Green Human Resource Management: A Systematic Review of Sustainability-Oriented HR Practices

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Abstract

Amidst rising environmental issues and a global emphasis on sustainability, firms are increasingly urged to implement environmentally responsible practices throughout all operational domains, including Human Resource Management (HRM). This paper examines the critical necessity for a comprehensive understanding of the alignment between HR functions and ecological objectives via Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM). This study aims to thoroughly investigate, classify, and integrate existing academic research on sustainability-focused HR practices, providing a thorough overview of the conceptualization, implementation, and evolution of Green HRM over time. This study employed the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to assess peer-reviewed articles published from 2010 to 2024, obtained from the Scopus and Web of Science databases. The selection process adhered to PRISMA principles to guarantee transparency and rigor in the inclusion and exclusion of articles. In total, 85 pertinent publications were analyzed and thematically categorized to discern recurring tendencies, theoretical frameworks, and practical implementations. This research is novel due to its comprehensive classification of Green HRM practices across essential HR functions while also highlighting underexamined aspects such as green leadership development and the influence of national culture on the adoption of Green HRM. The results indicate that firms adopting Green HRM contribute to environmental sustainability while simultaneously enhancing employee engagement, innovation, and organizational reputation. This review establishes a solid basis for future research and functions as a strategic framework for HR professionals aiming to integrate sustainability into their HR policies and practices.

Keywords: *Green Human Resource Management, Sustainability-Oriented HR Practices, Systematic Literature Review, Environmental Management, Sustainable Organizational Practices*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the imperative to confront global environmental issues, including climate change, ecological degradation, and unsustainable resource utilization, has garnered substantial attention from governments, corporations, and civil society. Organizations are increasingly anticipated to attain financial objectives while also functioning responsibly by mitigating their environmental

impact and fostering sustainability across their operations(Al-Romeedy & Alharethi, 2025). A developing approach to address these expectations is the incorporation of sustainability into human resource operations, sometimes referred to as Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) (Altassan, 2024; Chau et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). This notion pertains to the synchronization of HR policies and procedures with an organization's environmental goals, with the intention of promoting eco-friendly behavior among employees and integrating sustainability into the company culture.

Green HRM comprises various dimensions, including green recruitment, which emphasizes candidates with environmental consciousness; green training and development, designed to instruct employees on sustainable practices; green performance management, incorporating environmental objectives in evaluations; and green compensation systems that incentivize eco-friendly initiatives (Din et al., 2025; Gul et al., 2025; Khadse et al., 2025; Sangadji & Islami, 2024). Furthermore, Green HRM promotes employee engagement in environmental projects, including trash reduction campaigns and energy conservation efforts (Esponda Perez et al., 2024). These approaches not only advance environmental objectives but also improve employee engagement, organizational reputation, and long-term competitiveness.

Notwithstanding its increasing significance, the scholarly domain concerning Green HRM remains disjointed. Diverse studies have examined the subject from several perspectives. Jabbour & Santos (2008) examined the function of human resource management in advancing environmental management systems, highlighting the need of ecological training and awareness. Renwick et al. (2013) established a paradigm for incorporating green practices into HRM operations, proposing that this integration could enhance both environmental and organizational performance. Nejati et al. (2017) investigated the impact of Green HRM on employee behavior and motivation within sustainability-oriented organizations. While these studies provide significant insights, they vary in scope, context, and technique, complicating the formulation of a cohesive understanding of Green HRM as both a concept and a practical strategy.

This results in a significant research issue: the absence of a thorough synthesis and mapping of current studies on Green HRM (Akbar et al., 2024; Freihat et al., 2024; Qiu et al., 2025; Weber & Kassab, 2024). Despite the contributions of several academics, the literature remains fragmented across various issues, sectors, and geographic regions. A agreement has yet to be reached about the definition of effective Green HRM practices, their implementation across different business contexts, and the quantitative outcomes they generate (Hajj Hussein & Bou Zakhem, 2024; Li & Li, 2025; Shoaib et al., 2025). Consequently, both academics and practitioners possess an ambiguous and fragmented comprehension of the present status of Green HRM research and its ramifications for future implementation.

