

Green HRM and hospitality industry: challenges and barriers in adopting environmentally friendly practices

Adopting
environmentally
friendly
practices

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Abstract

Purpose – The recent decade has described the role of HR practitioners as more strategic to advance in environmental management (EM), technology and change management competencies. The study aims to identify the HR professionals' changing strategies and challenges and barriers in sustainability performance (SP) through green HRM, which have become an emerging topic.

Design/methodology/approach – Data collection was conducted through six semi-structured face-to-face interviews with senior HR representatives through purposive sampling. The grounded theory (GT) method was applied, followed by an iterative process for codes and themes.

Findings – The results indicated the highly significant challenges and barriers (C&B) proposing a 5 × 4 framework in adopting GHRM practices. Examples of the challenges included (1) lack of knowledge, orientation and awareness; (2) corporate social responsibility as an integral part of the organization strategy; (3) environmental concerns internally required from top-bottom and bottom-top approach; (4) budget and cost that remain an issue for the top management, and; (5) HR department's responsibility to build competencies for their entire team.

Practical implications – The findings help the top management and policymakers maintain a balance between economic, environmental and social sustainability performance agendas. Furthermore, the environmental goals and values of the hotel are key ingredients in seeking the solution to environmental sustainability, which requires continuous training programs to enhance awareness at all levels.

Originality/value – The results are presented as future directions to enrich the literature and make significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge. Moreover, the research benefits the managers from the results intended in accomplishing sustainable development approaches.

Keywords GHRM, Grounded theory, Barriers, Challenges, HR factors, Sustainability, Hospitality industry

Paper type Research paper



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Introduction

The past decade has significantly proven that the changes in the Earth's climate have notable impacts and rapidly compromise the quality of life. Jackson *et al.* (2012) emphasized that

business activities have impacted environmental issues regardless of the business nature. Following that, [Betts et al. \(2015\)](#) suggested that these activities could be reduced through the corporate EM process. Similarly, [Yusliza et al. \(2019\)](#) described corporate environmental sustainability as the primary challenge in the organizations' responsibility for meeting environmental standards and being socially amenable. Furthermore, it was suggested that HRM practices have a crucial role for meeting the aforementioned challenges and the concept of green HRM (GHRM) was formulated. Several authors defined GHRM and unanimously agreed that it is the systematic and planned alignment of HRM practices with the objective of reducing the adverse effects of the operational activities of companies and promoting pro-environmental behavior (PEB) ([Haddock-Millar et al., 2016](#); [Jackson et al., 2011](#)). The GHRM has been proven to significantly reduce environmental degradation and predict several outcomes, such as SP ([Yong et al., 2022](#)), sustainable procurement ([Aragao and Jabbour, 2017](#)) and environmental performance (EP) ([Yong et al., 2022](#)). Although the importance of GHRM practices in reducing environmental degradation is significant, literature on antecedents of GHRM are scarce ([Farrukh et al., 2022](#)). Besides, past literature has shown that human activities mainly cause overconsumption, water waste and land and air pollution resulting in climate change ([Swim et al., 2011](#); [Gifford, 2011](#)).

The concern for environmental risk increased among other global risks during the last 10 years due to its high likelihood and severe impacts ([McLennan et al., 2022](#)). Therefore, environmental sustainability has become the utmost concern among policymakers, the public and governments ([Jones et al., 2016](#)) due to the exponential usage of natural resources for economic growth ([Lim, 2016](#)). Environmental degradation is also common in tourism due to its non-renewable resource consumption ([Rodríguez-Antón et al., 2012](#)). However, it has been proven that the tourism industry enhances local businesses and industries ([Arshad et al., 2018](#)). Specifically, the hospitality industry (HPI) is among the largest sectors where environmental and economic impacts are rising ([Manoj et al., 2020](#); [Sari and Nazli, 2020](#)). Moreover, [Yusoff et al. \(2020\)](#) indicated that HPI has been exerting 20.6 kilograms of CO₂ per night per hotel, producing one kilogram of waste per customer in a day and consuming 218 gallons of water for each room in a day. On the other hand, the HPI's contribution to the economy is also significant, which could be seen from instances including a 10.3% contribution to the global GDP and reduction of poverty by offering 333 million jobs globally ([World Travel & Tourism Council \(WTTC\), 2022](#)). Similarly, the HPI made a 2.9% contribution to the GDP of Pakistan in 2017 and is projected to have increased by over 5.8% per annum by 2028.

The Government of Pakistan's Clean Green Pakistan Movement (CGPM) initiative aims to address the issues, such as solid and liquid waste management, safe drinking water and total sanitation ([Usman et al., 2020](#); [World Bank, 2019](#)). Based on the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2013), 320.7 million tons of CO₂ emissions were recorded worldwide ([Zhang et al., 2021](#)) and Pakistan was recorded with 3.31% increase in CO₂ emission from 2016 (0.87 metric tons per capita) to 2018 (0.98 metric tons per capita) ([Baloch et al., 2018](#)). [Jabbour and Santos \(2008\)](#) highlighted the significance of HR approaches to integrate HRM and organizational sustainability to improve economic, environmental and social issues. The outcry by environmental experts and management scholars on organizations has caused this industry to acknowledge global concerns ([Zhu et al., 2016](#)). Several research works were conducted on GHRM and its strategic importance. It was concluded that SHRM focuses on adapting and integrating strategic needs across hierarchies ([Schuler, 1992](#)). The concept of GHRM is new and at the infancy stage ([Bahuguna et al., 2022](#); [Farrukh et al., 2022](#); [Yong et al., 2020](#)), while the trend in the tourism industry is increasing. This situation increases the environmental degradation required to develop a thorough understanding of implementation of GHRM practices in the HPI. Therefore, this study explored the C&B faced by HR professionals in adopting GHRM strategies and the implementation of GHRM practices in the hospitality industry to attain sustainable performance. Past literature on GHRM also highlighted the

