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Research Article

Assessing the Effect of Green Human Resource Leadership on Organizational Culture Change Toward Environmental Awareness and Sustainability Goals

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of Green Human Resource Leadership (GHRL) in driving organizational culture change towards environmental awareness and sustainability goals. Employing a qualitative methodology through a systematic literature review (SLR), this research analyzes and synthesizes existing studies on GHRL, organizational culture, and sustainability. The data were collected from peerreviewed journal articles, books, and conference papers, focusing on literature published in the last decade. The findings reveal that GHRL significantly influences organizational culture by embedding sustainability practices in recruitment, training, and performance management systems. Leaders who prioritize sustainability can create a culture of environmental responsibility, fostering employee engagement in green initiatives. However, the study also identifies challenges such as resistance to change and a lack of prioritization by top management, which hinder the full integration of GHRL practices. Additionally, the alignment of organizational culture with sustainability goals is essential for achieving long-term environmental performance and organizational success. The study concludes that GHRL plays a crucial role in driving cultural shifts toward sustainability, but overcoming barriers requires strong leadership commitment and clear communication. Further research is recommended to explore the specific mechanisms through which GHRL impacts sustainability outcomes and to investigate its influence across various industries and organizational contexts.

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Keywords: Green Human Resource Leadership, Organizational Culture, Sustainability Goals, Environmental Awareness, Cultural Change, Leadership Practices.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing urgency of environmental sustainability has made it a critical issue for organizations worldwide. As environmental challenges escalate, businesses are increasingly expected to not only comply with sustainability regulations but also to lead the way in environmental stewardship. One of the key factors in driving this transformation is leadership, particularly in the domain of Human Resource Management (HRM). Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has emerged as a strategic approach that integrates environmental concerns into human resource practices, such as recruitment, training, and reward systems, to promote environmental awareness and sustainability within organizations (Renwick et al., 2013). The role of leadership in guiding organizations towards sustainability goals is crucial, especially in aligning organizational culture with environmental values.

Despite the growing body of research on GHRM, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the impact of Green Human Resource Leadership (GHRL) on organizational culture change. While studies have explored the relationship between GHRM practices and environmental outcomes, few have delved into how leadership within HR functions can drive cultural shifts towards sustainability (Jackson et al., 2011). Furthermore, existing research often focuses on individual HR practices rather than the broader role of leadership in fostering a green culture within organizations. This gap underscores the need to explore the specific effects of GHRL on organizational culture change towards environmental awareness and sustainability goals.

The urgency of this research lies in the critical need for organizations to embed sustainability into their cultures to meet both environmental regulations and the increasing expectations of stakeholders. Companies are under growing pressure to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability not only through operational practices but also through leadership that actively shapes organizational culture. GHRL could serve as a powerful mechanism for fostering a green organizational culture, thus aligning employee behaviors with sustainability objectives. However, the relationship between GHRL and organizational culture change, especially towards environmental awareness, remains underexplored.

Previous studies have demonstrated the positive relationship between GHRM practices and environmental outcomes, such as energy efficiency and waste reduction (Ni et al., 2023). However, these studies have largely ignored the role of leadership in driving these changes at the cultural level. For instance, Renwick et al. emphasized the need for leadership in promoting GHRM practices but did not investigate its specific influence on culture change (Renwick et al., 2013). This study aims to address this gap by examining how GHRL influences organizational culture change and promotes environmental awareness and sustainability goals.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on Green Human Resource Leadership as a specific leadership approach, which has not been sufficiently studied

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in relation to organizational culture change. This study will provide new insights into how leadership in HR can drive a shift in organizational culture towards greater environmental awareness and alignment with sustainability objectives. The findings will contribute to the literature by bridging the gap between leadership and sustainability, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how organizations can achieve long-term sustainability goals.

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of Green Human Resource Leadership on organizational culture change, particularly in relation to environmental awareness and sustainability goals. This study will also explore the mediating role of organizational culture in this relationship. The research aims to provide practical insights for HR leaders and organizational decision-makers on how to integrate sustainability into organizational culture through effective leadership practices.

This research holds significant implications for both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, it will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on GHRM by highlighting the role of leadership in fostering cultural change towards sustainability. From a practical standpoint, the study will offer actionable recommendations for HR leaders on how to leverage leadership practices to promote sustainability and environmental awareness in their organizations, thus contributing to broader sustainability goals.