Furthermore, the application of Green HRM in practice exhibits considerable variability. In extensive multinational businesses, Green HRM is frequently associated with overarching sustainability plans and environmental,

social, and governance (ESG) efforts. These organizations may possess established policies, training programs, and incentive systems specifically aimed at promoting environmentally friendly behavior (Kaur et al., 2022; Manuel et al., 2024; Zahrani, 2024). Conversely, in smaller or under-resourced businesses, particularly in developing nations, implementation may be informal, fragmented, or entirely lacking due to insufficient awareness or inadequate backing from top management. Moreover, obstacles such as the lack of defined frameworks, minimal employee engagement, and inadequate evidence of impact persist in obstructing the extensive implementation of Green HRM (Esponda Perez et al., 2025; N. T. H. Hong et al., 2024). This study is to perform a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to investigate, categorize, and integrate the current information on sustainability-focused HR practices within the Green HRM framework. This project aims to uncover major themes, theoretical frameworks, implementation techniques, and research gaps by examining peer-reviewed articles from 2010 to 2024. The results are anticipated to elucidate the development of Green HRM and furnish practical insights for HR practitioners aiming to integrate human resource strategies with business sustainability objectives.

METHOD

This study utilizes a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to discover, assess, and synthesize current academic literature about Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) and sustainability-focused HR practices. The SLR approach was selected for its rigor, transparency, and replicability in encompassing the breadth and depth of research advancements within a particular domain (Tranfield et al., 2003). This approach allows the researcher to rigorously assess the current knowledge base, pinpoint research deficiencies, and suggest avenues for subsequent investigations.

The research design was created in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) standard to guarantee a transparent and systematic review approach. The design comprises four primary stages: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion. The identification phase entails a methodical search for pertinent literature, succeeded by a screening process to exclude research that fail to satisfy established criteria. Eligibility is the phase in which studies are evaluated for their comprehensive relevance to the research question, while inclusion represents the concluding step where studies are chosen based on their conformity to the topic and quality criteria.

The data for this study were obtained from peer-reviewed journal publications indexed in esteemed academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The search was confined to publications published in English from 2010 to 2024, so encompassing both seminal and contemporary literature on Green HRM. To guarantee thorough coverage, a range of search terms was employed, incorporating combinations of keywords such as "Green Human Resource Management" OR "Green HRM," "Sustainability-oriented HR practices," "Environmental management AND

human resources," "Green HR policies," and "Sustainable workplace practices," utilizing Boolean operators to enhance the results.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were rigorously enforced to guarantee the pertinence and quality of the chosen studies (Austen & Piwowar-Sulej, 2024; Murillo-Ramos et al., 2023). The inclusion requirements mandated that publications be peer-reviewed and published in academic journals, specifically addressing Green HRM or sustainability-focused HR practices. The papers were required to offer conceptual, empirical, or theoretical contributions to the subject matter. The exclusion criteria removed non-English articles, conference papers, editorials, theses, and other non-peer-reviewed materials, along with studies that were irrelevant to HRM or lacked significance for environmental sustainability.

Upon selection of the articles, data were extracted utilizing a data extraction matrix that encompassed essential information, including author(s) and publication year, geographical context and industry setting, research objectives and methodologies, principal findings, theoretical frameworks, identified challenges, and suggested future research avenues. The gathered data underwent thematic synthesis to discern common themes, classify diverse Green HRM practices, and underscore deficiencies in the literature. This investigation compared patterns across several contexts, including developed and developing countries, as well as organizational settings, such as small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) and major corporations. A two-stage review technique was instituted to augment the validity and reliability of the review process. Initially, duplicate research were eliminated, and titles and abstracts were evaluated for relevance. In the second stage, the researcher independently evaluated and verified the whole texts to confirm their relevance to the study's objectives. The PRISMA flowchart was employed to clearly document the inclusion and exclusion process, hence enhancing the review's integrity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
In the initial search stage, the researcher did not impose a strict limit on the publication year to allow for the identification of a broad range of studies related to "Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM)" and "sustainability-oriented HR practices." This approach enabled the capture of both foundational and emerging scholarly works within the field. The initial search results indicate that scholarly discussions explicitly using the term "Green Human Resource Management" began to emerge prominently in academic literature around 2010. The following is a summary of the initial search results using the Scopus database, highlighting key trends and the evolution of interest in the topic "Green HRM and sustainability-oriented HR practices."

Table 1. Ten (10) Most Cited Research in the Scopus database.