importance of the factors that plays an integral role that help adopt and implement GHRM practices. In relation to this, the identified factors included strategic HR competencies (Yong and Mohd-Yusoff, 2016), green intellectual capital (Yong *et al.*, 2019b, 2022), top management commitment (TMC) (Yusliza *et al.*, 2019), HR business partner role and green employee empowerment (Yusliza *et al.*, 2017). However, the inconsistent results demonstrate a gap in the adoption of GHRM practices. For example, Yong and Mohd-Yusoff (2016) found an insignificant effect of a credible activist, a capability builder and a change champion on GHRM practices, which was contrary to the hypothesized relationship. Yong *et al.*'s (2019b) results were in contrast to the hypothesized relationship, in which green human capital and green relationship capital are insignificant predictors of GHRM.

Other studies exhibited varying results, which motivated the exploration of factors influencing GHRM in a separate context and extension of the literature on GHRM scholarships. Moreover, Farrukh *et al.* (2022) and Bahuguna *et al.* (2022) highlighted that most studies on GHRM addressed the output, while limited studies were conducted on the antecedents. Hence, the role of GHRM has gained more attention in the greening of organizations compared to the C&B faced by specialists (e.g. Farrukh *et al.*, 2022; Yusliza *et al.*, 2017). Thus, to answer the main research question of the C&B faced by HRM professionals, an understanding has been developed of the factors aiding the adoption of GHRM practices and qualitative methodology was recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018) for comprehensive explanation.

The need for the study

Past literature has applied various theories in the GHRM literature, such as the resource-based view (Yong *et al.*, 2020), Ability–Motivation–Opportunity theory (Fawehinmi *et al.*, 2020; Pinzone *et al.*, 2016), stakeholder theory (Yong *et al.*, 2022), the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Sawang and Kivits, 2014) and social exchange theory (Yusliza *et al.*, 2021). Following this, two schools of thought were presented: (1) with the antecedents of GHRM as the purpose, scholars have used stakeholder and institutional theories; (2) when the consequences of GHRM were the purpose, the studies tested the RBV theory. Therefore, focusing on the what and how phenomenon, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested the GT method to transform the experience or interpret phenomena through specific participants. While Creswell highlighted the limitation of the generalization in this method, integrating data and literature into the theory improved the comprehension of the phenomena. Hence, the studies on GHRM literature were lacking in terms of exploring the what and how phenomenon. The current study extended the literature by Bahuguna *et al.* (2022), Farrukh *et al.* (2022) and Yong *et al.* (2020) who acknowledged the need for qualitative studies. The research also enhanced the HPI's significant contribution to economies and reduction in environmental degradation.

Considering the urgent need for establishing a green HPI, past studies highlighted the significant benefits such as competitive advantage, cost savings, operational efficiency improvements and ecological responsibility through the support of EM policies of hotels (Moise *et al.*, 2021; Muisyo *et al.*, 2022). The role of GHRM actions was found to be significant in strengthening the green values and norms among the employees (Aboramadan and Karatepe, 2021; Hameed *et al.*, 2022; Yusliza *et al.*, 2021). However, the inconsistency and variances have proven the significant rationale for conducting this study. As a result, the function of GHRM actions in pursuing environmentally friendly hotel operations is critical in leveraging EP. The outcome would also aid the hospitality and tourism industry to reduce negative environmental impacts developed by non-renewable resources. This research would assist the top management and HR professionals in adopting GHRM practices in the HPI by considering C&B. In addition, this research offered a unique methodology using a grounded

method approach to build theory by identifying the C&B among the HR factors in adopting GHRM practices.

Justification could be made on the current study contribution: (1) It appears that no research was conducted through the GT approach; (2) The face-to-face interviews were performed to address the underpinning phenomena of SHRM conspiracy between flexibility and fit practices (Wright and Snell, 1998) for GHRM scholarships; (3) Ren *et al.* (2018) acknowledged the highest ranking of the Asia region in terms of pollution and environmental challenges at a large scale. Farrukh *et al.*'s (2022) qualitative study examining the driving forces for GHRM is highly needed in the current times. In a nutshell, the current study has improved the comprehension of the underlying mechanisms explaining the adopting factors of GHRM practices and their influence on environmentally friendly practices. Keeping in view the HPT's contribution to environmental degradation, the preservation of environmental degradation has been a critical problem (Zhu *et al.*, 2016). The need for GHRM practices in the hospitality sector was highlighted in Pakistan (Ahmed *et al.*, 2021; Umrani *et al.*, 2022) at an initial stage, including its importance in mitigating environmental degradation. Overall, these studies acknowledged the importance of GHRM practices in the hospitality sector as it aids the human capital in building the perception and involvement in eco-friendly behavior to boost EP.

