

FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: CURRENT TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF GREEN HRM IN HOSPITALS

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Abstract

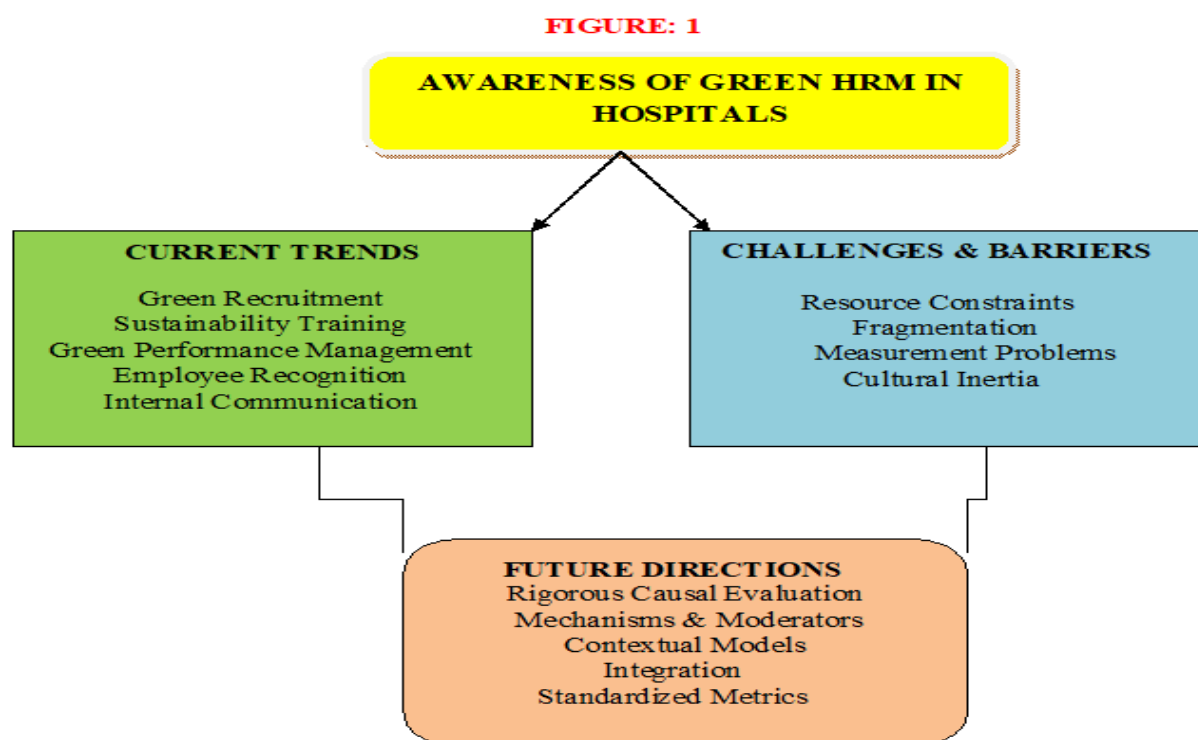
Translating the sustainability commitments into people-oriented practices: the sustainability commitment in hospitals is translated into green recruitment, training, performance appraisal, rewards and employee engagement that contributes to pro-environmental behaviour. The medical industry is crucial to ensuring a sustainable environment, yet hospitals are still struggling to adopt sustainable environmental practices. The article will examine the prevailing trends, issues and future of (GHRM) in hospitals, in the context of moving the awareness to practical integration. Using quantitative data of 150 hospital employees, the research evaluates the significant obstacles which prevent the implementation of the GHRM practices. Descriptive statistical results reveal that fragmentation and responsibilities (Mean = 3.87, SD = 0.950) and cultural and behavioural inertia (Mean = 3.66, SD = 0.858) are the most prominent obstacles, followed by resource and capacity constraints (Mean = 3.25, SD = 1.009) and measurement and attribution problems (Mean = 3.10, SD = 1.023). These findings indicate that while awareness of sustainability has increased among hospital staff, systemic barriers continue to impede its full integration into human resource policies and daily operations. The article underscores the importance of cross-functional cooperation, leadership dedication and alignment policies in entrenching GHRM in hospital management systems. The healthcare facilities can cultivate a culture of environmental mindfulness and can optimize their operations, as well as contribute to the overall objectives of sustainable development. Synthesizing the recent evidence on trends, practical barriers, organisational outcomes and research gaps, this article provides an implementation checklist to hospital managers and suggests a future research and policy agenda to transform awareness to concrete action by hospitals.

