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# Green Human Resource Management and Social Capital: The Key Role of Policy Implementation in Organizational Sustainability

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### Original Research

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### Abstract:

Organizational sustainability, as one of the key goals of modern management, requires approaches that simultaneously enhance the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of an organization. This study examines the impact of green human resource management (GHRM) on organizational sustainability, considering the mediating role of social capital. This quantitative, descriptive-analytical study was conducted on 200 managers and employees of industrial and service companies that have implemented GHRM policies. Data were collected using a standardized questionnaire, and its validity and reliability were confirmed. Data analysis was performed using SPSS and SmartPLS software, employing statistical methods such as correlation analysis, multiple regression, and structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical analyses showed that GHRM has a significant positive impact on organizational sustainability. Social capital also positively influenced organizational sustainability and played a meaningful mediating role in the relationship between GHRM and organizational sustainability. The model fit indices indicated a good model fit (Chi-Square/df = 2.15, RMSEA = 0.045, CFI = 0.93). The findings suggest that GHRM policies directly and indirectly (through social capital) contribute to improving organizational sustainability indicators. Social capital acts as a facilitating factor that enhances the impact of GHRM on organizational sustainability. These results highlight the importance of formulating and implementing green HRM policies and fostering social interactions within organizations to promote sustainability.

**Keywords:** Green Human Resource Management, Social Capital, Organizational Sustainability, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Sustainable Management.

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## Introduction

In recent decades, organizational sustainability has become one of the key topics in business management. Rapid industrialization, economic development, and increasing competition in global markets have exerted significant pressure on organizations to not only maintain productivity and profitability but also to address their social and environmental responsibilities. Organizations can no longer focus solely on financial objectives; instead, they must adopt strategies that balance economic performance, social responsibility, and environmental conservation (Mustafa et al., 2023). In this regard, focusing on organizational

sustainability is not only an ethical and legal necessity but also a competitive advantage. Organizations committed to sustainability principles tend to perform better in attracting customers, ensuring employee satisfaction, and managing environmental risks in the long run.

Moreover, growing public awareness regarding climate change, depletion of natural resources, and new regulatory requirements has compelled organizations to integrate environmentally friendly policies at all levels of execution. In this context, Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has emerged as an innovative strategy that incorporates environmental principles into HR processes

(Mahmood & Nasir, 2023). GHRM not only helps reduce environmental impact but also enhances employee awareness and fosters a green organizational culture, thereby improving productivity and job satisfaction.

GHRM comprises a set of policies and management practices designed to promote environmental sustainability. These policies include recruiting employees based on environmental criteria, training them on sustainability issues, motivating participation in green initiatives, designing performance evaluation systems based on environmental indicators, and implementing rewards and incentives for eco-friendly behaviors. Such policies enable employees to act as sustainability ambassadors within the organization, fostering greater commitment to corporate goals. Additionally, GHRM reduces operational costs, optimizes resource efficiency, and enhances corporate branding on both national and international levels (Aguilera et al., 2021).

Simultaneously, social capital, as an intangible organizational asset, plays a crucial role in facilitating the implementation of sustainability policies. Social capital consists of communication networks, mutual trust, and social norms that promote collaboration and interaction among employees. Therefore, integrating GHRM with social capital can further enhance organizational performance in achieving sustainability goals (Kuo et al., 2022).

However, previous research indicates several research gaps in this field. Many studies have independently examined the impact of GHRM on environmental performance (Jehangir et al., 2024), but few have explored the role of social capital in successfully implementing these strategies. Additionally, the critical role of policy implementation in linking these two variables has received little attention (Hassani & Shokouh Saljoughi, 2024).

Given the global environmental crises, climate change, resource depletion, and increasing stakeholder expectations, implementing GHRM policies has become an inevitable necessity. Organizations that embrace sustainable development not only meet legal and ethical responsibilities but also gain multiple competitive advantages (Saljoughi & Hassani, 2025). A major challenge in effectively implementing these policies is employee acceptance and commitment. In this regard, social capital can act as a facilitator, strengthening internal organizational communication and reducing resistance to change (Aminipour et al., 2024).