The next section presents the literature review, the underpinning phenomena of SHRM, the knowledge gaps and the association between the SHRM basic phenomena and GHRM literature. The approach adopted in this research is illustrated, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

Literature review

GHRM aims to prevent pollution hazards by re-engineering the operational processes of organizations (Renwick *et al.*, 2013), which involves aligning environmental goals with strategic HRM dimensions (Jabbour, 2011). The GHRM agenda is increasing daily in an organization, making it a step towards attaining environmental sustainability (Haddock-Millar *et al.*, 2016) and sustainable development. Consequently, the GHRM holds critical strategic importance among other organizational strategies for a source of competitive advantage by reducing costs and increasing benefits. Past studies have proven that GHRM has a favorable outcome on organizational performance (Obeidat *et al.*, 2020), economic performance (Yong *et al.*, 2022), enabling of green culture (Muisyo *et al.*, 2022), EP (Obeidat *et al.*, 2020; Yusoff *et al.*, 2020) and social performance (Zaid *et al.*, 2018). It was also found that GHRM is important in green OC and environmental sustainability due to its prominent role in reducing the adverse effects of energy consumption and hazardous emissions (Doghan *et al.*, 2022). The growing literature on GHRM focused on quantifying the impacts of GHRM practices (green job analysis and description, green recruitment, green training, green performance management and green compensation) on various outcomes over the last decade. Specifically, GHRM was conceptualized to reduce the carbon footprint and implement a paperless approach, energy reduction, recycling, technology usage and waste management (Yusliza *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, Mishra (2017) stated that GHRM compelled the activities and goals challenging to implement as they involved changes. Notably, GHRM is helpful in environment protection through collective employee engagement (Pinzone *et al.*, 2016), while green training helps the initiation of green supply chain practices (Teixeira *et al.*, 2016), employees' PEB (Ain *et al.*, 2022; Farooq *et al.*, 2021; Foster *et al.*, 2022), green OCB (Öğretmenoğlu *et al.*, 2022) and green teams built for greening (Jabbour *et al.*, 2013). Yong and Mohd-Yusoff (2016) examined the SHRM competencies of HR professionals associated with the adoption of GHRM practices in the Malaysian manufacturing industry. However, scholars in GHRM research were yet to identify the factors of the adoption of GHRM practices

from the literature and quantify their impacts on GHRM practices. Accordingly, the RBV theory affirmed that: (1) strategic positioning is a predictor of the adoption of GHRM practices; (2) change champions support green analysis, and; (3) job descriptions and green rewards are essential as intangible resources. On the other hand, reliable activists, capability builders, HR innovators and integrators and technology proponents were found to be insignificant in adopting GHRM practices. [Yusliza et al. \(2017\)](#) highlighted the positive impacts of HR factors including workers' empowerment and the HRBP role in GHRM practices, while E-HRM had an insignificant effect on GHRM practices.

The GHRM literature emphasized that the successful implementation of any goal and mission statement depends on TMC ([Ren et al., 2022](#); [Yusliza et al., 2019](#)). Effective employment of EM programs is also related to CSR programs as [Yusliza et al. \(2019\)](#) demonstrated the positive association of TMC with GHRM practices. However, CSR was significantly associated with green analysis and job description among the GHRM practices, affirming that CSR and TMC as significant HR factors. Moreover, [Yong et al. \(2022\)](#) asserted that the green intellectual capital (GIC) of the organizations is inclined towards influencing the adoption of GHRM practices, collaborating further at the upstream and downstream levels and enhancing the sharing of knowledge that assists in the employment of GHRM practices. In [Yong et al.'s \(2019c\)](#) study, four semi-structured interviews suggested that stakeholder pressure, TMC, relative advantage and GIC are the possible factors of GHRM practices. Moreover, customer pressure is essential in adopting green hiring, training and participation and green performance handling and compensation. Similarly, [Haldorai et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Obeidat et al. \(2020\)](#) discovered that TMC and environmental orientation were positively related to GHRM practices. [Sawang and Kivits \(2014\)](#) study supported environmental-related attitudes, green resource readiness and internal and external subjective norms as the factors related to GHRM practices. Thus, the adoption of GHRM practices leads to the accomplishment of the SP agenda for the organizations ([Farrukh et al., 2022](#)).

Based on the previously highlighted literature, unboxing the black box has urged a review outside the GHRM literature and a broader view of SHRM literature for studying organizational behavior. Furthermore, individual actors in the HR department could elucidate an organization's processes, behavior and structure ([Rubel et al., 2017](#)). The SHRM theorists also suggested that HR practices and strategies should be aligned to increase an organization's effectiveness ([Wright and Boswell, 2002](#)). [Wright and Snell \(1998\)](#) stated that fit/flexibility aims to deploy appropriate HR practices through the lens of strategy by continuously scanning and analyzing the environment. Meanwhile, [Nadler and Tushman \(1980\)](#) described congruence or fit as the level of consistency of the demands, needs, goals, objectives, and/or structure of one factor with the importance of another element (p. 40). Consequently, [Wright and Snell \(1998\)](#) recommended that organizations become flexible and fit due to flexibility that allows them to exploit human resource skills and behavioral aspects to achieve a competitive advantage. Comparatively, the recent establishment of green agendas lacks the HR factors to adopt GHRM practices ([Farrukh et al., 2022](#); [Ren et al., 2018](#); [Yusliza et al., 2019](#)). Based on the above arguments, HR factors need to be dug out through the SHRM flexibility approach by scanning, analyzing and considering the environment.

The implementation of GHRM requires proper investigation of C&B from HR professionals in adopting GHRM practices to exhibit optimized and SP. In most cases, the studies on GHRM were lacking in adopting environmental scanning to identify the adopting factors. However, the C&B behind the adoption of GHRM practices across the HPI has not been systematically explored. Several pieces of evidence were provided about the effect of GHRM practices on individual-level results, especially in terms of employees' capability to enhance EP ([Cabral and Jabbour, 2020](#); [Kim et al., 2019](#)) and engagement and citizenship behavior ([Haddock-Millar et al., 2016](#); [Pham et al., 2020](#)). [Yeşiltaş et al. \(2022\)](#) asserted that the

need for GHRM practices is one of the essential aspects for the radical solutions towards greening the hotels. This research explored the C&B of adopting GHRM practices in the HPI.

