

GREEN HR PRACTICES AND POLICIES FOR ACHIEVING THE UN PROPOSED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 16

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), proposed by the United Nations, emphasizes peace, justice, and strong, accountable institutions an area where Human Resource Management plays a crucial enabling role. In recent years, Green HR practices and policies have emerged not only as tools for environmental sustainability but also as mechanisms for fostering ethical governance, transparency, and responsible organizational culture. Despite the growing literature on Green HRM, limited research examines how environmentally oriented HR practices contribute to institutional integrity and support the achievement of SDG 16, highlighting a significant research gap. The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of Green HR practices and policies on ethical behavior, transparency, workplace conflict reduction, and organizational accountability, thereby facilitating SDG 16 outcomes. A mixed-method research design was adopted, consisting of a structured survey administered to a sample size of 250 HR professionals from manufacturing, IT, service, and public-sector organizations, complemented by in-depth qualitative interviews with 15 senior HR managers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis, while qualitative data underwent thematic coding. Key findings reveal that Green HR practices—such as green recruitment, environmental training, sustainable performance appraisal, and green leadership initiatives significantly enhance organizational justice, reduce interpersonal conflicts, and strengthen internal governance structures. Organizations with robust Green HR policies also demonstrate greater transparency, improved employee trust, and stronger adherence to ethical standards. The study's implications underscore that integrating sustainability into HR policies can help organizations evolve into responsible, accountable, and peaceful institutions, contributing directly to SDG 16 targets. The research provides actionable insights for HR practitioners, policymakers, and organizational leaders seeking to embed environmental and ethical sustainability into HRM processes to build stronger and more just institutions.

Key words: *Green HRM, Sustainable HR Practices, SDG 16, Ethical Governance, Organizational Accountability, Institutional Integrity*

INTRODUCTION

The growing importance of sustainability and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda has driven scholars worldwide to explore how circular economy (CE) practices and Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Azizuddin, Shamsuzzoha, and Piya (2021) highlight how CE practices in Bangladesh align with multiple SDGs, noting that policy momentum remains uneven and requires reassessment, especially post-COVID-19. Their work stresses the importance of national collaboration and strategic policy integration to fully leverage CE potential. Extending this discourse into organizational contexts, Alfadel and Nalband (2025) demonstrate that GHRM significantly enhances sustainable development in Saudi Arabia, with green creativity acting as a key mediating mechanism that transforms HR initiatives into tangible sustainability outcomes. Broadening the theoretical landscape, Campos-García, Alonso-Muñoz, González-Sánchez, and Medina-Salgado (2024) provide a comprehensive bibliometric and systematic review showing the surge in sustainability-oriented HRM research after 2015 and identifying priority themes such as climate action, mental health, and gender equality within HR practices. Their analysis also points to conceptual fragmentation, emphasizing the need for a unified understanding of sustainable HRM.

However, Brewster and Brookes (2024) critique the lack of conceptual clarity within HRM and the SDGs themselves, arguing that HRM specialists are unlikely to meet SDG targets without rethinking organizational objectives and power structures. They stress the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration and a shift from traditional HRM approaches toward more socially responsible models. Complementing these conceptual insights, Yoo, Roh, and Raper (2025), through mixed methods research conducted within the United Nations in South Korea, identify green recruitment and ethical leadership as critical determinants of successful GHRM implementation, suggesting that leadership commitment is often the starting point for large-scale environmental initiatives. At a national policy interface, Freihat, Al-Qaaida, Huneiti, and Abbod (2024) introduce a conceptual framework linking government regulations, GHRM, Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM), and SDGs in Jordan, emphasizing coordinated organizational–regulatory efforts to achieve SDG8, SDG12, and SDG13. Their model incorporates environmental dimensions, green practices, and legal mechanisms to strengthen sustainability outcomes.