Green Human Resource Leadership

Green Human Resource Leadership (GHRL) refers to the integration of sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices into the leadership strategies within the human resources (HR) function of an organization. It involves HR leaders promoting and advocating for green policies, practices, and behaviors that align with organizational sustainability goals. These leaders not only influence the development of green human resource practices but also lead by example, encouraging employees to embrace environmental responsibility (Renwick et al., 2013). By embedding environmental awareness into recruitment, training, performance management, and employee engagement, GHRL fosters a work culture that supports sustainable practices, thus contributing to the achievement of long-term environmental objectives (Jackson et al., 2011).

A critical aspect of GHRL is the role of HR leaders in shaping organizational attitudes towards environmental sustainability. These leaders act as change agents, driving the organizational commitment to environmental causes through strategic leadership and influence (Ghazal & Arshad, 2016). Green HR leadership is not just about implementing eco-friendly practices, but about creating a vision and motivating employees to be part of an organizational culture that supports sustainability. Research has highlighted that the leadership within HR functions plays a pivotal role in embedding sustainability into the core values of the organization (Jackson et al., 2011). This leadership goes beyond the operational level and extends to shaping attitudes and behaviors toward sustainability, making it an essential element for companies aiming to meet their environmental goals.

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Fostering a Culture of Environmental Awareness and Sustainability in Organizations

Organizational culture is a set of shared values, beliefs, and practices that shape how employees behave within an organization. When organizations adopt environmental sustainability as a core value, it becomes crucial for leaders, especially in HR, to guide and influence culture change towards this objective. The process of shifting organizational culture towards greater environmental awareness and sustainability goals requires a deep understanding of how organizational norms are developed and how they can be changed (Schein, 2010). A green organizational culture emphasizes environmentally responsible behaviors, such as reducing energy consumption, promoting recycling, and integrating sustainability into daily operations (Renwick et al., 2013).

The relationship between leadership and culture change is complex and requires strategic management. Leaders must ensure that sustainability becomes embedded not only in organizational processes but also in the mindset of employees. Studies have shown that leadership can significantly impact the success of culture change initiatives by aligning organizational values with sustainability goals, fostering a sense of ownership among employees, and motivating them to adopt environmentally friendly practices (Rizvi & Garg, 2021). In particular, green HR leadership is instrumental in creating a culture where sustainability is part of the organizational identity. This includes providing training on environmental issues, promoting green practices through rewards and recognition, and incorporating sustainability criteria into performance appraisals (Rahim et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the implementation of green initiatives in organizational culture aligns with broader sustainability goals, such as those outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Organizational culture influences how employees perceive their roles in achieving these goals. Research suggests that a strong green organizational culture contributes to improved environmental performance, employee satisfaction, and organizational commitment to sustainability (Renwick et al., 2013). HR leaders, therefore, play a critical role in ensuring that sustainability becomes a cornerstone of the organization's culture, which ultimately drives the success of sustainability goals. By cultivating an environmentally conscious workforce, GHRL facilitates the transition towards a sustainable future, where both employees and organizations take collective responsibility for environmental stewardship.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, specifically employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology. The SLR is chosen due to its effectiveness in synthesizing existing research and identifying patterns, gaps, and key themes across multiple studies (Tranfield et al., 2003). The primary aim of this approach is to critically evaluate and integrate the findings from a range of academic sources on the topic of Green Human Resource Leadership (GHRL), organizational culture change, and sustainability. This method allows for a comprehensive

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understanding of the subject by aggregating findings from diverse perspectives and disciplines, providing a robust foundation for future research directions.

The data sources for this study include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference papers, and reputable online databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. Only articles published within the last 10 years (2013-2023) are considered to ensure the relevance and timeliness of the literature reviewed. The inclusion criteria are based on the relevance to the key concepts of Green HR leadership, organizational culture change, environmental awareness, and sustainability, as well as the methodological rigor of the studies.

