

FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE BY ADOPTING GREEN HR PRACTICES: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

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ABSTRACT

Integration of eco-friendly practices with Human Resource practices in organization is gaining worldwide attention to capture sustainable growth. The goal of this study is to examine the impact of green HR practices on environmental performance adopted by the food and beverage industry of Lahore to gain long-term growth. Quantitative study is conducted and data is collected through a questionnaire (153) from HR employees working in the food and beverage industry of Lahore through random sampling. A structural equation model (SEM) is used. The Ability Motivation Opportunity theory provides theoretical support to this study. This study elucidates that green job description ($\beta= 0.22$), green training ($\beta= 0.39$), and green performance management and appraisal ($\beta= 0.26$) have a positive and significant effect on environmental performance. Environmental concern partially mediates the relationship between green HR practices and EP. The findings of this research are helpful for the stakeholders of the food and beverage industry in particular and human resource divisions in general in guiding them on how they can get a competitive advantage and can fulfill their urge to gain green certification by adopting green HR practices that will ultimately enhance company environmental performance. The limitation of this study is that data is collected only from food and beverage firms based in Lahore, Pakistan. Therefore, researchers are suggested to further investigating these variables with some other factors in same sectors.

Keywords: Green HR practices; Sustainable growth; Environmental performance; Environmental concern



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1. Introduction

The growing worldwide concern about how economic development contributes to climate change and environmental-related problems has raised new strategic issues for organizations (Ren et al., 2020). Hameed et al., (2020) stated that organizations and stakeholders demand such strategies according to social and environmental responsibilities and help them sustain their operations as sustainability is one of the top international trends (Alkhodary, 2021). Because of this emerging societal concern, companies are not only assuming greater importance in adopting green practices for environmental performance but also shifting their operations from traditional models to green models by employing green initiatives, and this transmission is helping the organization to get a competitive advantage (Alfred & Adam, 2009; Jackson & Seo, 2010; Yang et al., 2011). The HR department is also aligning its practices with corporate social responsibilities to become a part of the sustainable culture as HR practices are considered a means of attaining sustainable development. Under this need, green HR practices have emerged as a means to maintain an organization's well-being and even encourage its employees to become a part of such a culture. Recently, this topic has been gaining enormous attention in the scholarly world that comes into being through the integration of environmental management into HR practices. Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) includes green HR practices such as green job analysis and description (GJAD), green training (GT), green recruitment, green performance management and appraisal (GPMA) and putting all these green HR practices into execution leads towards environmental sustainability that is ultimate goals of many organizations as it makes them efficient use of resources without harming the environment. GHRM is not only linked with ecological management but also with environmental performance as it includes the three essential aspects of economic, social well-being of individuals and corporations well-being are also an integral part of it (Muster & Schrader, 2011).

Though green HR is increasingly gaining attention at the global level and many studies can be found only in the context of developed countries. However, understanding and implementing Green HR practices that foster environmental performance are still undercover in developing countries like Pakistan, which means that there is little empirical evidence showing the integration of environmental performance with HR practices (Masri & Jaaron, 2017). Thus, the critical goal of this study is to highlight the impact of green HR practices such as GJAD, GT and GPMA on the environmental performance of organizations. Another goal is to investigate the

mediating role of environmental concern between Green HR practices and EP. No previous study has established this relationship as this study has built-in its conceptual model.

Furthermore, this research may help organizations achieve their environmental goals if they revise their HR practices into green HR practices. It will also help them to sustain their growth. Literature is cited to explain green HR practices through the previous studies. The methodology is presented next to the literature review to describe how this research is conducted. This is followed by the result analysis and discussion section. In the end, the conclusion explains the summary of this research and its practical implications.

2. Review of literature

2.1. *Green Human Resource Management and Environmental performance:*

Many researchers suggested that effectiveness and success in strategic tools and any management innovation are determined by Human Resource Management (Cho et al., 2019). Human resources (HR) are known as the most valuable asset of the organization, as well as it is also viewed as the most compelling part of the management (Ones & Dilchert, 2012). Linking HRM with environmental goals is increasingly getting attention around the globe. It is worth mentioning that environmental issues are caused by human activities; therefore, there is a need to change human behavior by using suitable HR practices to encourage employees Renwick et al. (2013) coined green human resource management (GHRM). Sharma & Gupta (2015) define Green HR practices as those HR practices used to promote the sustainable use of the resources within the organization, in general, which encourages a sustainable environment. Green HR helps to understand the triple bottom line concept, which aims to align practices with three pillars of sustainability, environment, social and economic balance (Yusoff et al., 2015). Specific procedures are developed to implement green HR practices.