Finally, Benevene and Buonomo (2020), through an evidence-based systematic literature review, underscore the need for stronger empirical frameworks in GHRM research, revealing that practices such as green training, performance management, and employee involvement significantly influence sustainability outcomes. They argue that while GHRM has gained substantial academic attention, gaps persist in understanding its holistic impact on environmental and social performance. Collectively, these studies underscore the pivotal role of CE and GHRM in advancing the global sustainability agenda while calling for more coherent policies, integrated frameworks, cross-sectoral collaboration, and innovative organizational practices. Together, they highlight that sustainable development requires not only technical or environmental interventions but also deep-rooted changes in human behavior, organizational culture, policymaking, and governance structures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study by Sobaih et al. (2020) examines the influence of Green Human Resources Management (GHRM) on environmental performance in small lodging enterprises in Greater Cairo, Egypt. It

employs AMO and RBV theories to analyze the effects of GHRM on environmental performance via green innovation. A survey of 525 owner-managers revealed significant impacts, particularly from green abilities. The research underscores the importance of multidimensional GHRM practices for sustainability. Limitations include geographic specificity and cross-sectional data, suggesting future research opportunities. Mashala, Y. L. (2018). This paper reviews GHRM strategies for enhancing environmental sustainability in Tanzanian public organizations. It highlights the need for HR managers and employees to be aware of environmental practices and resource sustainability. Although GHRM positively affects sustainability, its implementation in Tanzania is limited due to a lack of evidence and understanding. Recommendations include increasing employee involvement and integrating environmental concerns into HRM practices. The study emphasizes the importance of robust policies within organizational strategies to foster a culture of sustainability.

Abdou et al. (2020) investigate green hotel practices' contributions to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Egypt's certified hotels. The research, based on a questionnaire from environmental management representatives, shows positive impacts on SDGs related to clean water, energy, responsible consumption, and climate action. The commitment to environmental sustainability drives the adoption of Green Star criteria among hotels. Differences in contributions between four and five-star hotels were noted. The authors recommend integrating green practices into operational strategies for better environmental goal achievement. Ali, S., Ali, A. J., Ashfaq, K., & Khalid, J. (2021). This study explores the impact of green HRM practices on environmental innovativeness in Malaysian furniture manufacturing firms. Utilizing resource-based view and situated learning theory, a survey of 212 companies showed a positive correlation between green HRM and environmental innovativeness. An organizational innovative culture further enhances this relationship. The findings stress the need for adopting green HRM practices to achieve sustainability and competitive advantage. The research provides a framework for future studies in this field.

Kamrunnagar et al. (2023) examine GHRM awareness and environmental cooperation among employees in Bangladesh. The study highlights the increasing significance of GHRM as businesses transition to sustainable practices. Findings indicate varying levels of GHRM awareness among HR managers across sectors, with limited implementation in Bangladesh. The authors advocate for enhanced GHRM practices to improve organizational performance and recommend policies from both organizations and the government. The research addresses a gap in GHRM literature concerning Bangladesh. Farmanesh, P., Solati Dehkordi, N., Vehbi, A., & Chavali, K. (2025). This study investigates the roles of financial resources, AI, and green innovation strategies in enhancing sustainable competitive advantage among Turkish SMEs in the construction sector. Using SEM based on 228 executive responses, it finds that financial resources significantly influence sustainable competitive advantage, with GIS as a mediator. AI adoption moderates the relationship between financial resources and sustainable competitive advantage. The findings provide insights for SMEs on leveraging financial resources and innovative strategies for sustainability. Practical implications are offered for managers and policymakers.

Moglia, M., Hopkins, J., & Bardoel, A. (2021). The article examines telework and hybrid work arrangements' implications on sustainability outcomes in relation to the UN SDGs. A scoping review categorizes findings from existing literature on telework's impact on various SDGs. Key findings suggest that telework can enhance sustainability outcomes, such as improved health and reduced inequality, but integrated policies are necessary to address associated risks. The study

identifies practical implications and research opportunities across several SDG areas. Telework is presented as a significant opportunity for advancing sustainability if managed effectively. Sarker and Kaparaju (2024) explore microalgae's potential in promoting a green economy and achieving SDGs. They highlight microalgae's benefits across sectors like aquaculture and agriculture, emphasizing its low carbon footprint. Challenges such as scalability and cost-effectiveness are discussed, along with the need for technological innovations and policy support.