Data collection is carried out through a structured search of academic databases using specific keywords such as "Green Human Resource Leadership," "Organizational Culture Change," "Environmental Awareness," and "Sustainability Goals." Additionally, citation chaining will be employed to identify further relevant studies referenced in the selected articles. Articles are screened for quality and relevance, and data from each study is extracted using a standardized template to ensure consistency. The review process is systematic and transparent, following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, which outline procedures for reporting systematic reviews in a methodologically sound manner (Moher et al., 2009).

For the data analysis, a thematic synthesis approach is utilized. This method involves identifying, coding, and categorizing key themes and patterns related to the impact of Green HR leadership on organizational culture and sustainability. Each theme is analyzed in terms of its contribution to understanding the role of leadership in driving cultural shifts towards environmental sustainability. The findings are then organized into coherent categories, and relationships between these categories are explored to offer a deeper insight into the mechanisms by which GHRL influences organizational culture and supports sustainability goals (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This systematic approach to literature review ensures that the findings are comprehensive, transparent, and reproducible, thus contributing to a meaningful understanding of how Green HR leadership can drive cultural and environmental change within organizations.

RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

The analysis of the literature on Green Human Resource Leadership (GHRL), organizational culture change, and sustainability goals has yielded several significant findings that provide a deeper understanding of how GHRL contributes to the transformation of organizational culture towards environmental awareness and sustainability. These findings not only underline the importance of GHRL in shaping cultural shifts but also provide insights into the challenges and successes of integrating sustainability into organizational practices.

Impact of Green HR Leadership on Organizational Culture Change

Green Human Resource Leadership (GHRL) has been consistently recognized as a key driver in shaping organizational culture towards sustainability. HR leaders who embrace GHRL practices significantly influence both the formal and informal cultural aspects of an organization, such as the shared values, behaviors, and

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expectations around environmental practices. These leaders are not only responsible for introducing and advocating for green HR practices but also for embedding sustainability as a core organizational value (Renwick et al., 2013). The implementation of GHRL practices, such as incorporating sustainability into recruitment, training, performance management, and employee engagement, ensures that environmental responsibility becomes ingrained in the organizational culture. This comprehensive approach to integrating green practices into HR functions has been shown to foster a culture that promotes environmental awareness, leading to increased employee participation in green initiatives and aligning organizational behavior with sustainability goals (Jackson et al., 2011).

Leadership Practices That Promote Environmental Awareness

A key finding in the literature is that leadership practices centered on sustainability are essential in promoting environmental awareness within organizations. Green recruitment, eco-friendly training programs, and sustainabilitybased reward systems have been identified as pivotal leadership practices in fostering a green organizational culture (Renwick et al., 2013). Leaders who prioritize environmental sustainability in their strategic goals and day-to-day operations effectively integrate these practices into the core of the organization's values, thereby influencing employee behaviors and organizational norms. GHRL leaders also engage in sustainability reporting, set clear expectations for employee involvement in green practices, and communicate the importance of sustainability through regular updates and organizational campaigns. Such leadership practices ensure that employees not only understand the environmental goals but also feel motivated to contribute to them. As Mansoor et al. highlights, the involvement of leadership in sustainability initiatives significantly strengthens employees' engagement with environmental practices, enhancing the overall effectiveness of organizational sustainability efforts (Mansoor et al., 2021).

Employee Perceptions of Green Leadership and Organizational Commitment to Sustainability

The literature also underscores the significant role that employee perceptions of GHRL play in fostering organizational commitment to sustainability. Research shows that when employees perceive that their leaders genuinely support sustainability and lead by example, they are more likely to engage in environmentally responsible behaviors (Farrukh et al., 2022). This alignment between leadership values and employee perceptions creates a positive feedback loop, where employees not only adopt green behaviors but also feel a stronger sense of commitment to the organization's sustainability objectives. Employees who are exposed to green training programs and who are rewarded for sustainability-related achievements develop a deeper connection to the organization's sustainability goals, leading to higher organizational commitment (Jackson et al., 2011). The studies suggest that when leaders effectively communicate the importance of sustainability and embed it within the organizational culture, employees are more likely to internalize these values, integrating them into their daily work routines.