Keywords: (GHRM), Hospitals, Sustainability, Environmental Practices, Challenges, Barriers and Healthcare Management.

Introduction

Healthcare systems are ironically huge sources of resources and waste and are at the heart of national wellbeing; this has placed a growing strain on hospitals to shrink environmental imprints without reducing care services. Green HRM- the coordination of HR processes and systems with environmental objectives- has become a tool to work sustainability into daily hospital operations through the construction of staff selection, skills, motivation and behaviour. Literature indicates a recent interest in the role GHRM plays in improving

environmental and organisational performance in healthcare environments. A cross-sectional study and quasi-experimental ones indicate that GHRM practices (training, green performance management, awareness campaigns) are linked with increased employee green behaviours and better environmental performance indicators (waste segregation rates, energy use per bed, procurement choices). Ecological, knowledge, meaningfulness of work mediation has been reported. New findings indicate secondary benefits: increased employee engagement, organisational identity and positive public image-factors that can indirectly help patient care and retention. Nevertheless, there are still a limited number of robust causal studies in hospital settings



Source: Authors contribution

Current trends in Green HRM for hospitals

Rising Scholarly and Practical Attention

(GHRM) has drawn considerable academic and practical interest in the last ten years, especially in the field of healthcare. The world has become more focused on sustainability and more stringent environmental regulations have forced hospitals to re-evaluate their approaches to human resources in order to minimize their ecological footprints. The question of how HR functions, including recruitment, training, and performance evaluation, can act as drivers towards creating environmental responsibility in healthcare professionals has emerged as a topic being researched upon. Numerous bibliometric and systematic reviews indicate a

steep increase in publications connecting HRM and sustainability in healthcare, particularly since 2020, with hospitals aiming to equate themselves. In practice, a number of hospitals have embarked on eco-friendly HR practices to minimize waste in operations, maximize energy consumption, and motivate their staff to engage in sustainability initiatives. Environmental stewardship has been identified as a healthcare quality component by international health organizations. GHRM has therefore become a mainstream management practice, a strategic approach that is studied and applied, filling the gap between workforce engagement and environmental awareness. This growing interest indicates that hospitals are starting to think about sustainability not as a marginal practice but as a fundamental organizational goal that is being embedded in human capital practices.

Common GHRM Practices Being Piloted in Hospitals

To introduce environmental sustainability into their cultures, hospitals around the world are trying various Green HRM practices. One of the most obvious efforts is green recruitment and selection, which focuses on the applicants showing their socially responsible attitude and environmentally friendly work behavior. Upon recruitment, new employees are taken through training sessions that aim to instill in them waste management, energy conservation, and environmental-friendly clinical practices. Environmental goals are also incorporated in performance management systems used in hospitals to reward departments or individuals who achieve certain sustainability benchmarks. Recognition programs like the Green Employee of the Month encourage motivation and learning among peers. Digital HR tools are being adopted by some institutions to reduce the amount of article consumed, and others are promoting the involvement of staff in green committees to propose and enact eco-initiatives. There are also pilot green compensation systems that provide bonuses or incentives based on attaining measurable environmental results. Environmental responsibility in health care delivery is promoted through communication campaigns, posters and awareness drives in hospitals. Together, these practices not only diminish the environmental footprint of the hospital, but also establish a sense of shared ownership. The initial success of such pilot programs underscores the importance of GHRM in translating the notion of sustainability into everyday operational practice so that the concept of environmental protection becomes an inherent aspect of healthcare service provision.