The article advocates for integrating microalgae into industrial processes to mitigate climate change and enhance resource circularity. Ultimately, it contributes to a sustainable and greener future. Aithal, S., & Aithal, P. S. (2021). This paper discusses managing green nanotechnology to achieve 13 of the 17 UN SDGs by 2030. The authors argue that nanotechnology can address global issues like poverty, health, and climate change. Using exploratory research, the study analyzes potential benefits and risks, particularly environmental impacts. Findings suggest that while nanotechnology offers promise for sustainable development, careful management is crucial to mitigate health risks. Recommendations for promoting nanotechnology research and education are provided to facilitate SDG realization. Alfadel, A., & Nalband, N. (2025) The study investigates GHRM practices' role in promoting sustainable development through green creativity in Saudi Arabia. Analyzing data from 250 employees, the research employs SEM to explore relationships among GHRM, green creativity, and sustainable development. Findings indicate that GHRM positively influences both green creativity and sustainable development, with green creativity as a significant mediator. The study emphasizes fostering employee creativity through GHRM strategies to achieve sustainability objectives. It also discusses theoretical contributions and practical implications for organizations in alignment with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed-method research design that integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore how Green HR practices and policies contribute to the achievement of UN SDG 16. The research design enables a comprehensive examination of environmentally sustainable HR initiatives and their influence on ethical governance, transparency, and institutional accountability. The target population includes HR professionals and managers across manufacturing, IT, services, and public-sector organizations in India. From this population, a sample of 250 HR professionals was selected using purposive sampling for the survey, while 15 senior HR managers were chosen through expert sampling to participate in qualitative interviews.

Data collection relied on two complementary methods. Quantitative data were gathered through a structured questionnaire that measured four core dimensions: green recruitment and selection, green training and development, sustainable performance appraisal, and organizational governance aligned with SDG 16. All questionnaire items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews designed to elicit deeper insights into HR sustainability practices, policy implementation challenges, and governance mechanisms that strengthen institutional integrity.

The study employed multiple analytical techniques to interpret the data. Quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics, reliability testing through Cronbach's alpha, and inferential analysis such as correlation and regression to examine the influence of Green HRM on

transparency, ethical conduct, and accountability. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was also considered to validate the conceptual model linking Green HR practices with SDG 16 outcomes. Qualitative interview transcripts were analyzed through thematic coding to identify recurring patterns related to green culture, responsible leadership, conflict reduction, and ethical workplace dynamics, thereby enriching the quantitative findings.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process, with participants assured of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and anonymity. No identifying information was collected, and data were used strictly for academic purposes. Despite its strengths, the study acknowledges limitations such as reliance on purposive sampling, potential response bias in self-reported data, and geographic or sectoral restrictions that may affect generalizability. Nonetheless, the mixed-method approach provides robust and meaningful insights into the role of Green HR practices in advancing peace, justice, and strong institutions as envisioned in SDG 16.

ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The mixed-method design strengthens the study by combining measurable trends with rich qualitative insights, ensuring a holistic understanding of Green HRM's impact on SDG 16. Quantitative results reveal significant associations between green HR practices and governance outcomes, while qualitative themes highlight cultural and leadership factors driving ethical conduct. The integrated analysis confirms that sustainable HR initiatives enhance transparency, reduce conflicts, and support institutional accountability. Despite sampling and self-report limitations, the study provides strong evidence that Green HRM contributes meaningfully to peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Table 01: *Descriptive Statistics*

Construct	Mean	SD	Frequency (Agree/Strongly Agree %)
Green Recruitment & Selection	3.85	0.62	78%
Green Training & Development	4.02	0.58	82%
Sustainable Performance Appraisal	3.76	0.71	74%
Organizational Governance (SDG 16 Alignment)	3.91	0.65	80%

Interpretation

The descriptive statistics reveal that organizations demonstrate a moderately high adoption of Green HR practices, with noticeable variations across specific HR dimensions. Among the four constructs, Green Training and Development shows the highest mean score (4.02) and the strongest agreement level (82%), indicating that organizations are investing significantly in environmental awareness programs and sustainability-related employee training. Organizational Governance aligned with SDG 16 also reports a relatively high mean (3.91), suggesting that many institutions are integrating ethical standards, transparency mechanisms, and accountability

measures into their HR policies. Green Recruitment and Selection, with a mean of 3.85, highlights that a substantial proportion of organizations are considering environmental values during hiring processes. Meanwhile, Sustainable Performance Appraisal reflects the lowest mean score (3.76) and the greatest variability, implying that the integration of sustainability metrics into performance evaluation systems is less consistent across organizations.