Methods

To explore the C&B among the HR professionals in the HPI in adopting GHRM practices to attain sustainable performance, this study was designed as an interpretive exploratory study where the GT method was used (Glaser, 1992; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Straus and Corbin, 1990). The GT method was selected for three factors: the newness of the topic, the lack of research and theories about the antecedents in adopting GHRM practices, the “green” and “sustainability” concepts that were recognized as value-laden (Jabbour and Santos, 2008; Ren *et al.*, 2018; Yong *et al.*, 2019c) and the importance placed by the green management field on theory development (Farrukh *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, Farrukh *et al.* (2022) recommended the qualitative method to develop a crucial relation between the subject matter and the testing of hypotheses and the subsequent formal theorizing. According to the GT method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992), the iterative data collection and analysis procedures were performed through an inductive theoretical goal. In the subsequent rounds of the study, the literature was consulted to increase the understanding of the growing concepts and categories particularly after the core category had emerged. Literature and mental mapping were used to identify the main category from the themes (Giske and Artinian, 2007). The literature was used to make clarification of the data instead of defining or constraining the interpretation of it (Glaser, 1992).

Sampling frame

Limitation was placed on the number of possible information sources using purposive sampling. Several criteria were present: (1) the respondent is a senior HR manager at their hotel; (2) they have held a strategic role at the hotel for more than a year; (3) they are of any gender, education, experience, or age, and; (4) they are based in Rawalpindi/Islamabad to permit face-to-face interviews. Subsequently, senior managers were selected for their strategic decision-making in HR. Notably, these decisions were strategic due to their impact not only on the hotel's business, but also on the well-being of employees, stakeholders and society. Therefore, after the selection of 3-star hotels and above in the twin city Islamabad/Rawalpindi of Pakistan, Rodríguez-Antón *et al.* (2012) concluded that these hotels tended to implement EM practices compared to the low-ranked hotels. The HPI was identified as a significant harmful source to the environment after the intense emission of water, energy and toxicity into the air, water and soil (Yusoff *et al.*, 2020) and intense pressure from regulatory bodies to meet sustainability goals. The study conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews involving one manager from the HR department of each hotel to understand the C&B, adopt GHRM practices and achieve EP. The analysis enabled an understanding of where the C&B was faced by HR managers in adopting GHRM practices to enhance SP.

Data collection

The Pakistan Hotel Association's website was used to rank potential informants and assess their eligibility. A total of fourteen 3-star hotels and above were identified. Top HR managers at Rawalpindi/Islamabad hotels received invitation emails. Informants were chosen and data was collected based on gender, age, education level and professional experience to ensure a representative sample. This action was performed to achieve the theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which should lead to (1) dense development of attributes of categories; (2) integration of categories and attributes, and; (3) delimitation of the scope of the theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 58). Ultimately, six participants responded and consented to participate

after making follow-up calls. However, restriction was placed on the audio recording of the interviews. Therefore, transcription was performed on the detailed notes using the pen and paper technique. The collection of data comprising six semi-structured interviews with a senior representative of the HR department was conducted from January to July 2020. Despite the small sample size, the size was adequate compared to other studies on GHRM (e.g. [Haddock-Millar et al., 2016](#); [Jabbour et al., 2010](#); [Yong et al., 2019c](#)). Previous studies recognized the importance of the HR department, suggesting that they could play a significant role in forming and applying EM practices ([Bahuguna et al., 2022](#); [Yusliza et al., 2017](#)). Moreover, [Glaser \(1992\)](#) suggested that creativity is required for GT as it explores new ideas from the existing data and establishes new connections between conceptual ideas. Given the aim of GT to reduce the conceptual inadequacy of the theory through the alternative descriptions of the developed concepts, data were collected until this process was complete ([Glaser and Strauss, 1967](#); [Straus and Corbin, 1990](#)). Therefore, a multiple iteration process was performed to measure sample adequacy until data saturation was reached. Inductive thematic saturation was observed, as stated by [Saunders et al. \(2018\)](#). The researchers generated lower-order codes after conducting the first interview. In the next phase, a second interview was conducted using the iterative process, while the codes were generated from the interview data. The process was conducted until the last interview when no new information was recorded from the interview descriptions and no new code was generated. The process was confined to the level of analysis and found to be the most implicit. The content analysis method defined by [Cooper and Schindler \(2014\)](#) was applied to the participant's responses. Hotels in Rawalpindi/Islamabad surrounding the capital city of Pakistan were selected due to the presence of various NGOs and foreign embassies ([Javed and Hussain, 2017](#)), which increased the visitor ratio.

Semi-structured interviews

Six open-ended interviews were conducted to understand the C&B in the adoption of GHRM practices. An open-ended question highlighted the cognitive reactions and deep motivational reasons. Interviews took place through the interview guide for approximately 35–45 min. Although an interview guide was used, participants also expressed their views on related issues. Each hotel employed one representative, such as the HR director/Senior HR manager or HR manager, as a respondent for this study. The questions were organized into four lines of inquiry, namely (1) the background of the HR department, (2) understanding of HR manager on GHRM, (3) the C&B associated with the adoption of GHRM and (4) understanding of GHRM practices and their associations with EP. The interviews were conducted in English and transcription of interview notes was transcribed for further analysis. Moreover, in achieving the credibility of the research findings, the interview data were further triangulated with the sustainability information provided on hotels' websites to create coherence ([Farquhar, 2012](#); [Yin, 2014](#)). See the details in [supplementary file "Supplementary file.docx"](#).