Barriers and Challenges to Implementing Green Human Resource Leadership

While the implementation of GHRL has shown positive results, several barriers have been identified in the literature that hinder its full implementation. One of the primary challenges is the insufficient prioritization of sustainability by top management. In some organizations, sustainability is not viewed as a core business goal, and as a result, HR leaders may lack the resources or support needed to integrate green practices into HR functions (Jackson et al., 2011). Furthermore, some companies face a lack of clarity regarding the role of HR in driving sustainability, which limits their ability to fully engage with GHRL practices. Another significant barrier is resistance to change. Employees and managers who are accustomed to traditional business practices may resist the transition to a sustainability-driven approach, particularly when the tangible benefits of such changes are not immediately evident (Schein, 2010). Overcoming this resistance requires persistent leadership, clear communication about the benefits of green initiatives, and a demonstrated commitment from top management to foster an environment where sustainability is valued.

The Role of Organizational Culture in Achieving Sustainability Goals

A recurring theme in the literature is the importance of organizational culture in achieving sustainability goals. A strong green organizational culture is critical for the successful implementation of sustainability practices and the long-term achievement of environmental objectives. Organizations with a culture that prioritizes environmental responsibility are more likely to adopt and maintain sustainable practices such as energy conservation, waste management, and ecofriendly supply chain management (Renwick et al., 2013). The alignment of organizational culture with sustainability goals not only enhances the environmental performance of the organization but also improves employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. Employees who work in organizations with a strong green culture tend to internalize sustainability values, making them more likely to engage in green behaviors both at work and in their personal lives (Mirahsani et al., 2024). Thus, the development of a green organizational culture is a key factor in achieving long-term sustainability goals and ensuring that sustainability becomes embedded in the daily operations of the organization.

Sustainability Outcomes Linked to Green Human Resource Leadership

Research indicates a direct link between GHRL and positive sustainability outcomes within organizations. Organizations with strong GHRL practices have been shown to achieve significant environmental outcomes, including reduced resource consumption, improved waste management, and enhanced sustainability reporting (Abbas et al., 2022). These outcomes not only contribute to the environmental goals of the organization but also enhance its reputation among stakeholders, improve its competitive position in the market, and ensure compliance with environmental regulations. The integration of GHRL into the strategic management of the organization ensures that sustainability is not treated as a peripheral concern but as

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a central component of the organization's overall business strategy. This holistic approach to sustainability, driven by GHRL, facilitates the achievement of environmental goals and strengthens the organization's commitment to sustainable practices (Jackson et al., 2011).

The Influence of Green HR Leadership on Organizational Sustainability Performance

The literature consistently suggests that GHRL has a direct influence on organizational sustainability performance. By aligning HR practices with sustainability goals, HR leaders play a crucial role in driving the overall sustainability performance of the organization. The implementation of green HR practices ensures that sustainability is considered in decision-making processes, from product development to marketing strategies, thereby integrating sustainability into all facets of the business. Organizations with strong GHRL practices are better equipped to meet regulatory requirements, respond to stakeholder pressures, and enhance their overall environmental performance (Renwick et al., 2013). These organizations not only achieve sustainability goals but also improve their financial performance by reducing waste, lowering energy costs, and enhancing operational efficiency.

Discussion

The findings from this study underscore the pivotal role of Green Human Resource Leadership (GHRL) in shaping organizational culture towards sustainability. The literature consistently highlights that GHRL is not merely about implementing eco-friendly practices but about strategically influencing the broader organizational culture to embrace environmental responsibility. This aligns with current trends where organizations are increasingly integrating sustainability into their core values to remain competitive in a world that demands corporate environmental responsibility (Renwick et al., 2013). As global awareness about climate change and environmental degradation grows, the role of leadership, particularly in human resources, becomes ever more critical. GHRL, therefore, serves as a key driver in making sustainability an intrinsic part of organizational culture, which has become an essential expectation for organizations seeking to align with international environmental standards and corporate social responsibility (CSR) commitments .

One of the major insights from the results is the significant impact of leadership practices on fostering environmental awareness. The literature reveals that leadership practices such as green recruitment, sustainability training, and ecofriendly reward systems are integral to cultivating a culture of environmental consciousness within organizations. In line with this, many organizations today are aligning their recruitment processes to attract talent who not only have the necessary skills but also share the company's sustainability goals (Vikas et al., 2024). This shift is not only a response to employee demand for more sustainable workplaces but also a strategic decision driven by the recognition that sustainability is a critical factor for long-term business success. As the world faces increasing environmental challenges, businesses are realizing that fostering a green culture is not a luxury but a necessity. Leaders who prioritize sustainability are setting a standard for the organization, and

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their influence is essential for motivating employees to adopt green behaviors, ultimately leading to a more sustainable organizational culture.

