descriptive statistics and Demographic data of sample are shown below in Table 1:

**Table 1: Demographics Features of Sample (N=354)**

Characteristics of the respondents	Frequency	%age
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	262	74
Female	92	26
<b>Age</b>		
22-33 years	220	84.6
34-44 years	86	24.2
>45 years	48	13.7
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
Undergraduate	162	45.9

Masters	156	44.2
Postgraduate	22	6.2
Others	14	4.0
<b>Designation</b>		
HR officer	94	26.6
HR manager	65	18.4
HR accountant	42	11.9
Assistant HR	48	13.6
Operations manager	23	6.5
Internee HR	44	12.5
Recruitment officer	15	4.2
Director HR	9	2.5
Other	14	3.9

Correlation coefficients illustrated in Table 2 depict that management commitment and employee empowerment have moderate to weak relationship with sustainability, feedback & review and rewards have moderate relationship. Whereas, exit and sustainability has moderate to strong positive relationship. All variables are significant with p-value=0.000.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation**

Variables	MC	EE	FR	R	E	S
<b>MC</b>	1					
<b>EE</b>	-0.688	1				
<b>FR</b>	0.678	-0.637	1			
<b>R</b>	0.444	-0.583	0.712	1		
<b>E</b>	0.429	-0.459	0.592	0.656	1	
<b>S</b>	0.419	-0.368	0.500	0.495	0.587	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.000 level (2-tailed). N=354

#### **A. Impact of GHRM Practices on Sustainability**

For the measurement of impact, regression analysis has been carried out between each dimension of GHRM practices and sustainability. Overall contribution of GHRM practices on sustainability is 40%. In step-1 regression, statistics given in Table 4 show that provided the effect of demographic variables is controlled, management commitment positively influences sustainability (p-value <0.05), employee empowerment and rewards have a weak but significant positive impact on sustainability, and exit has a moderate to weak positive impact on sustainability at 100% confidence level. This proves that when employees are committed, empowered, are facilitated with appropriate compensation, and are given the opportunity to submit feedback leaving, they are more likely to work in favor of their firms, consequently, enhancing sustainability in manufacturing organizations. Similarly, in step-2 regression, it is shown that feedback and review also exerts positive impact on sustainability (p<0.05). This result proves all hypotheses (H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub>) of this study.

**Table 3: Empirical Findings Where Dependent Variable: Sustainability**

External factors	Regression Step-1		Regression Step-2	
	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
<b>(Constant)</b>		.367		.139
<b>Respondent's Age</b>	.099	.230	.087	.293
<b>Gender</b>	-.042	.398	-.042	.393
<b>Educational level</b>	-.057	.219	-.050	.278
<b>Length of Employment</b>	-.089	.257	-.088	.264
<b>Job Position</b>	-.022	.616	-.024	.575
<b>MC</b>	.211	.000	.144	.026
<b>EE</b>	.066	.306	.042	.504
<b>FR</b>	-	-	.165	.013
<b>R</b>	.165	.008	—	-
<b>E</b>	.420	.000	.449	.000

## V. Conclusion

This study in the light of management theory, has addressed the effect of GHRM practices on Sustainability of manufacturing companies in Pakistan. Development in retaining rate of worker, advance public image, and development in attracting better employees, improvement in efficiency and sustainability, decrease in ecological effect of the business, improved productivity and improved overall performance are major benefits of GHRM practices. Green HRM depends on the distinctive and recognizable patterns of green assessments and actions of HR managers (Jackson, Renwick, Jabbour, & Muller-Camen, 2011). Empirical analysis highlights that the significance of green HRM practices is dynamic to endorse employee confidence and this may help in arriving at a great deal of advantage for both the business and employees.

Findings from this research are not only helpful for the shareholders of the organization, but also for other individuals and society. This suggests that management organized practices and actions could have a significant influence on environmental sustainability (Daily, et al. 2003, 2007). The results support the arguments by (Daily, et al., 2007) that employees encouraged by feelings of empowerment should be expected to be more involved in the progress of the environment. Also corporations should deliver employees with persistent feedback regarding their influence and efficiency on environmental enhancement efforts (Chinander, 2001; Govindarajulu & Daily, 2004; Ramus 2001). As the rewards given to employees in any form depend upon their evaluated performance, therefore it is vital to show an up to the mark in-role performance in order to gain mutual advantages. Furthermore, environmentally aggressive behavior may constitute breach of agreement and possible ground for discharge (Nujhawan, 2014). Finally, this study makes a contribution to literature by testing a western tool in the context of Asia, where not many researches within this theoretical framework have focused upon.



### A. Limitations and Future Work

First, this study is cross-sectional in nature and has been conducted in one developing country (Pakistan); yet, this judgment about impact analysis may vary across countries and cultural orientations. Therefore, longitudinal studies may be carried out in future. Secondly, demographic traits were used as control variables in current study. Future researches may include them as the predictor variables. Theoretically, this study did not include all dimensions of GHRM. Moreover, other sampling techniques or instruments may be used to measure the same concept and individual or nationwide culture may be studied as a moderating tool between the said variables.

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