Inclusion criteria

- (1) Each hotel had a minimum of 3-star hotels as low-ranked hotels compromised with essential features due to budget constraints ([Hudik, 2021](#); [Rodríguez-Antón et al., 2012](#));
- (2) Data were collected from senior HR personnel from each hotel that was actively involved in a strategic role ([Tanveer et al., 2022](#)), and;
- (3) The HR representative understood the GHRM practices.

Exclusion criteria

- (1) The study did not consider the differences between the samples with and without GHRM hotels.
- (2) The study was limited to the factors related to adopting the GHRM practices rather than measuring the relationship with each practice.

Data analysis

This study was based on the GT approach using three steps, as described by Gioia *et al.* (2013). In the initial step, categories for the first-order were identified from the data preserved during interviews concerning C&B in adopting GHRM practices. The first-ordered practices were classified under the second-order and further analytical dimensions. After each interview, the collected data were typed and sent to the interviewees, allowing them to check the data. After checking, substantive coding (Glaser, 1992) was used to examine the transcripts. Glaser and Holton (2004) recommended that substantive coding is performed line by line, sentence by sentence, or paragraph by paragraph based on the sense. However, when placing an event into a category, a continuous comparison was made with other events that were placed in identical or distinctive classifications (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Moreover, observation was made on the suitability of the incidents and categories. Observation was also made on the ideas emerging in every interview, followed by their comparison with those that were present in the interviews of the same round. The analysis of each interview round was compared to the analysis of the previous round. With consistent comparison, new ideas were identified, a comparison was made between categories and it was decided whether the ideas were adequate or required changes (Wastell, 2001). The analysis procedure along with the coding table is presented in more detail in a [supplementary online material file](#) (to meet the word limit of the journal).

Results

This study aims to determine the C&B faced by HR professionals in the adoption of GHRM practices, which involve complicated phenomena and require investigation related to the HPI's strategic operations. This section presents the results gathered from each interviewee on the C&B in adopting GHRM practices based on the table presented in [supplementary file II](#). The critical practices highlighted at the hotel and GHRM practice levels were demonstrated. The interviews indicated the limitation of the respondents' knowledge of GHRM and highlighted C&B as achievable agendas rather than failures. A relation between GHRM practices and SP was also established (See [Figure 1](#)).

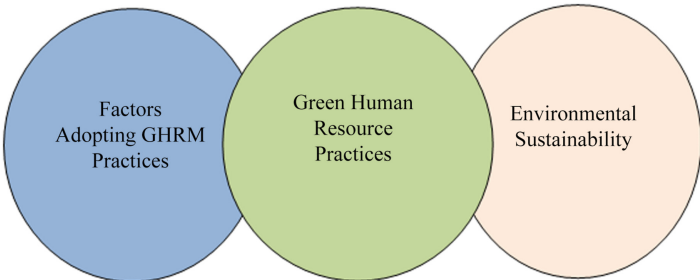


Figure 1.
Conceptual framework:
Hr factors, GHRM and
environmental
performance

Source(s): Author - Conceptual Framework

Barriers to the implementation of GHRM practices

Interviewees reported that the HPI lacked the knowledge, orientation and awareness of GHRM practices. These deficiencies were the significant barriers highlighted in the HPI by HR managers who needed to mitigate these barriers and build awareness and knowledge among the HPI members. Respondents agreed on the importance of knowledge and awareness of GHRM practices. Interviewees also reported on the difficulty in convincing and coordinating with top management on environmental sustainability issues. As highlighted by the participants, half of the implementation would be conducted successfully if top management support is available. In this case, an investment is required, including a change management process and justification to create a possibility. Interviewees highlighted that viewing a C&B is key to successful implementation. Regarding support, allocating resources is vital for HR managers, given that change requires funds for activities such as the adoption of new technology and green talent hunting. Top management support (TMS) was highlighted as support in allocating funds and empowerment. The data has proven that CSR is essential in adopting GHRM practices. The CSR should be a part of an organization's strategy, create guidelines for HR representatives and establish a CSR culture. The interviews also highlighted that organizational culture (OC) has a significant role in establishing and adopting GHRM practices. A supportive culture and a learning environment directed towards new procedures bring positivity to organizational operations. Additionally, OC also helps the hotel gain a competitive advantage in this dynamic environment. The interviews also highlighted that concern for environmental issues was required internally, which could be facilitated by top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top approaches.

Challenges to the adoption of GHRM practices

One challenge raised by the interviewees for the adoption of GHRM practices is the absence of organizational documentation and policies on SP. Documentation and policies are the relevant controls to integrate environmentally friendly practices in the HRM practices and help leverage GHRM practices to preserve established assets. The second challenge is the lack of budget as cost remains an issue for top management. Managing the transitions to technologies requires fixed assets and human capital investments. It also burdens basic operations as human intervention is required. The third challenge is empowerment, which also includes awareness, knowledge and funding; empowerment was required to provide freedom to perform tasks and be innovative. Lastly, the HR department had to build its competencies and teams. Building competencies helped accelerate the transition from traditional HR practices to GHRM or environmentally friendly practices. Additionally, building competencies was challenging as individuals require organizational support in monetary and non-monetary issues.