Author(s)	Title	Year	Journal Name / Publisher	Total Citaton
Renwick, D.W.S. ,Jabbour, C.J.C., Muller-Camen, M., Redman, T.,Wilkinson, A.	Contemporary developments in Green (environmental) HRM scholarship	2016	International Journal of Human Resource Management	325
Pinzone, M., Guerci, M., Lettieri, E., Redman, T.	Progressing in the change journey towards sustainability in healthcare: The role of 'Green' HRM	2016	Journal of Cleaner Production	299
Haddock-Millar, J., Sanyal, C., Müller-Camen, M.	Green human resource management: A comparative qualitative case study of a United States multinational corporation	2016	International Journal of Human Resource Management	224
Bombiak, E., Marciniuk-Kluska, A.	Green human resource management as a tool for the sustainable development of enterprises: Polish young company experience	2018	Sustainability	215
Malik, S.Y., Cao, Y., Mughal, Y.H., ... Mughal, M.H., Ramayah, T..	Pathways towards sustainability in organizations: Empirical evidence on the role of green human resource management practices and green intellectual capital	2020	Sustainability	188

Guerci, M., Carollo, L.	A paradox view on green human resource management: Insights from the Italian context	2016	International Journal of Human Resource Management	141
Paillé, P., Valéau, P., Renwick, D.W.	Leveraging green human resource practices to achieve environmental sustainability	2020	Journal of Cleaner Production	135
Jerónimo, H.M., Henriques, P.L., Lacerda, T.C.D., da Silva, F.P., Vieira, P.R.	Going green and sustainable: The influence of green HR practices on the organizational rationale for sustainability	2020	Journal of Business Research	124
Malik, S.Y., Mughal, Y.H., Azam, T., ... Zhu, H., Thurasamy, R.	Corporate social responsibility, green human resources management, and sustainable performance: is organizational citizenship behavior towards environment the missing link?	2021	Sustainability (Switzerland)	123
Ercantan, O., Eyupoglu, S.	How Do Green Human Resource Management Practices Encourage Employees to Engage in Green Behavior? Perceptions of University Students as Prospective Employees	2022	Sustainability (Switzerland)	79

Source: Proceeded based on Scopus Database

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The findings of this study, based on a systematic review of relevant literature, reveal several key developments and influential contributions in the field of Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM). The citation-based analysis helped identify the most impactful articles, authors, and recurring themes, reflecting the evolution and maturity of the research landscape. Notably, several scholars—particularly Renwick, Guerci, Redman, and Müller-Camen—have played a central role in shaping the discourse, with their works consistently cited across high-impact journals.

The most cited article in the dataset is by Renwick et al. (2016), titled "Contemporary developments in Green (environmental) HRM scholarship", published in the International Journal of Human Resource Management, which has received 325 citations. This article is widely recognized for establishing a foundational understanding of Green HRM by mapping its key concepts, practices, and implications for organizational behavior and environmental performance. Its continued relevance highlights the importance of a strong conceptual base in facilitating further empirical investigations.

Similarly, Pinzone et al. (2016) offered another pivotal contribution with their study "Progressing in the change journey towards sustainability in healthcare: The role of 'Green' HRM", which garnered 299 citations. Published in the Journal of Cleaner Production, the study explores how Green HRM practices can support sustainable change within healthcare organizations. This application-oriented approach demonstrates the versatility of Green HRM across different sectors and the growing importance of aligning HR strategies with sector-specific sustainability goals.

Further, the work of Haddock-Millar, Sanyal, and Müller-Camen (2016) provided qualitative insights into how a United States-based multinational corporation integrates Green HRM into its operations. With 224 citations, their study reinforces the role of multinational companies as both leaders and laboratories for sustainable HR practices. This study also draws attention to the influence of organizational culture and internal stakeholder engagement on the success of green initiatives. The analysis also uncovers a growing interest in applying Green HRM frameworks in non-Western and emerging market contexts. For instance, Bombiak and Marciniuk-Kluska (2018) examined Polish young companies and showed how Green HRM serves as a vital tool for promoting sustainable enterprise development. Published in Sustainability, the study has amassed 215 citations, demonstrating that Green HRM is increasingly relevant for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) aiming to meet global sustainability standards.

More recent studies continue to extend the conceptual boundaries of Green HRM by linking it with constructs such as green intellectual capital, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and organizational citizenship behavior toward the environment (OCBE). For example, Malik et al. (2020, 2021) published two empirical studies in Sustainability and Sustainability (Switzerland), focusing on how Green HRM practices interact with intellectual capital and CSR initiatives to foster sustainable organizational performance. Despite being relatively recent,

these studies have each received over 120 citations, suggesting their high relevance to current academic and practical debates.