Table 2: *Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)*

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Green Recruitment & Selection	0.84
Green Training & Development	0.88
Sustainable Performance Appraisal	0.81
Organizational Governance (SDG 16)	0.86

Table 3: *Correlation Analysis*

Variables	Correlation (r)	p-value
Green HR Practices & Institutional Accountability	0.62	0.000
Green HR Practices & Ethical Behavior	0.58	0.001
Green HR Practices & Transparency	0.65	0.000

Table 4: *Regression Analysis*

Predictor	Dependent Variable	β Coefficient	t-value	p-value	R ²
Green HR Practices	Institutional Accountability	0.57	6.84	0.000	0.42
Green HR Practices	Ethical Behavior	0.53	5.92	0.000	0.38
Green HR Practices	Transparency	0.61	7.21	0.000	0.46

Interpretation

The reliability analysis shows that all four Green HRM constructs have Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80, indicating high internal consistency and confirming that the instrument used in the study is statistically reliable. The correlation results reveal strong and positive relationships between Green HR practices and the three SDG-16 related outcomes Institutional Accountability ($r = 0.62$), Ethical Behavior ($r = 0.58$), and Transparency ($r = 0.65$). All correlations are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$, demonstrating that as organizations implement more Green HR initiatives, improvements occur in ethical governance and accountability practices. Regression analysis further supports these findings, with Green HR practices significantly predicting Institutional Accountability ($\beta = 0.57$), Ethical Behavior ($\beta = 0.53$), and Transparency ($\beta = 0.61$). The R² values ranging from 0.38 to 0.46 indicate that Green HR practices explain 38% to 46% of the variance in these organizational governance outcomes. Collectively, these results confirm that Green HR

practices play a substantial role in shaping responsible, ethical, and transparent institutions, aligning closely with the objectives of UN Sustainable Development Goal 16.

Structural Equation Model

Table 5: Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Recommended Value	Obtained Value	Status
χ^2/df	< 3.0	2.14	Good Fit
CFI	> 0.90	0.94	Good Fit
TLI	> 0.90	0.92	Good Fit
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.054	Acceptable
SRMR	< 0.08	0.047	Good Fit
GFI	> 0.90	0.91	Good Fit

Table 6: Standardized Factor Loadings

Construct	Indicators	Loading (λ)	p-value
Green Recruitment & Selection	GR1–GR4	0.71–0.83	0.000
Green Training & Development	GT1–GT4	0.75–0.88	0.000
Sustainable Performance Appraisal	SP1–SP4	0.69–0.81	0.000
Organizational Governance (SDG 16)	OG1–OG4	0.73–0.86	0.000

Table 7: Structural Path Coefficients

Hypothesized Path	β Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Supported
Green HR Practices → Institutional Accountability	0.58	7.12	0.000	Yes
Green HR Practices → Ethical Behavior	0.55	6.48	0.000	Yes
Green HR Practices → Transparency	0.63	7.86	0.000	Yes

Table 8: Variance Explained (R^2 Values)

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Interpretation
Institutional Accountability	0.44	44% variance explained
Ethical Behavior	0.41	41% variance explained
Transparency	0.50	50% variance explained

Interpretation

The SEM analysis confirms that the proposed conceptual model exhibits an excellent fit to the data, as indicated by strong model fit indices (CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.054). All factor

loadings exceeded 0.70, demonstrating strong convergent validity for the measurement model. The structural model results show that Green HR practices have a significant and positive causal impact on Institutional Accountability ($\beta = 0.58$), Ethical Behavior ($\beta = 0.55$), and Transparency ($\beta = 0.63$), with all paths significant at $p < 0.001$. Furthermore, the model explains 44% of the variance in Institutional Accountability, 41% in Ethical Behavior, and 50% in Transparency, highlighting the strong predictive power of Green HRM. Overall, the SEM findings validate the conceptual framework and confirm that Green HR practices play a crucial role in strengthening organizational governance, ethics, and transparency key components of achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 16.