Consequences of GHRM practices

Interviewees showed positive results of the adoption of GHRM practices. For instance, hotels A and B stated that the HR department is the first point of contact for new and existing employees. Considering the new recruitment, including the required skill set of EM practices tends to be beneficial for attaining sustainability goals. Furthermore, it was found that HR was the source of first impressions (Hotel B) that positively impacted the organizational, employee and community outcomes (Hotel C). In terms of existing employees, the HR department was the primary source for communicating policies, job requirements and GHRM practices, particularly in training and rewarding sessions, which were critical roles (Hotel D). Operational activities were more prominent in greening the HPI. Hence, it was acknowledged that profitability is currently not the sole goal; protecting the environment has become the main agenda to comply with regulatory and stakeholder demand.

Discussion and conclusion

This research has assisted in solving the evolving need to study the C&B to GHRM (Farrukh *et al.*, 2022). While many studies relied on quantitative analysis (Farrukh *et al.*, 2022; Yong *et al.*, 2019a), these studies were unable to identify the relevant C&B to adopt GHRM practices due to their nature. According to Yong *et al.* (2019a), qualitative studies on GHRM are limited, with most being based on conceptual papers or literature reviews. Furthermore, this research has contributed to the existing body of knowledge by adopting the GT method to comprehend managerial implications and future avenues for scholars by highlighting the C&B to adopt GHRM practices. The findings have contributed to the investigation of C&B in adopting GHRM practices and their association with SP. The results identified the C&B to adopt GHRM practices for the prevention of environmental hazards and promote green practices inside the HPI. Insights were presented on adopting GHRM practices in a hotel's operation, which has been reconceptualized via environmentally friendly practices. It was also found that GHRM practices in Pakistan's hotels were in the early stages and facing C&B, including a lack of knowledge, orientation and awareness of GHRM practices which required further empirical testing. A green OC should be developed for successful implementation, while the environmental concerns benefit from top-bottom and bottom-top approaches. In this context, TMS plays a vital role, while CSR is integral to an organization's strategy to develop a green orientation. Such relationships are scarce in the literature.

This study is in line with past research on developing an internal environmental orientation. For example, Paillé *et al.* (2014) considered an internal environmental orientation key for successfully adopting environmentally friendly practices. They also suggested that EP can be achieved by overcoming inadequate organizational capabilities and internal environmental orientation. Similarly, Haddock-Millar *et al.* (2016) determined that awareness of restaurant staff and senior managers increases environmental sustainability. The literature also highlights that an efficient environmental value system is crucial for understanding environmental issues by enhancing environmental orientation through GHRM practices (Obeidat *et al.*, 2020). Despite previous research emphasizing the importance of environmental knowledge and awareness in green agendas (Fawehinmi *et al.*, 2022; Rubel *et al.*, 2021), these research works examined the relationship between environmental knowledge and awareness with workplace behavior; it should be further examined in developed and undeveloped countries. Similarly, Obeidat *et al.* (2020) established the association between environmental orientation and GHRM practices. The findings of this study highlighted the significance of environmental knowledge and awareness as a source of adoption factors identified as barriers, which could enhance literature on RBV theory limitation (Priem and Butler, 2001). Besides, the significant contribution that requires further exploration was highlighted, specifically in the hospitality and tourism industries among the developing economies. In the current study, interviewees noted that support from top management has a crucial function in adopting GHRM operations, particularly when the concept is new and implemented in developing or underdeveloped countries. An organization's economic situation plays an integral role in allocating funds and resources. The interviewees stated that it is crucial to convince top management and obtain support from them to achieve environmental objectives. In this regard, the literature also supports the current study findings. Scholars including Obeidat *et al.* (2020) and Steinbach *et al.* (2017) also found that TMS is a critical factor in helping an HR manager achieves EP objectives. Moreover, Yusliza *et al.* (2019) described the significance of TMC towards GHRM operations and strategy with a top-down approach as strategically essential. Furthermore, TMC is beneficial in participation or decision-making and enhances the role of monitoring and responsibility for environmental activities. Overall, based on the interviewees' observations, the literature highlighted the significant role of TMS in adopting GHRM practices. It was also emphasized that TMS was one of the barriers in terms of funds faced by the HR department in

adopting GHRM practices. This situation could be due to the limited resources and technological advances in developing countries which is yet to be investigated. These results were supported by [Yong et al. \(2019c\)](#). Similar limitations were highlighted by [Chan et al. \(2020\)](#), for the HPI despite its advantages. However, the importance of TMS was found to be crucial among the respondents.

The interviewees' third concern was that CSR is integral to an organization's strategy. The results suggested that the active CSR strategy helps managers adopt and implement GHRM practices and encourages environmentally friendly practices that increase EP. This finding was in line with the previous literature, considering that other studies highlighted that CSR is positively associated with green analysis and job description of job positions of GHRM practices ([Yusliza et al., 2019](#)). Studies also demonstrated that CSR and HRM are positively associated, improve employee morale and benefit organizational outcomes ([Jamali et al., 2015](#)). [Yusliza et al. \(2019\)](#) emphasized that sustainability is an important facet of business that helps transform traditional HRM practices into GHRM due to CSR strategies. The findings of this study determined CSR strategies as the barriers within the HPI, creating future opportunities to identify essential factors in developing economies such as Pakistan. The current study extended the literature by identifying the need to establish a green OC. According to the interviewees, green OC must be developed to implement green agendas with success. Their statements presented the belief that OC must be developed to support green agendas, help adopt and learn new procedures, which are beneficial for implementing green practices. Similarly, [Jabbour \(2011\)](#) found that OC is linked to EP. To illustrate, OC is well recognized among all variables as it tends to attain its goal. Based on interviews, [Pham et al. \(2019\)](#) revealed the differences between the green OC and non-green OC; hotels with a green culture are more active and committed in environmental-related issues compared to non-green hotels. Furthermore, [Jackson et al. \(2011\)](#) also emphasized OC as an indicator determining the success or failure of organizations' environmental programs. Subsequently, further research on the HR role is recommended to mitigate these barriers.