Moreover, the study by Guerci and Carollo (2016), offering a paradoxical view of Green HRM in the Italian context, reflects a critical shift toward understanding the nuanced and sometimes contradictory outcomes of sustainability practices. With 141 citations, this work challenges the assumption that Green HRM uniformly leads to positive outcomes, emphasizing the need for deeper contextual and organizational analysis.

Lastly, even the most recent entry in the list—Ercantan and Eyupoglu (2022)—which focuses on university students' perceptions of Green HRM, has already accumulated 79 citations. This suggests a growing academic interest in how future employees perceive sustainability initiatives and the potential for universities to serve as incubators for green awareness and behavior. From a thematic standpoint, several trends emerge across the reviewed literature. First, there is a clear progression from foundational theoretical frameworks toward more nuanced, context-specific empirical studies. Early works focused primarily on defining Green HRM and its components, while recent literature has explored its practical implementation and outcomes in various organizational and national contexts. Second, there is an increasing emphasis on employee engagement and behavior, particularly through the lens of OCBE, signaling a shift toward micro-level analyses of how individuals respond to and support green initiatives. Third, interdisciplinary integration is evident, with Green HRM studies drawing on fields such as environmental science, business ethics, and sustainability management.

These findings offer several implications for future research. As the field matures, scholars are encouraged to explore longitudinal effects of Green HRM on organizational performance, investigate the mediating role of digital transformation in supporting green HR practices, and further examine Green HRM adoption in the public sector and in developing countries. Additionally, more research is needed to understand how Green HRM contributes to broader sustainability goals, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
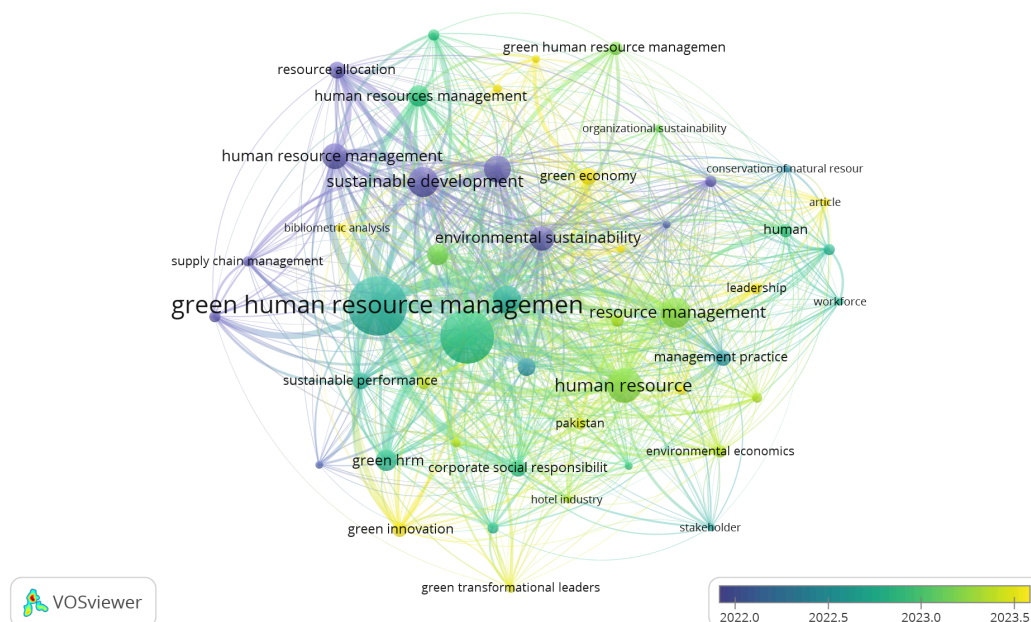
Figure 1. Co-Occurrence Visualization

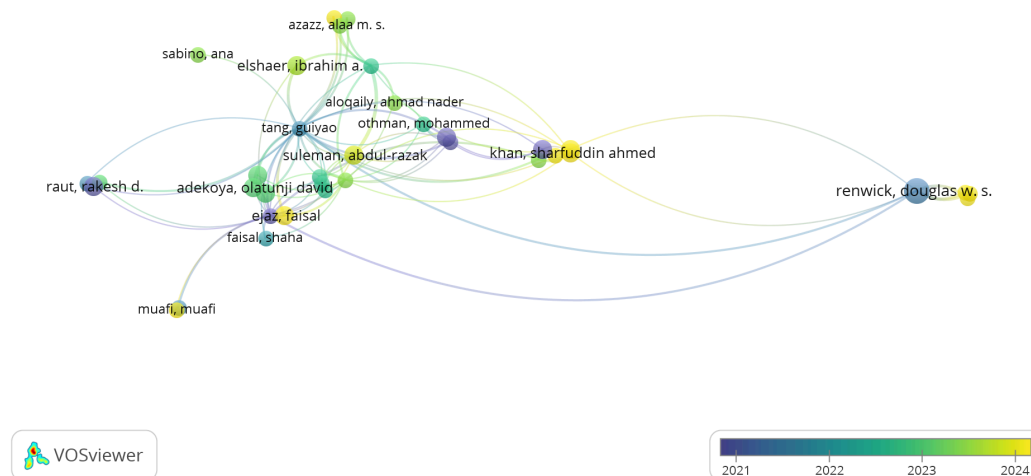Source: Processed by Authors using VosViewer (2025)