Many studies have looked into how the pro-environmental HRM activities improved the environmental performance (EP) of an organization (Arda et al., 2019). EP is a procedure that helps the firm protect the environment by hiring green-aware people. EP measures are waste reduction, recycling, cost control, incidents, etc. The HR manager plays a vital part in achieving environmental performance objectives through training, appraisal, and recruitment of green-aware people (El-Kassar & Singh, 2019). Many kinds of research can be found in the context of developed countries. Still, the firms operating in less developed countries have a lack of evidence

that explain the positive impact of green HR practices on EP. This paper will ultimately address the concern of these firms and provide them with clear evidence that Green HR practices influence EP (Roscoe et al., 2019). Green HR practices are implemented within an organization through green job analysis and description of job position (GJAD), green training (GT), and green performance management and appraisal (GPMA), which are the primary antecedent of this study. Ability Motivation opportunity theory is giving theoretical support over here.

The AMO (Ability Motivation Opportunity) theory helps explain the links between Green HR practices and EP by extending HR practices in the green context. According to this theory, any Green HR practice can contribute to organizational performance. It increases employees' ability by providing them training, which is a fundamental practice of the HR department. It also motivates employees by adopting a green performance management system. This system evaluates employee green performance. Similarly, it also provides an opportunity to employees to show environmental concern. The hypotheses of this study are as follow;

2.2. Green analysis and description of job positions

Wehrmeyer (2017) defined green job design and analysis as "Incorporating several environmental protection-related tasks, duties and responsibilities in each job and put into effect". There is a need to identify and hire those people who are concerned about the environment or are environmentally conscious. Organizations need to build their environmental reputation to attract green employees here Renwick mentioned that while the job analysis stage, organizations should clarify personal specifications and job description and focus on green activities and aspects of the environment, and each green employee should be aware of what the organization is expecting out of him (Renwick et al., 2013). According to Wehrmeyer (2017) reported that the job description could play an essential role by including elements highlighting the environmental reporting role. Moreover, organizations can integrate environmental tasks into each employee's duties and responsibilities that he is supposed to perform in his job (Arulrajah et al., 2016). Organizations can design new positions related to environmental concerns; it will help the organization focus on environmental management aspects more clearly.

The HR manager mainly promotes its environmental credentials to attract job hunters who look for organizations that promote their values. Mainly university students prefer organizations with

a pro-environmental image. HR personnel recruit or train the staff and manage the leadership development (Pham, 2021). They play a vital part in selecting and promoting green-aware employees to leadership positions and appraising employees on essential environmental awareness. The study is conducted to help organizations hire green people by designing new jobs or positions to stay focused on the environmental aspects of an organization. Thus, GJAD were operationalized and measured on the scale of (Jabbour, 2011). Based on previous literature, this study shows that GJAD positively influences environmental performance; based on this following hypothesis is proposed.

H1. Green analysis and description of the job position is positively related to EP.

2.3. Green training

Amrutha & Geetha, (2021) referred to green training (GT) as a process that motivates employees to concentrate on issues related to the environment and learn skills to protect the environment. In the literature, green training is acknowledged as a key to accomplishing environmental objectives (Paillé et al., 2020). Renwick et al. (2013) mentioned that it is the most implemented practice in the organization and is also considered a central practice for successful implementation of environmental management (Jabbour et al., 2019). AMO theory is also in view of providing ability and motivation to employees to perform better. From this perspective, green training can be considered an ability-enhancing practice. It can increase employees' skills, awareness, and knowledge regarding environmental activities (Pinzone et al., 2016).

Previous literature has revealed the main effects of GT, which are as follows; 1) it raises employees' and managers' awareness of how an environment can be affected by daily decisions of managers and employee activities. 2) It assists the employee in recognizing environment-related issues. 3) It enables employees to understand the complexity of the environment (Vidal-Salazar et al., 2012). The research was conducted that collected data from 437 employees, and the result clearly depicted that the development of a green management system was related to environmental training (Daily et al., 2007). By providing green training to employees, organizations can make their employees aware of efficient utilization of organizational resources and energy conservative. Studies found that environmental training influences environmental performance. The above discussion leads to the hypothesis:

H2: Green training is positively related to EP.