Another significant factor was identified; environmental concerns should be addressed by top-bottom and bottom-top approaches. The discussions revealed the interviewees' belief that if all employees at all levels including top management shared environmental concerns, environmental programs would be more easily implemented. Interviewees acknowledged the employees' agreement that these issues are critical when environmental concerns are explained to employees. Thus, the attitude towards environmental reduction practices plays a vital role as an arbitrator between GHRM practices, barriers and challenges. The literature also suggested that the negative attitudes of managers towards environmental programs are the critical and positive attitudes leading to pollution prevention activities ([Dieleman and De Hoo, 1993](#)). Similarly, [Cordano and Frieze \(2000\)](#) emphasized that the preferences of environmental managers are altered by attitudes and social psychology-related variables. It was further argued that attitudes and beliefs are limited to individuals despite the tendency to be considered organizational. Therefore, investigating and exploring the environmental concerns' perceptions among top management, managers and non-managerial employees are crucial. This action would contribute to the GHRM literature, followed by a further contribution to the hospitality and tourism industries.

The research findings also addressed documentation, policies, budgets and costs, empowerment and building competencies. It was found that (1) documentation and policies were pre-requisites for the right direction and implementation; (2) budget and costs remain an issue for the top management; (3) the empowerment for decision-making and implementation had been challenging, and; (4) HR department should build competence for their entire team. It is clear that competitive advantage and sustainability remain significant factors for the HPI. Specifically, interviewees from hotels A, B, C and E highlighted the need for adequately written documentation and policies, which become the source for green agenda related to HR

tasks and sustainable performance. Documentation is the primary source of communication between hotels and the ISO to comply with regulatory bodies and establish ISO certifications. Moreover, they stated that documentation and policies are effective in the operational tasks and act as prerequisite. [Ren et al. \(2018\)](#) acknowledged that environmental sustainability success relies on HRM systems, practices and policies that need to be drafted to be meaningful for executing environmental sustainability goals. Additionally, [Mishra \(2017\)](#) highlighted that policies and documents help organizations measure the impacts of GHRM practices on PEBs and deficiencies within an organization, which is scarce in the literature. Another challenge includes budget and cost, which remain an issue for the top management affecting the adoption of GHRM practices. The respondents raised the issues associated with the costs and benefits for top management and the organization's economic condition. Implementing environmentally friendly practices imposes high initial costs, making it a challenge for HR managers in the initial stages. [Ren et al. \(2018\)](#) acknowledged that EP is affected, given that environmental sustainability is considered a cost from the strategic management perspective. This aspect normally harms the profitability of organizations. Similarly, [Jabbour and Santos \(2008\)](#) argued that the environmental aspect is measured as a surplus cost in redesigning or developing a new product. Considering these challenges in developing economies, natural resources are compromised for economic benefits, which should be explored further. Although these challenges had been overlooked in past research, they became the highlight of this research.

The third challenge was related to the empowerment of HR managers for decision-making and implementation. The respondents urged the need for empowerment for decision-making and implementation despite the presence of tangible and intangible resources. [Yusliza et al. \(2017\)](#) argued the significant responsibility of employee empowerment in adopting GHRM practices; a superior level of green employee empowerment increases EP. Moreover, [Tariq et al. \(2016\)](#) highlighted the importance of green employee empowerment and its role in decision-making and described it as "neurons play in brain functioning". In addition, the literature also highlighted that empowered employees play their roles in managerial implications, given their position as knowledge repositories who bring innovation. Additionally, green management tasks are dependent on their technical and management skills. Overall, the results of this research contribute to the literature as a challenge among the HR departments in the HPI. This challenge may be due to power distance culture, which is also highlighted in the literature. As an example, [Robert et al. \(2000\)](#) found that empowerment was reduced in a high-power distance culture. Accordingly, the findings further contributed to the exploration of empowerment issues in the hospitality and tourism industry among non-developed countries. The literature described competence and skills as enabling factors for adopting GHRM ([Da Silva et al., 2019](#); [Yong and Mohd-Yusoff, 2016](#)). An HR department must build competencies for its entire team. According to the interviewees, the HR department faces challenges in building competencies and skills. Besides, competencies and skills enable employees to implement new technologies, bring change, build capacity and orient green processes.

Theoretical implications

This study offers a crucial theoretical contribution to the research by emphasizing the factors that facilitate GHRM. Despite the understanding developed by hotels regarding GHRM practices, the increasing skills and understanding of GHRM operations contribute to improved efficiencies within an organization by reducing wastage, expenses and consumption. This initiative improves the organization's economic, social and EP. These hotels are essential for an organization's success, which maintains the potential to transmit a competitive advantage via its green performance as the core agenda ([Umrani et al., 2022](#)). Consequently, the HR department's green orientation may be seen as a significant intangible

asset contributing to a competitive advantage (Obeidat *et al.*, 2020). From a theoretical perspective, this study featured several important repercussions. For instance, the study expanded the knowledge regarding the institutional theory and RBV theory, which is significant for examining the antecedents and outcomes of GHRM in organizations. The results also considered the internal factors in the GHRM literature, which were significant problems in measuring the consequences as internal factors could contribute further to the literature on GHRM. The study offers several factors enriching the GHRM literature. Specifically, it adds to the body of knowledge through TMS and considers CSR strategies as an important agenda. GOC management is one of the most essential elements enabling the hotel to develop environmental concerns and CSR strategies. Yeşiltaş *et al.* (2022) highlighted that GOC is eminent to encourage environmental consciousness and GHRM practices. Subsequently, the results have made contributions to the growing body of information about the impact of GHRM on adoption and the consequences of GHRM practices. In addition, the findings also demonstrated that environmental orientation is a path to establish a link between the factors and GHRM practices, particularly in establishing the linkage between GOC, TMS and GHRM. Implementing GHRM practices requires strategic benefits including TMS, while the incorporation of green agendas to the vision and mission requires the role of the HR team. A manager must also disseminate environmental knowledge to add to OC and promote long-term sustainability (Renwick *et al.*, 2013). In contrast to most other studies in the field that have used quantitative methodologies, this study utilized GT to conceptualize, analyze and synthesize data. It may also provide a direction for analyzing data in future quantitative studies, creating new survey instruments and developing new theories.