However, the results also highlight a key challenge: the resistance to change within organizations. As Schein notes, organizational change, particularly in ingraining new values such as sustainability, often faces resistance from employees and management who are accustomed to traditional business practices (Schein, 2010). This resistance is one of the key barriers preventing the full realization of GHRL's potential. Employees may be skeptical about the efficacy of sustainability initiatives, especially when the benefits are not immediately clear or tangible. Similarly, if top management does not show a strong commitment to green leadership, these initiatives may lack the necessary resources and support to be successful. This finding aligns with the experiences of many organizations that face challenges in integrating sustainability into their culture. Despite the growing environmental awareness, some organizations still treat sustainability as an add-on rather than a core strategic priority. This disconnect can hinder the successful implementation of green practices across the entire organization.

Moreover, the findings emphasize the need for clear communication and leadership commitment to overcome these barriers. Houmanfar et al. argues that leadership is crucial in driving cultural change, particularly in the case of sustainability (Houmanfar et al., 2018). Leaders must not only communicate the importance of sustainability but also lead by example, demonstrating their commitment through concrete actions and policies. For instance, leadership in HR should integrate sustainability criteria into performance evaluations, reward systems, and employee training programs. As the results suggest, organizations that align their culture with sustainability goals are more likely to achieve long-term success in implementing green practices. This finding is consistent with the notion that culture is the foundation for change; when sustainability becomes part of the organizational identity, employees are more likely to internalize green values and integrate them into their daily work (Ahsan & Khawaja, 2024).

In discussing the sustainability outcomes linked to GHRL, the study reinforces the importance of a strong green organizational culture in achieving long-term sustainability goals. The reviewed studies show that organizations with an established green culture are more likely to achieve measurable environmental outcomes, such as reduced energy consumption, improved waste management, and enhanced sustainability reporting (Rizzi et al., 2018). These outcomes not only fulfill regulatory requirements but also contribute to the organization's competitive advantage. As organizations continue to face increasing pressures from stakeholders, including customers, investors, and regulatory bodies, aligning organizational culture with sustainability goals is a strategic move that enhances both reputation and performance.

In conclusion, the findings of this study reaffirm the critical role of Green Human Resource Leadership in driving organizational culture change towards environmental awareness and sustainability. While the integration of green practices into organizational culture is essential, it requires overcoming significant barriers such as resistance to change and a lack of commitment from top management. As

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organizations continue to navigate the complexities of sustainability, the role of HR leaders in shaping and guiding organizational culture towards sustainability will only become more important. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on GHRL by providing new insights into how leadership can effectively drive cultural and environmental change within organizations, and it calls for further research to explore the specific mechanisms through which GHRL impacts sustainability outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of Green Human Resource Leadership (GHRL) in fostering organizational culture change towards environmental awareness and the achievement of sustainability goals. The findings reveal that GHRL practices, such as green recruitment, sustainability-focused training programs, and eco-friendly reward systems, are critical in embedding sustainability into the organizational culture. HR leaders who prioritize sustainability in their strategic goals can influence both the formal and informal elements of organizational culture, encouraging employees to embrace environmental responsibility. However, challenges such as resistance to change and insufficient prioritization by top management must be addressed to fully implement GHRL practices. Overcoming these barriers requires strong leadership commitment and clear communication of the benefits of sustainability initiatives. Furthermore, aligning organizational culture with sustainability goals enhances the effectiveness of green practices and contributes to the organization's long-term environmental performance.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between GHRL and organizational culture change, further research is needed to explore the specific mechanisms through which GHRL influences sustainability outcomes. Future studies could examine the impact of GHRL across different industries and organizational sizes to determine whether the relationship holds in various contexts. Additionally, empirical research exploring the role of GHRL in driving environmental behavior at the individual level would provide deeper insights into how leadership directly shapes employee engagement with sustainability initiatives. Lastly, future research should explore the long-term impact of green organizational culture on business performance, particularly focusing on the interplay between sustainability goals and organizational success.

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