2.4. Green Performance management and appraisal

Saeed et al. (2019) defined green performance management and appraisal as introducing green criteria in performance appraisals of employees or evaluating their job performance according to green criteria. Environmental performance can be enhanced by adopting a Performance management system by organizations as it is an effective tool for measuring an employee's contribution to achieving environmental performance (Ahmad, 2015). Therefore, PMS not only leads to the improvement of green initiatives over time (Jackson et al., 2011) but also protects environmental management against any harm. Kapil (2015) suggested that the primary purpose behind the green performance management system is developing green initiatives rating criteria for an employee with the help of creating objectives and responsibilities that are related to EM and employee performance should be evaluated on these standards. Moreover, sharing regular feedback with the employee on their performance can be a good instrument in accomplishing environmental goals, and this will be helpful for organizations to enhance their EP (Jackson et al., 2011).

Hence, the HR department is in needs to redesign its performance appraisal system that would help measure employee behavior and employee technical skills integrated into environment sustainability (Ahmad, 2015). This will indeed help the organization to practice green HR Practices. Organizations can design an online information-sharing platform with their employees so that they can track their own performance to what extent they have achieved environmental goals. This will definitely add value in the appraisal system. Based on this, this hypothesis is generated;

H3: Green performance management and appraisal is positively related to EP.

2.4. Environmental concern as a mediator

Environmental concern (EC) includes understanding an individual regarding those harmful activities that are not environment friendly (Song et al., 2020). Whenever an organization addresses the environmental concern, discussion about Green HR practices becomes obvious. Saeed et al. (2019) suggested in their literature on the manufacturing sector that Green HR management improves staff's green behavior. As a result, employees adopt pro-environmental behavior in their work and in their personal lives, making employees feel responsible regarding

environmental issues. Some other studies related to the manufacturing sector also suggested that jobs designed encourage employees to understand the environmental problems. With the help of training, employees learn about Environment Management systems that ultimately enhance employee environmental concerns (Zaid et al., 2018). In prior studies, Green HR practices are positively affected by other factors. Considering the above-discussed studies, it can assume that Green HR practices can be enhanced through the environmental concern. This will motivate employees to achieve the best environmental performance in the corporations. Environmental concern is operationalized on Malik et al. (2019) measure. Therefore, following hypothesis is proposed as;

H4: Environmental concern is partially mediating the relationship between all the independent and dependent variables.

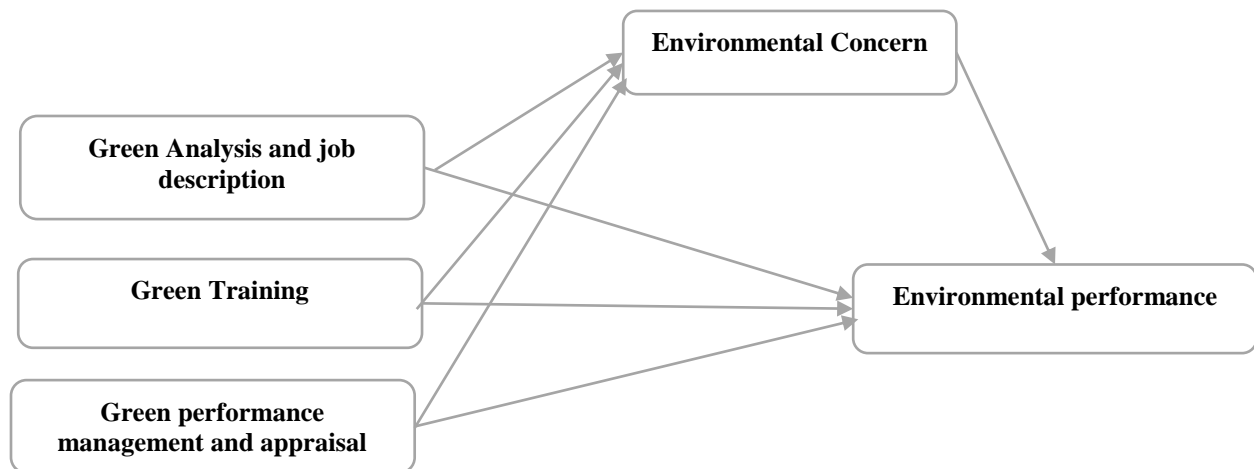


Fig. 3.1 Conceptual framework

3. Material and Method

3.1. Data Collection and sampling

In this quantitative study, the online questionnaire was mailed and shared via WhatsApp and LinkedIn to our target population. Due to COVID-19, physical visit to organizations was not allowed, and it was the safest and most straightforward data collection measure. The questionnaires (n=157) were received back through a convenience sampling approach from the employees working in the Food and Beverage Industry of Lahore, Pakistan. Green HR's role is