The VOSviewer research results indicate developing trends and the changing importance of key ideas associated with green human resource management (GHRM). The prominent placement of green human resource management in the framework underscores its increasing significance in contemporary research. This is intimately linked to essential terminology such as human resources management, sustainable development, resource management, and green economy, indicating that these notions are fundamental to contemporary discourse and research in the realm of sustainability in human resources.

The color gradient on the map illustrates the historical progression of these subjects. Keywords marked in blue pertain to the year 2022, signifying that these notions were less prominent during this timeframe. This indicates that specific subjects were either inadequately explored or eclipsed by more recent advancements. Conversely, green denotes the year 2023, indicating a heightened significance of certain subjects. Terms like environmental sustainability, sustainable performance, and green innovation are becoming focal points, highlighting the increasing need of incorporating sustainability into human resource strategies. Yellow, representing 2023.5, signifies themes of paramount value in contemporary research, encompassing green HRM, green transformational leadership, and corporate social responsibility, all of which epitomize the latest trends in the discipline.

Prominent keywords such as resource management, leadership, workforce, and management practice appear in green and yellow, signifying a substantial increase in their significance in 2023. This indicates a transition towards prioritizing leadership and workforce management as essential components in the execution of sustainable HR strategies. The significance of sustainable performance and green innovation indicates an increasing focus on sustainability-oriented business strategies and advancements in human resource management. The map features the phrase Pakistan, signifying that part of the research concentrates on this area, presumably addressing the implementation of green HR practices in the context of poor nations. This geographical emphasis may indicate an increasing demand for sustainable HR practices in emerging economies.

Further, The VOSviewer citation network analysis highlights significant trends in the scholarly impact and temporal evolution of various authors within the field. Central to the network, Sharfuddin Ahmed Khan emerges as a highly influential author, with a notable increase in citations marked by a yellow hue, indicating a surge in academic attention between 2023 and 2024. This positions Khan as a leading figure in the domain, reflecting a rising interest in his recent contributions. Similarly, Douglas W. S. Renwick exhibits a similar pattern, with citations trending toward yellow, signifying a substantial rise in scholarly focus on

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his work in the most recent period. These findings suggest that both authors are at

the forefront of current research discussions.

Figure 2. Co-Citation Overlay Visualization

In addition to these prominent authors, Alaa M. S. Azazz, Ahmad Nader Alogailey, and Mohammed Othman are positioned within the green and yellow spectrum, indicating that their publications have gained increasing visibility and citation attention in 2023 and 2024. This suggests that these researchers are contributing to emerging areas of inquiry or addressing current issues that resonate within the academic community. In contrast, authors such as Rakesh D. Raut, Ibrahim A. Elshaer, and Guiyao Tang are represented with consistent citation patterns, as evidenced by their placement in the green and light blue zones. This indicates that their work has maintained a steady presence in the literature, with a moderate but continuous level of attention over the past few years.

The citation network also reveals key patterns of collaboration among authors. Notably, Faisal Shaha and Abdul-Razak Suleman are part of a tightly connected group of researchers, as indicated by the numerous citation links between them. This suggests that these authors are highly interrelated in their research, frequently citing each other's work and contributing to the development of shared academic themes. Furthermore, Muafi Muafi and David Olatunji Adekoya appear to be gaining increasing recognition, with their works shifting toward yellow, indicating a rise in recent citations and an emerging scholarly influence.

The analysis also reflects a regional and temporal dimension, where recent works (2023-2024) have become more visible in the scholarly landscape. The increase in citation activity for authors such as Sharfuddin Ahmed Khan and

Douglas W. S. Renwick aligns with the broader trend of growing interest in their research, potentially due to new findings or advancements that have captured the academic community's attention.