Focus Shift: From Ad-hoc Initiatives to Systemic Integration

Although in the past several hospitals have appeared to introduce green concepts as a stand-alone project, there is definite movement towards systematic implementation of sustainability in HR policies and organizational strategies. Initial attempts, including a few recycling events or campaigns, were symbolic and did not last long. Nowadays, progressive healthcare institutions realize that the long-term ecological impact needs to be incorporated into the very fabric of HR practices. This systemic integration is achieved through institutionalizing sustainability objectives in HR policies, connecting environmental performance measurement to staff performance assessment, and holding leaders responsible to achieve green results. In addition, the HR indicators have become a part of sustainability reporting and audits because of the green culture commitment of the organization. Digital tools and data analytics tracking both environmental performance and staff engagement in real time also help to support this transition of fragmented activities to structured systems. It has led to a holistic approach in which sustainability is considered as an ethical demand alongside an operational requirement. Institutionalizing GHRM, hospitals are taking the next step to awareness campaigns to create resilient, environmentally responsible healthcare systems that can support long-term change.

Literature Review

Luo et al (2025) analyzed the interaction among green transformational leadership and the impact on sustainability in the health industry. The authors suggest that leaders who set positive examples and demonstrate environmental responsibility and convey an idea of what sustainability should look like, will be able to encourage staff to get involved in practices that are environmentally friendly. Hospitals that employ them have better environmental performance, high levels of employee loyalty, and organizational loyalty. The research finds that long-term sustainability of a healthcare organization is attainable by aligning leadership practices with well-organized GHRM practices. With a culture of mutual environmental stewardship, healthcare facilities can effectively strike the balance between patient care and ecological stewardship, making sustainability an essential element of organizational performance.

Ren, Tang, and Jackson (2018) discussed that such as green recruitment and selection, training, performance management, and rewards have shown to encourage the eco-friendly conduct of employees. Although there is an increased interest, the review observes that many gaps in research have been identified, including the need to conduct more longitudinal and causal research, examine mediation processes, including employee green behavior, and

contextual variables, such as cultural and organizational differences. The article also proposes to integrate GHRM with more comprehensive sustainability and strategic management efforts. On the whole, this publication is a resource that scholars and practitioners can use to gain an insight into the theoretical basis, existing trends, and perspectives on the research of GHRM.

In a study by Faheem, Nawaz et al. (2023), the authors examined the trends in the volume of research, authorship, and thematic focus in the last 20 years and noted the rise in scholarly interest to environmental sustainability in organizational management. It is also found in the analysis that there are gaps in research, such as in service industries which involve the health care sector, there is a limited study of contextual variables, and there are no empirical studies of a direct link between GHRM practices and quantifiable environmental results. The authors outline future research lines that include cross-sector comparisons, causal studies, and how a framework can be developed to align human resource practices with organizational sustainability strategies. This paper provides a guide to scholars and practitioners who want to use HRM to drive environmental innovation.

Research Gap

(GHRM) has received considerable focus in industries, studies in the healthcare field especially in hospitals are small and scattered. The existing limited literature focuses mainly on theoretical models or broad sustainability programs without providing empirical findings to employee attitudes, organizational preparedness, and objective environmental impacts in a healthcare context. Additionally, the effect of contextual variables on the effectiveness of GHRM like the size of the hospitals, the ownership structure, and availability of resources is not well-evidenced.. Moreover, empirical research tends to be based on cross-sectional or perception-based data, without longitudinal or experimental designs that may help determine causation. Thus, we urgently require thorough and context-specific studies to establish the barriers, determine the implementation efficiency, and suggest efficient frameworks to integrate GHRM into hospital management systems, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Importance of the Study

The research is noteworthy in that it deals with the increasing need to accomplish a more sustainable hospital. Hospitals represent some of the biggest energy consumers and medical waste generators, but their sustainability programs tend to be disjointed. The research gives practical information to administrators, policymakers, and HR professionals by determining

the contemporary trends, difficult aspects, and new trends of GHRM in hospitals. It emphasizes how good HR practices including green hiring, training and performance reviews can develop an environmentally responsible culture among hospital employees. The article also highlights how leadership commitment and interdepartmental cooperation can contribute towards long-term results. The results will lead hospitals to go beyond individualized sustainability efforts towards systemic, measurable action. Additionally, the research adds to scholarly literature by providing a contextual gap in the healthcare-based GHRM research and a basis to undertake empirical and policy-focused studies in the future.