strategic for the food and beverage industry as it helps them gain green certification and a source of competitive advantage. Respondents would have at least one year of experience working in this industry to fill up the questionnaire. The possible reason behind this because these employees would have a better understanding of green practices prevailing in their organizations. The underpinning theory of this study, AMO theory, provides theoretical support in this study and also justifies that HR practices directly influence employee environmental concerns to enhance organizational and environmental performance.

The cross-sectional data were collected in 2021, and only five responses were excluded based on their incompleteness. Thus, 153 responses were used for further statistical analysis. The sample size (n=153) was sufficient to run SEM. To check the demographic characteristics of our target audience, a descriptive analysis was conducted, and the ratio of males and females was 66 and 33 per cent, respectively. In the sample, there were a total of 52 females and 101 male respondents.

3.2. Measurement scale

The already established scales were adopted from various related studies for the measurement of the variables. The scale of environmental performance was adopted from Kaur (2011), having five items. To measure the analysis and description of job positions, the scale was adopted from Jabbour (2011) which has three items; the scale of green training was adopted from the study conducted by Tang et al., (2018) with 3 items; to measure green performance management and appraisal, scale with five items were adopted from Masri & Jaaron (2017), and the scale of environmental concern was adopted from Malik et al. (2019) with five items. All variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree).

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis is performed using SPSS and AMOS. Here, a two-step approach was followed. In the measurement model, data was verified by checking reliability and validity (confirmatory factor analysis). Then, hypotheses were tested with the help of a structural model. All necessary tests to check the reliability and consistency of data for analysis were conducted, like EFA, normality, and finding outliers. Hair et al. (1998) suggested that all Cronbach's alpha values should be greater than 0.7. The reliability value of each construct was checked and found above the cut-off level. The factor loading values should be greater than the cut-off level of 0.6, and

thus, all the smaller values are deleted from the cut-off level. The average variance extracted values were also measured and found between 0.87 and 0.54; all the values were greater than the acceptable limit of 0.5. Table 4.1 explains these values in detail.

After conducting an initial analysis, hypotheses were tested through structural equation modelling. All the values of the goodness of model fit were acceptable as they were above the cut-off level of 0.05. Therefore, all the hypotheses are accepted. The first hypothesis explained the positive relationship between analysis and job descriptions and environmental performance and accepted at 0.001 with a 0.220 estimated value ($\beta = 0.220$, $p < 0.05$). Green Training, the second hypothesis, also positively impacts environmental performance at a 0.001 level ($\beta = 0.399$, $p < 0.05$). Green performance management and an appraisal are also significant at 0.001 value ($\beta = 0.261$, $p < 0.05$) and positively related to environmental performance. So, H3 is also accepted. These results coincide with some previously conducted research, such as Zhang et al., (2019), who empirically tested that Green HR management is positively related to EP with the help of 260 sample plants dataset in 11 countries. Environmental concern plays the role of mediator and the mediation effect was measured with the help of Baron and Kenny's approach. Here, the result of environmental concern was found to partially mediate the relation between all 3 independent variables. Table 3 explains this effect in detail. The model fit values of this study were at the acceptable level, GFI 0.93, AGFI 0.95, TLI 0.91, CFI 0.90 and RMSEA 0.06.

Table: 4.1 Confirmatory and reliability analysis

Variable	Construct	Factor loading	Cronbach alpha	Average Variance Extracted
Analysis and description of job position	GAJD1	0.95	0.966	0.89
	GAJD2	0.99		
	GAJD3	0.93		
Green Training	GT1	0.99	0.953	0.87
	GT2	0.86		
	GT3	0.90		
Green performance management and appraisal	GPMA2	0.61	0.864	0.75
	GPMA3	0.79		
	GPMA4	0.92		
	GPMA5	0.90		
Environmental concern	EC1	0.63	0.711	0.54
	EC2	0.76		