Managerial implications

This study offers practical implications as a tool for developed and undeveloped countries, specifically for Pakistan's HPI. Adopting green practices is critical to achieving a better output of GHRM practices. Moktadir *et al.* (2019) recommended that policymakers concentrate further on the identified factors. Therefore, this study has identified that HR factors would help managers build a sustainable workplace in the HPI. It is also helpful for the HR department to overcome C&B while implanting GHRM practices. Moreover, new insights have been highlighted. For example, environmental orientation is an important mediator between HR factors and the adoption of GHRM practices, making it a pathway for a successful journey to SP. The findings suggested that greening the workplace in the HPI requires behavioral change through a high level of environmental orientation and concerns. This factor would enable the managers to obtain the anticipated outcome of EP in the hospitality and tourism sectors. These practical implications are also in line with Umrani *et al.* (2022), who suggested that the serious environmental concerns of the managers would lead to improved GHRM practices. Green practices tend to attract tourists and their satisfaction, which ultimately enhances the hotel's economic value (Moise *et al.*, 2021). This factor offers another worthwhile implication for the hospitality and tourism sector. The results indicated that environmental concerns are pertinent in the hospitality sector and promoting green behaviors among employees requires the application of GHRM practices. The rise of green practices and a sense of pride could help protect the environment and the role of TMS is an encouraging behavior for the strategic and operational roles of GHRM practices. Moreover, the identified challenges the HPI faces would help managers formulate strategies to overcome the challenges and strengthen the GHRM practices. This study result was aligned with Yusliza *et al.* (2017), who argued that significant factors are helpful for organizations in implementing GHRM practices.

Another plausible implication is that this study advised hotel HR managers to establish HR practices based on environmental goals. This action requires CSR strategies, which

should be further implemented through documentation and policies. Furthermore, CSR was found to be a significant element in the service industry (Kwon and Ahn, 2020). Moreover, HR managers should work on recruitment and training practices to recruit employees, specifically with environmental objectives and further development of employees through training. This action would enable the understanding of the priority of environmental protection among HPI employees. The results illustrated that GHRM practices were not adequately adopted in the HPI and at the infancy stage. With Wright and Nishii (2007) showing the perceptual gap between actual and perceived HR procedures, the ultimate effect of GHRM practices on SP is scarce. Given that managers have a crucial role in GHRM success, the knowledge, environmental orientation, attitude and behavioral aspects of managers are key to designing and implementing GHRM practices (Gürlek, 2020). This research requires the commitment of top management and the HR department toward the green management agendas in the HPI. However, Sajjad *et al.* (2018) highlighted that the lack of awareness in the HPI discouraged the consideration of sustainability issues. Moreover, hiring new employees to meet environmental standards and practices does not guarantee the success of implementation and achieving positive outcomes. In this case, HR managers should undertake the training of existing employees to gain environmental awareness. This study also presented thoughtful insights for academic curriculum developers to include courses for green management to overcome C&B in the organization.

Limitations and future research

This research had four primary limitations. The first limitation was the setting, which was constrained to Pakistan's HPI sample. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, the HPI remained closed most of the time and many potential respondents could not respond and participate. Second, the results could not be generalized due to the qualitative study featuring a small sample size. Third, with the senior HR representative being included, future studies should involve more respondents at a vertical level to extend the literature. Future studies should also empirically measure the C&B as the factors of GHRM practices. Moreover, future studies could explore how organizations from other sectors perceive sustainability, additional barriers, challenges, or drivers towards the adoption of GHRM practices to meet SP agendas. Different contexts, including various types of accommodations for tourists such as low-ranked hotels and guest houses, have diverse organizational cultures, which may enlighten rich data and further enhance the performance through implementation strategies. Considering that sustainability indicators vary from sector to sector, scholars should consider this a vital aspect in future studies. Third, studies should consider managerial and operational points to measure the perceptual gap in environmental orientation (Wright and Nishii, 2007). Fourth, studies should explore how SP is measured in the HPI, which is scarce in the literature. Lastly, recent research highlighted the role of TMS and budget constraints. Future studies should expand the dimensions of TMS by considering the aspects discussed in the discussion. Addressing these questions is essential to enhance the current body of knowledge and unfold the black box on the association of GHRM practices with SP.

Conclusion

The literature recognizes the importance of GHRM practices and critical issues within the HPI. This study discussed the C&B faced by HR managers in the HPI. This study has contributed to the literature on HR factors, GHRM, sustainable performance and sustainable development and approaches. The study also extended the literature on adopting factors of GHRM practices through interesting findings to industry practitioners, hospitality researchers and policymakers. The findings have shed light on the C&B to adopting GHRM practices and offered insights from HR practitioners on the best environmental protection strategies. Lastly, the study has assisted

the top management, with HR managers understanding their efforts to initiate positive returns through environmentally friendly practices.

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Supplementary file

The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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