Statement of the Problem

With the growing concern over environmental sustainability, not all hospitals are able to translate the concern into effective and measurable (GHRM) practices. Healthcare is a business with special operational needs that often override environmental efforts, including patient safety, 24/7 service delivery, and regulatory compliance. Consequently, green practices in hospitals are generally informal, disconnected, and not well assimilated into HR policies. The primary issues are shortage of funds and human resource, lack of focus on unified duties in various departments, absence of uniform measurement framework, and reluctance to change behaviour amid the employees. Moreover, hospital administrators do not have empirical data provided on which GHRM strategies will provide real environmental and organizational paybacks. Such a gap leads to uneven uptake and low long-term effects. Thus, the key issue discussed in this article is the level of adoption of GHRM practices by hospitals, the obstacles to its successful implementation, and the processes with the help of which GHRM practices can be institutionalized. These concerns are essential in facilitating sustainable management of hospitals, and alignment of healthcare facilities to global sustainability objectives.

Objectives

- To examine the significant challenges and barriers influencing the implementation of (GHRM) practices in hospitals.
- To determine to what the degree to which these problems affect integration or sustainability of GHRM initiatives in healthcare institutions.

Research methodology

The convenient sampling technique was used to identify a sample of 150 respondents in this study, which is suitable in exploratory research study in an organizational setting like a hospital. The given non-probability sampling method enabled the researcher to collect data effectively among people who were easily accessible and willing to discuss the subject such as doctors, nurses, administration, and HR professionals. The questionnaire included closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to measure the variables of awareness, the level of implementation, and barriers quantitatively. The group of respondents was contacted both in person and through electronic means, over a specified time frame, to increase participation and representation of the departments. The gathered information was informative as it helped to understand how the hospital employees feel and think about GHRM initiatives and define the main barriers and opportunities to facilitate environmental sustainability in healthcare organizations.

Analysis, Findings and Results

The analysis aimed to quantify the extent to which each factor influences the adoption and sustainability of green initiatives within healthcare institutions. Data were collected from 150 respondents representing various hospital departments. The mean and standard deviation values provide an understanding of the general perception and variability in responses concerning each challenge. To gain deeper insights into the difficulties faced by hospitals in implementing (GHRM) practices, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on the major challenges and barriers.

Results of Descriptive Statistics of Major challenges and barriers

Sr.no.	Major challenges and barriers	N	Mean	SD
1	Resource and capacity constraints	150	3.25	1.009
2	Fragmentation and responsibilities	150	3.87	.950
3	Measurement and attribution problems	150	3.10	1.023
4	Cultural & behavioral inertia	150	3.66	.858

The findings revealed that fragmentation and responsibilities (Mean = 3.87, SD = 0.950) became the most prominent obstacle, which implies a lack of coordination between the HR and sustainability functions. Subsequently, there was cultural and behavioral inertia (Mean = 3.66, SD = 0.858), which can be characterized as an employee resistance to change. There

were also significant issues of resource and capacity limitations and measurement and attribution that contributed to the challenges highlighted by the complexity of obstacles that have to be overcome to achieve successful GHRM integration within hospitals.

Practical roadmap — a hospital manager's checklist to move from awareness to action

1. Design pilots that can be measured: small, time limited pilots (e.g., waste segregation in wards pre/post measurement) to accrue evidence and scale.
2. Communication & norms: implement frequent sustainability messages that connect actions to patient care (why it matters clinically) and share favorable news with the audience.
3. Align incentives: start with low cost recognition programs; think of basing part of team performance bonuses on reliable environmental KPMIs when there are such metrics.
4. Capacity building: The staff training time is safeguarded and green champions are appointed in clinical teams.
5. Monitor and report: post basic internal dashboards with behaviour and environmental performance; repeat on data.

Future research & policy directions

1. Strict Causal review in Hospitals: Future studies of (GHRM) in hospitals should be centered on strict causal review, aimed at creating explicit connections between HR practices and environmental outcomes. The vast majority of the available literature operates on the basis of cross-sectional or perceptual-based information, making it impossible to infer causality. The use of experimental or longitudinal designs could facilitate the determination of the actual effect of green recruitment, training and reward systems on the quantifiable sustainability measures of energy consumption, waste minimization, and cost savings. Strict assessment will also assist in the evaluation of policy decisions based on evidence so that hospital administrators can learn what specific GHRM interventions have the most significant and long-term effects.
2. Mechanisms and Boundary Conditions: It is important to gain an understanding of the underlying mechanisms and bounds of the GHRM effectiveness to develop the theory and practice. Future research must investigate the mediation or moderation of the relationship between GHRM practices and environmental performance by variables like employee motivation, ecological commitment, leadership style, and organizational culture. Further, variables such as the size of hospitals, ownership, and availability of resources could affect the intensity of such associations. Through establishing the

psychological and situational motivation of staff green behaviour, it becomes possible to tailor interventions that are more specific and thus most effective, as well as make GHRM approaches more adaptable in various healthcare settings.