Environmental performance	EC5	0.65	0.829	0.58
	EP1	0.93		
	EP2	0.94		
	EP5	0.97		

Table: 4.2 Path coefficient

Hypothesis Statement	Estimate	Sig.	Result
H1 Analysis and description of job position is positively related to EP.	0.220	0.001	Supported
H2 Green training is positively related to EP.	0.399	0.001	Supported
H3 Green performance management and appraisal is positively related to EP.	0.261	0.001	Supported
H4-I Environmental concern is partially mediating the relationship between analysis and Job description of job position and EP.	0.231	0.001	Partially mediate
H4-II Environmental concern is partially mediating the relationship between green training and EP.	0.251	0.001	Partially mediate
H4-III Environmental concern is partially mediating the relationship between green training and EP.	0.210	0.001	Partially mediate

Table: 4.3**Mediation Result**

Relationship	Direct without mediator	Direct with mediator	Indirect
GAJD.EC.EP	0.220 (0.001)	0.231 (0.001)	Partial mediate
GT.EC.EP	0.399 (0.001)	0.251 (0.001)	Partial mediate
GPMA.EC.EP	0.231 (0.001)	0.210 (0.001)	Partial mediate

Notes: GAJD–Green Analysis and Job Description, GT–Green Training, GPMA–Green Performance Management and Appraisal, EC–Environmental Concern, EP–Environmental Performance

5. Discussion

The study is conducted to check which green HRM practices influence on environmental performance (EP). The current literature explains organizations with green HRM practices are more likely to have good environmental performance because of their environmental conscious employees. This research also fills the literature gap by exploring the effect of Green HR practices on EP by collecting data from the food and beverages industry, as it is second largest industry in Pakistan. This research hypothesized that green HR practices such as green analysis

of job and description, green training, and green performance appraisal positively impact environmental performance and found all these practices are significantly and positively related to environmental performance. Moreover, this study also contributes to previous studies by exploring the effect of the mediation relationship of environmental concern between the proposed independent and dependent variables. Analysis and job description have a positive and significant relation with EP, and this discussion seems associated with some previous studies (Arulrajah et al., 2016). This is a valuable source for organizations to attract employees with green behavior by mentioning the green roles in the job description so that candidates will have an idea about the position they would perform during their job. Green training is also the most essential and significant practice that positively impacts environmental performance. This result is also supported by the study of Ghouri et al., (2020). By providing training to employees, an organization can enhance its organization and environmental performance by getting training, and employees will be well familiar with the uses of resources available to an organization to gain a competitive advantage. Similarly, Green performance appraisal and management is also the second most important practice in this research to exert a positive effect on environmental performance. The prediction to enhance environmental performance through green HRM practices is turned to be true. These findings were also proved by Roscoe et al., (2019). It also helps organizations attract the right pool of candidates, which will assist the organization achieve its environmental goals. By focusing on their environmental performance, organizations can attract more customers in this competitive market. Furthermore, environmental concern partially mediates the relationship green training, analysis and job description, green performance Management and Appraisal, and the dependent variable, environmental performance.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of green HR practices on environmental performance by collecting data from food and beverage firms located in Lahore. This study has contributed in several ways. Firstly, the study's relevance in identifying the green HR practices that help fostering environmental performance in developing countries, especially in food and beverage firms which was previously overlooked in the literature. Secondly, the study establishes the mediator role of environmental concern between green HR practices such as GJAD, GT, and GPAM and EP. Additionally, this research recommends that organizations provide training to

their employees as it will help them achieve more performance levels and managers can enhance organizational performance. Further, the results are useful for the stakeholders of food and beverage industry in particular and human resource divisions in general in guiding them how they can get a competitive advantage over its competitors and can fulfill their urge to gain green certification by adopting green HR practices that will ultimately enhance company environmental performance. This contribution will surely help the food and beverage industry adopt green HR practices as this sector alone accounts for 27% of value-added products and is responsible for 16% of employment. There are several limitations in this study that can be research opportunities for future research. The first limitation is related to sample size. Data were collected during covid; therefore, it was challenging to manage the large sample. Although this sample was enough, a larger sample size could be more beneficial to support the findings. Therefore, future researcher can test these hypotheses on a larger sample by adopting other techniques. Future studies can use moderator and other mediator variables to test the mediating effect, and researchers are enthusiastic about investigating further the influence of these variables on some other variables. The third limitation is the lack of time and resources; this study collected data from food and beverage firms in Lahore, Pakistan. Therefore, researchers can investigate further the effect of some other variables of green innovation and green culture by collecting data from different sectors.

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