The necessity of integrating Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices into organizational strategy is more evident, in light of the heightened worldwide focus on sustainability and the environmental concerns currently confronting the world (Hassanein et al., 2024; Mousa et al., 2025; Salama, 2024). As businesses and organizations face heightened accountability for their environmental impact, it is imperative for HR functions to synchronize their practices with sustainability objectives. GHRM not only tackles the essential requirement to mitigate environmental effect but also presents a strategic opportunity to establish human resources as a pivotal force for sustainability within enterprises (De et al., 2024; N. T. H. Hong et al., 2024; Ramachandaran et al., 2024). The expanding research and increasing citations of leading authors in the field demonstrate the urgent necessity of incorporating environmental considerations into HR operations. This urgency stems from the acknowledgment that organizational sustainability necessitates the active participation of employees, who are crucial in embracing eco-friendly practices and cultivating sustainable organizational cultures.

Nonetheless, despite the evident significance of GHRM, substantial deficiencies persist in both the theoretical and practical comprehension of how these practices can be effectively executed across various organizational contexts. Initially, there is an absence of comprehensive frameworks that particularly direct the incorporation of sustainability into HR policies and practices (Alhajj, 2022; AlNaqbi & Shamsudin, 2024; N. T. Hong et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2025). Although the current literature emphasizes multiple facets of GHRM, including recruiting, training, and employee engagement, these initiatives frequently lack cohesion and a comprehensive model for organizational implementation. The research findings indicate that prominent scholars such as Sharfuddin Ahmed Khan and Douglas W. S. Renwick have significantly contributed to addressing this gap; however, there is an urgent requirement for enhanced conceptual clarity and systematic models that HR departments can implement to integrate sustainability into their daily operations.

Moreover, a significant deficiency exists in studies addressing the obstacles and difficulties firms encounter in the integration of GHRM practices. A significant portion of current research emphasizes the theoretical advantages of green HR practices while neglecting practical problems, including resistance to change, resource constraints, and insufficient leadership support. Research on GHRM has inadequately examined the impact of cultural disparities and regional variables on the implementation of green HR practices (Ali et al., 2024; Benjamin et al., 2023; Haddock-Millar et al., 2016). Although the citation network reflects an increase in the contributions of scholars from emerging economies, there is a limited comprehension of the adoption of GHRM in these areas, and if global GHRM models can be successfully implemented in varied organizational contexts. Researchers Muafi Muafi and David Olatunji Adekoya highlight a burgeoning interest in this domain; nonetheless, additional empirical studies are

requisite to investigate the cross-cultural applicability of GHRM practices and their contextual significance.

This paper contributes to the area by presenting a thorough analysis of the current state of GHRM practices, thereby offering an integrated understanding of sustainability-oriented HR tactics utilized across various enterprises. This study synthesizes existing research on GHRM, offering a detailed overview of its theoretical foundations and empirical findings (Bombiak & Marciniuk-Kluska, 2018; Devi et al., 2024). A significant fresh contribution is the recognition of an evolutionary trend in the domain. The citation network study underscores a transition from broad sustainability practices to specific green HR activities, including green recruitment, environmentally conscious training programs, and employee involvement in sustainability efforts. The heightened visibility of these techniques, particularly in recent years as seen by the citation trends of authors such as Alaa M. S. Azazz and Ahmad Nader Alogailey, indicates an advancing sophistication in the academic and practical implementations of GHRM.

Furthermore, the paper presents a novel perspective on the internationalization of GHRM. Research conducted by experts from emerging markets, such Muafi Muafi and David Olatunji Adekoya, indicates that GHRM is not exclusively relevant to established countries, but is increasingly acquiring global prominence. This signifies a notable transformation in the research domain, emphasizing the importance of GHRM in many economic scenarios. The growing participation of authors from many countries signifies that sustainability-focused HR practices are emerging as a global trend, with firms globally seeing the necessity of incorporating eco-friendly policies into their operations.

In conclusion, the necessity of implementing GHRM is evident, considering the imperative for enterprises to enhance their sustainability. The deficiencies in research—specifically concerning the absence of a cohesive framework for GHRM implementation, obstacles to adoption, and the influence of regional and cultural factors—offer significant prospects for further investigation. This study's originality is found in its thorough review and the identification of developing trends, especially the growing acknowledgment of GHRM in international settings. This research establishes a foundation for further inquiries that can fill these gaps, providing enhanced practical assistance for HR experts and fostering the progression of sustainability in firms worldwide**.**

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