3. **LMIC Contextualized Models:** Vast majority of GHRM studies are supported by high-income countries leaving low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs) with a knowledge gap. It is crucial to develop contextualized models in LMICs because hospitals in these countries have limited budgets, equipment, and training resources. Individualised models must focus on low-cost high impact strategies including behaviour change initiatives, green awareness education, and community-based sustainability alliances. In addition, policies have to take into account local cultural values and socio-economic realities. The GHRM models contextualized will help LMIC hospitals to undertake sustainable practice effectively without compromising on quality healthcare delivery in resource-constrained environments.
4. **Connectivity to Patient Safety and Clinical Objectives:** The combination of GHRM programs with patient safety and clinical goals fosters sustainability initiatives complementary and not competitive to healthcare priorities. To achieve environmental targets and patient care, hospitals can connect green practices to better patient care outcomes- such as decreasing chemical waste leads to a better air quality and infection control. Integrating sustainability education with clinical practices can contribute to accountability and multidisciplinary team working. This incorporation redefines environmental responsibility as a component of comprehensive health care provision. Green HR can be implemented to benefit hospitals in multiple ways by promoting ecological and patient safety outcomes, since in this case, hospitals can both improve the quality of care and reduce their impact on the environment.
5. **Standardized Measurement Frameworks:** Due to the lack of standardized measurement frameworks, comparison and long-term evaluation of GHRM effectiveness in hospitals are limited. It is necessary to develop validated tools and indicators to track progress and promote accountability. Further studies must suggest combined measures, including the proportion of employees who have been educated on sustainability, the waste / patient bed, and the inclusion rate of green performance appraisal. The regular measurement will allow institutions and region benchmarking of data and make decisions based on the results. Also with standardized frameworks, transparency and integration of sustainability reporting into hospital management systems are encouraged, a culture of

constant improvement and evidence-based environmental performance in healthcare is promoted.

Policy & managerial implications

- ✚ **Policy-makers** should incentivize hospitals through reporting requirements and targeted grants for staff training and green HR pilots.
- ✚ **Hospital leaders** should treat GHRM as strategic (not cosmetic), invest in cross-functional governance, and prioritize measurement.
- ✚ **HR professionals** must partner with sustainability teams to embed competencies across HR processes rather than relying on one-off campaigns.

Conclusion

Green HRM provides an exciting way of transforming personal consciousness into lasting organisational behaviour within hospitals. The evidence base indicates positive relationships between GHRM practices and employee green behaviour and indicates wider organisational benefits; however, hospitals are facing resource, governance, measurement and cultural challenges. Taking these steps, hospitals can no longer focus on isolated awareness movements but transform them into systematic measurable action. The increased relevance of sustainability in the human resource management in the healthcare sector. Results indicate that although awareness of environmental responsibility is rising amongst hospital employees and administrators the actual implementation of (GHRM) practices is low due to structural, cultural and resource based barriers. Major challenges (poor departmental coordination, absence of measurement protocols, and behavioural change resistance) remain as a hindrance to improvement. Nonetheless, the findings also demonstrate a high possibility of change should hospitals implement a systemic strategy where GHRM policies are coupled with organizational strategy, patient safety and operational efficiency. Hospitals can foster a workforce that actively supports environmental goals by integrating sustainability in recruitment, training, performance appraisal and rewards systems. The article highlights the importance of stringent assessment, situational-based models, and leadership programs to ascertain long-term effectiveness. After all, GHRM implementation could be used to shift hospitals that are still focused on mere green awareness campaigns to a more comprehensive and sustainable model of management, which would not only reduce resource waste, but also the employee level of engagement and the reputation of the institution as a whole, as well as improve the overall quality of provided healthcare services.

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