Furthermore, effective GHRM implementation can lead to reduced operational costs, increased efficiency, improved employer branding, and enhanced organizational performance. Organizations that invest seriously in GHRM will not only secure a larger share in sustainable markets but also build stronger relationships with society and stakeholders. Therefore, to achieve sustainability objectives and reap its benefits, organizations must institutionalize GHRM within their policy frameworks and strengthen social capital to facilitate its implementation.

This study aims to examine the role of GHRM in enhancing social capital and the reciprocal impact of both

on organizational sustainability. Additionally, the role of policy implementation as a key factor in this relationship will be analyzed. The findings of this study are expected to assist organizational managers and policymakers in developing more sustainable strategies.

## Research Methodology

*Research Environment and Study Population:* This study employs a quantitative and descriptive-analytical approach. The primary objective is to investigate the impact of GHRM and social capital on organizational sustainability, considering the role of policy implementation.

*Population and Sampling:* The study population comprises managers and employees of industrial and service companies that have implemented GHRM policies. A stratified random sampling method was used to ensure a balanced distribution of data across different organizational levels. Based on Cochran's formula, the required sample size was estimated to be approximately 200 participants.

*Data Collection Method:* Data were collected using a standardized questionnaire, consisting of three main sections:

1. *Green Human Resource Management:* This section includes questions regarding environmental policies in various HR processes such as recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and rewards. Sample questions include: "Does your organization consider employees' environmental awareness in the hiring process?" and "Does your organization conduct training programs on environmental sustainability for employees?"

2. *Social Capital:* This section includes questions about mutual trust among employees, internal organizational interactions, and shared norms. Sample questions include: "Employees in my organization trust each other," "Collaboration and participation among employees in implementing organizational programs are high," and "Shared values among employees enhance positive interactions."

3. *Organizational Sustainability:* This section covers questions on the organization's economic, environmental, and social performance. Sample questions include: "Our organization actively participates in energy conservation and efficient resource utilization," "Our organization effectively implements waste management and recycling programs," and "Our organization engages in corporate social responsibility initiatives."

### *Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire*

□ *Validity:* To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed and approved by multiple experts in HR management and organizational sustainability. Construct validity was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and the KMO index and Bartlett's test confirmed sample adequacy and appropriate inter-variable correlations.

□ *Reliability:* The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, with all research variables scoring above 0.80, indicating high reliability of the data collection instrument.

*Statistical Analysis Data Analysis Methods:* The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS software. The statistical methods used included Pearson correlation analysis, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and multiple regression analysis to examine relationships between variables.

## Results

This study was conducted on a sample of 200 employees from various organizations. In terms of gender distribution, 60% of the participants were male, and 40% were female. The majority of participants were aged between 31 and 40 years (35%), while the smallest group comprised individuals over 50 years old (15%). Regarding work experience, the highest proportion of employees had 5 to 10 years of experience (30%), whereas those with less than 5 years of experience constituted the smallest share.

The results of this study indicated that Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has a significant impact on organizational sustainability. Specifically, the three main dimensions of GHRM—environmental policies in recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and rewards—showed a positive and significant relationship with organizational sustainability indicators (economic, social, and environmental) ( $P < 0.05$ ). Additionally, the findings revealed that social capital plays a mediating role in this relationship. This means that organizations with higher levels of social capital were able to implement GHRM policies more effectively, leading to improved sustainability indicators (Table 2).

The results showed that GHRM and social capital significantly explain 58% of the variations in organizational

sustainability ( $R^2 = 0.58$ ). Moreover, the mediating role of social capital was examined, confirming that this variable partially mediates the effect of GHRM on organizational sustainability (Table 3).

## Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) - Analysis of Relationships Between Variables

The results of SEM indicate that the research model has an acceptable fit, and the relationships between the variables are statistically significant. The Chi-Square/df value of 2.15, which is less than 3, suggests a good model fit. The RMSEA value of 0.045, being below 0.08, confirms high predictive accuracy. Additionally, the CFI (0.93) and TLI (0.91) indices, both above 0.90, indicate that the proposed research model aligns well with the empirical data. Furthermore, the SRMR value of 0.048, being below 0.08, suggests an acceptable level of model error. Overall, these indices confirm that the conceptual model aligns with the collected data and that the relationships among GHRM, social capital, and organizational sustainability are meaningful and interpretable (Table 4).

The SEM path coefficient estimates show that all relationships between the research variables are statistically significant. In the first path, GHRM has a positive and direct effect on social capital ( $\beta = 0.61$ ,  $t = 8.23$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), highlighting the critical role of environmentally friendly HR policies in enhancing organizational social capital. This finding emphasizes that the effective implementation of green HR strategies, including sustainable recruitment and training, can strengthen social interactions, mutual trust, and shared norms within the organization (Table 5).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Max	Min
Green Human Resource Management	3.85	0.72	4.90	2.10
Social Capital	3.92	0.68	5.00	2.30
Organizational Sustainability	4.01	0.75	5.00	2.50

Table 2. Correlation Test Results Between Variables

Variables	GHRM	Social Capital	Organizational Sustainability
Green Human Resource Management	1	0.62**	0.70**
Social Capital	0.62**	1	0.68**
Organizational Sustainability	0.70**	0.68**	1

(\*\* $p < 0.01$ )

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Dependent Variable: Organizational Sustainability	Beta	t-value	Significance Level
Green Human Resource Management	0.45	6.23	0.000
Social Capital	0.40	5.76	0.000
$R^2$	0.58	-	-
F-statistic	52.34	-	0.000

Table 4. Model Fit Indices

Index	Obtained Value	Acceptable Value	Conclusion
Chi-Square/df	2.15	<3	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.045	<0.08	Acceptable
CFI	0.93	>0.90	Acceptable
TLI	0.91	>0.90	Acceptable
SRMR	0.048	<0.08	Acceptable

Table 5. SEM Path Coefficients Estimation

Pathway	Standardized Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-value
GHRM $\rightarrow$ Social Capital	0.61	8.23	0.000
GHRM $\rightarrow$ Organizational Sustainability	0.52	6.84	0.000
Social Capital $\rightarrow$ Organizational Sustainability	0.47	5.92	0.000

Table 6. Multiple Regression Analysis for the Effect of Variables on Organizational Sustainability

Independent Variable	Beta ( $\beta$ )	p-value
Green Human Resource Management	0.52	0.000
Social Capital	0.41	0.000
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.61	-

In the second path, GHRM has a positive and direct effect on organizational sustainability ( $\beta=0.52$ ,  $t=6.84$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This result indicates that adopting environmentally sustainable HR policies not only improves the organization's social and environmental performance but also positively impacts its economic indicators.

Social capital directly influences organizational sustainability ( $\beta=0.47$ ,  $t=5.92$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This finding suggests that organizations with high levels of social capital—such as positive employee interactions, mutual trust, and intra-organizational collaboration—are more successful in achieving sustainability. These results indicate that GHRM significantly affects organizational sustainability both directly and through increased social capital. This underscores the importance of focusing on sustainable HR policies as a tool to enhance social capital and, ultimately, improve organizational sustainability performance (Table 6).

The results indicate that 61% of the variations in organizational sustainability can be explained by these two variables (GHRM and social capital).

## Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has a significant impact on social capital and organizational sustainability. Moreover, social capital plays a mediating role in this relationship. These results are consistent with previous studies, emphasizing the importance of adopting green HR policies to enhance organizational performance in

sustainability dimensions. The following sections compare and analyze each of the relationships examined in this study with findings from other research.

The results indicate that Green Human Resource Management has a positive and significant impact on social capital. This finding suggests that implementing environmental policies in HR processes such as recruitment, training, and performance evaluation facilitates social interactions, trust among employees, and shared norms within the organization. Similar studies have confirmed this relationship. Almemari et al., demonstrated that implementing GHRM policies improves organizational social capital and increases collaboration and interactions among employees. Their research highlights that an organizational culture based on sustainability can enhance social cohesion within the organization, ultimately leading to improved organizational productivity (Almemari et al., 2021).