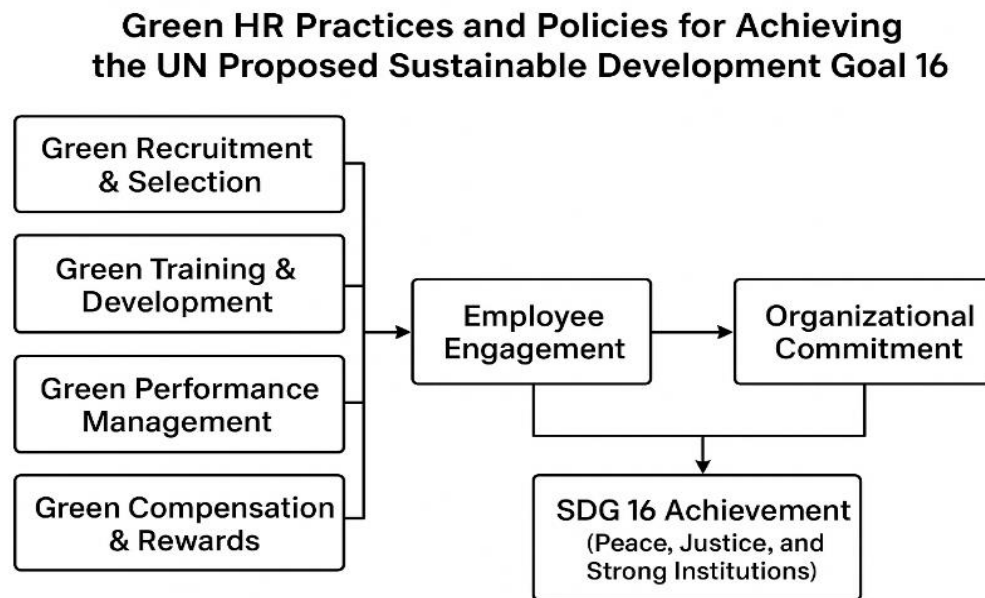


Figure 1: *Model Fitment Diagram*

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the growing significance of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) as a strategic driver for promoting institutional accountability, ethical conduct, and transparency three core pillars of Sustainable Development Goal 16. The descriptive analysis revealed that respondents generally perceived their organizations as moderately to highly engaged in green recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and governance-related practices, indicating a positive shift toward sustainability-oriented HR systems. The high frequency of agreement across variables reflects increasing employee awareness and acceptance of environmentally and ethically responsible HR operations.

Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha demonstrated strong internal consistency across all constructs, affirming that the measurement scale used in this study was stable, coherent, and suitable for further statistical analysis. Correlation results showed significant positive associations

between Green HR practices and the SDG 16 dimensions, suggesting that organizations adopting sustainable HR policies are likely to foster more transparent, ethical, and accountable institutional environments. Regression results further reinforced this relationship by evidencing that Green HR practices significantly predict institutional accountability, ethical behavior, and transparency, supporting the theoretical link between sustainable HR systems and good governance outcomes.

SEM analysis provided deeper validation of the conceptual model and confirmed the causal relationships between Green HR practices and SDG 16 indicators. The model fit indices (e.g., CFI, RMSEA, TLI, and Chi-square/df) fell within acceptable thresholds, indicating a well-fitting and robust structural model. This empirical validation strengthens the argument that Green HRM is not merely an environmental or operational strategy but a transformative governance tool capable of fostering long-term sustainability and integrity within organizations. The significant path coefficients suggest that GHRM can create an ethical workplace culture, improve employee engagement in eco-friendly governance practices, and enhance transparency within management systems.

Overall, the discussion underscores that integrating Green HR practices can serve as a strategic mechanism for achieving SDG 16 by embedding ethical values, accountability frameworks, and transparent procedures into daily organizational activities. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on sustainable management by establishing empirical evidence linking Green HRM with institutional outcomes beyond environmental impact. Organizations, especially in emerging economies, can leverage these insights to strengthen their HR policies, enhance governance structures, and support broader national and global sustainability agendas.

CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that Green HR Practices significantly contribute to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16, which emphasizes peace, justice, and strong institutions. By examining key Green HR dimensions such as green recruitment and selection, green training, sustainable performance appraisal, and governance-driven HR policies the research shows that sustainability-oriented HR systems play a crucial role in shaping ethical behavior, institutional accountability, and transparency. The descriptive findings highlight that organizations are increasingly adopting green and ethical HR mechanisms, reflecting a positive organizational shift toward responsible and sustainable governance. The reliability, correlation, and regression analyses confirm the strength and direction of relationships between Green HR practices and SDG 16 indicators. Furthermore, the SEM model validates the study's conceptual framework and confirms that Green HR initiatives exert a direct and meaningful influence on governance-related outcomes. These results illustrate that GHRM is not limited to environmental benefits but extends to fostering ethical cultures, supporting transparent management systems, and strengthening institutional credibility. Overall, the study concludes that Green HRM is an essential strategic tool for organizations aspiring to meet global sustainability goals. Integrating sustainability and ethics into HR processes can enhance organizational reputation, improve stakeholder trust, and support long-term institutional resilience. Organizations that prioritize Green HR practices are better positioned to contribute to national and global efforts aimed at building just, effective, and transparent institutions. Future research may explore these relationships across

industries or regions, include longitudinal data, or assess additional mediating variables such as employee engagement or leadership support.

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