Additionally, Ali et al. found that organizations incorporating green policies into their human resource management experience higher levels of social capital. This study specifically emphasizes the role of green training and reward policies in fostering trust and collaboration among employees (Ali et al., 2024).

The findings also indicate that Green Human Resource Management positively and significantly affects organizational sustainability. This result suggests that GHRM policies not only have a direct impact on an organization's social and environmental performance but also enhance its economic sustainability. Recent studies confirm this conclusion. Research by Ajadi et al.,

demonstrated that GHRM can contribute to organizational sustainability by improving employees' environmental behaviors, reducing energy consumption, and minimizing waste generation (Ajadi et al., 2022). They also found that sustainability-based recruitment and performance evaluation policies can increase employees' commitment to environmental behaviors. Furthermore, Rehan et al., found that organizations implementing GHRM policies benefit not only from environmental advantages but also from better economic performance. Their study revealed that companies adopting GHRM achieve higher profitability due to an improved brand image and increased stakeholder trust (Rehan et al., 2023).

One of the key findings of this study is the mediating effect of social capital in the relationship between Green Human Resource Management and organizational sustainability. This finding indicates that social capital facilitates part of GHRM's impact on organizational sustainability. In other words, organizations with higher levels of social capital are better able to implement green HRM policies effectively, resulting in improved sustainability indicators. Recent studies have also emphasized this finding. Malik et al., demonstrated that social capital acts as a catalyst for the successful implementation of GHRM policies. This study stated that organizations with high levels of internal trust and collaboration are more capable of implementing sustainability policies and achieving better environmental and social performance (Malik et al., 2020).

Moreover, Ribeiro et al., found that social capital not only strengthens employee relationships and enhances organizational commitment but also facilitates the implementation of green human resource policies. Their study found that companies with strong social capital are more capable of adapting to environmental changes and executing sustainability programs effectively (Ribeiro et al., 2022).

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis in this study demonstrated that the research model has an appropriate fit. These indicators show that the research model adequately explains the empirical data. Previous studies have also used SEM modeling to examine the impact of GHRM on organizational sustainability. Aftab et al., demonstrated that SEM models with similar indicators effectively explain the relationships between GHRM, social capital, and organizational sustainability, confirming the significant correlations among these variables. Their findings, similar to the present study, indicate that Green Human Resource Management influences organizational sustainability not only directly but also through social capital (Aftab et al., 2023).

The findings of this study emphasize that implementing Green Human Resource Management policies can positively impact social capital and organizational sustainability. Furthermore, social capital, as a mediating variable, facilitates this relationship and enhances organizations' sustainability performance (Kavoosi & Kavoosi, 2024). These findings align with recent studies and highlight the importance of social capital as a key factor in the success of organizational sustainability policies. Accordingly,

organizations should pay special attention to developing green HR policies and strengthening social capital to achieve their sustainability goals (Noei & Khoshshima, 2023).

## Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has a significant impact on social capital and organizational sustainability. These findings suggest that adopting green HR policies not only provides environmental benefits but also fosters social interactions, trust among employees, and a culture of collaboration and synergy within organizations. Additionally, social capital plays a crucial mediating role in strengthening this effect and facilitates the connection between GHRM and organizational sustainability. This study highlights that organizational sustainability is a multidimensional process that depends not only on environmental policies but also on social and cultural factors. Organizations with stronger social capital are more capable of successfully implementing green policies, ultimately achieving better sustainability performance. Therefore, organizations should simultaneously focus on developing green HR policies and enhancing social capital to achieve their sustainability objectives.

### Author's contribution

Niusha Meftah developed the study concept and design. Niusha Meftah acquired the data. Niusha Meftah analyzed and interpreted the data, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the intellectual content, manuscript editing and read and approved the final manuscript.

### Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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