

# The Impact of Green Leadership on Sustainable Human Resource Management Practices

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## Abstract:

In the context of global sustainability, the need for green transformation and corporate environmental responsibility (CER) is increasingly urgent. This study examines how green leadership builds sustainable organizational practices and serves as a cornerstone of green human resource management (GHRM). In order to integrate environmental values into HR systems, this paper specifically explores how green leadership can be integrated with recruitment, training, performance management, and employee engagement. Based on a review of recent research, green leadership has an impact on GHRM at both the macro level (alignment of institutional and strategic frameworks) and the micro level (impact on employee behavior and organizational culture). The study suggests that green leadership sets the vision and expectations, GHRM puts them into practice, and employee engagement sustains the leadership commitment. This study contributes to both practice and theory by emphasizing the broader impact of leadership in promoting sustainable human resource systems, providing companies with practical strategies for pursuing environmentally friendly goals, and deepening academic discussion on the relationship between sustainability, leadership, and human resource management.

**Keywords:** Green leadership; GHRM; sustainable development; corporate social responsibility (CSR).

## 1. Introduction

Green Leadership is the most significant foundation of GHRM. From a macro perspective, it affects the implementation of actions and institutionalization of companies; on the other hand, for micro perspective,

it shapes the behaviors, routine and expectation of employees. In other words, green leadership creates company cultures, embedding environmental values into shared beliefs and norms [1]. By examining the mechanisms by which green leadership influences recruitment, training, performance management, and

employee engagement, it is clearer to understand how values are institutionalized in HR systems. Drawing on insights from contemporary research and synthesizing evidence from a number of studies, this section explores how each of these dimensions influences green human resources management.

The core assumption of sustainable human resources management is that environmental values must be integrated into all stages of the employee life cycle. To make sure those values are embedded into employees' understanding of the companies' culture, the positive impact of leadership is indispensable. As a leader of a company in the present day it is even more important to focus on how to transform into a green leader. Green leadership is defined as the ability of leaders to support environmental goals by modeling pro-environmental behaviors, establishing a green vision and implementing systems that reinforce eco-responsibility [2]. According to this study, the transition of leadership into environmentally transformational leadership and environmentally responsible leadership is essential, along with the development of organizational citizenship behavior for the environment.

Green leadership can have a qualitative impact on employees. Some scholars found that servant leadership directed toward the environment had a direct and significant impact on employees' green behaviors [3]. Employee perceptions of CSR further strengthened this relationship. This finding implies that when leaders not only advocate but also embody environmental values, they can inspire employees to emulate these behaviors. This impact is not limited to informal actions but translates into formal global human resource management practices such as eco-conscious recruitment and performance appraisals.

Green leadership impacts recruitment and selection in two main ways. First, it shapes the employer brand, specifically how potential candidates perceive the organization's environmental identity. Leaders who actively communicate their commitment to sustainability through public information, ESG reporting, and green certifications increase an organization's attractiveness to environmentally conscious talent, especially among millennials. Second, it determines the specific environmental competencies that organizations prioritize during the recruitment process. Job descriptions may include responsibilities in sustainability, and interviews may assess a candidate's experience with eco-initiatives or personal environmental values. This alignment, as "the fit between the green person and the organization," helps ensure long-term engagement and commitment [4].

Encouraged by green leadership, behavior-based interviews and environmental case assessments allow organizations to assess candidates' real-world sustainability

thinking. Additionally, leaders can guide hiring teams to seek out talent from green-focused universities or platforms, creating a pipeline of candidates with environmental skills. The hiring process becomes a two-way signal: the organization assesses the green potential, and the candidate assesses the authenticity of the leadership's sustainability proposition. Interviews led or influenced by green leaders provide a visualization of the company's environmental philosophy.

Training, development and performance management are key mechanisms in which green leadership builds an organization's capacity for sustainability. Leaders who promote environmental values not only influence what employees learn, but also how they are evaluated and rewarded.

Training programs reflect the priorities set by green leadership. Leaders who clearly articulate environmental vision are more likely to invest in eco-literacy onboarding, technical skills upgrading. For example, leaders will focus on developing employees in energy efficiency or recycling practices. To further deepen the impact of green leadership, some leaders may even host cross-functional workshops on sustainability. All these initiatives will help put environmental goals into practice and integrate sustainability into employees' daily responsibilities. As some scholars point out, the combination of GHRM practices and green transformational leadership can enhance employees' green awareness and thus significantly predict pro-environmental behavior [5].

Companies need to think about performance and reward systems at the same time as training programs to make sure what they operate. Green Leadership wants to make sure that sustainability is a clear goal, not just a vague value. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for emissions, waste, or participation in green initiatives are part of a performance system that helps employees make sustainability a part of their jobs and improves their intuition. Leaders can tie incentives to environmental results or offer public praise to green innovations. Some scholars say that environmental leadership styles are better at making companies care about the environment than general leadership styles [2]. This means that when green leaders are in charge, performance reviews are more likely to focus on skills like life cycle thinking, engaging stakeholders, and working together for sustainability, which are all important parts in the long term.

Ultimately, Green Leadership and GHRM form a reinforcing cycle. Green leadership initiates the process by establishing a vision and expectations, and GHRM puts that vision into practice through specific HR practices. In turn, employee green behaviors and engagement generate feedback that sustains leadership commitment.

This circular relationship is supported by some scholars, who found that green transformational leadership enhances GHRM's impact on behavior through self-efficacy [5]. As employees become more confident in their green capabilities, their behaviors further validate the organization's sustainability goals and therefore help the company reinforce a self-sustaining culture.

In summary, this paper explains how green leadership forms the cornerstone of GHRM. At the macro level, green leadership influences organizational strategies and institutional practices, but at the micro level, green leadership influences employee behaviors, habits, and expectations to develop a green organizational culture. By integrating environmental values into recruitment, training, performance management, and employee engagement, leadership can turn sustainability from a vision into a lived practice. The practice and theory implications of this research are the following: this paper establishes the essential function of leadership in developing sustainable human resource systems, provides organizational practice suggestions for organizations that are willing to integrate environmental goals into human resource practices, and contributes to the academic literature by reasserting the sustaining feedback mechanism between leadership, human resource management, and employee behavior. Lastly, green leadership is not only the pillar of global human resources management, but also a motivating force in the pursuit of a balance between greater economic, social and environmental goals.

## 2. Characteristics of Green Leadership

### 2.1 Strategic Vision

At the strategic level, green leadership implies that the long-term plan of the organization has a clear environmental vision. Leaders must clearly articulate the company's environmental goals, such as those often aligned with international frameworks for sustainable development, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or science-based climate goals. Timetables for achieving carbon neutrality, waste reduction targets, and renewable energy adoption rates. These aspirations are often aligned with international frameworks for sustainable development, such as the United Nations SDGs or science-based climate goals. Authoritative United Nations goals can add legitimacy and guidance to a company's green vision.

This necessitates that leaders have a very clear vision. Some scholars write that to be an exceptional environmental leader; one must have definite and quantifiable objectives that exceed being a fine leader [2]. A strategic

vision is what enables one to join global human resource management so that recruiting, training, and performance management are all linked to environmental results. A strategic vision also allocates funds for projects that benefit the environment in the long run. Leaders must ensure that funds are available in the budget for green infrastructure, environmentally focused training, and initiatives that foster innovation that benefits the environment. If funds are not allocated in this manner, there is a likelihood that environmental agendas will be symbolic rather than actual.

### 2.2 Cultural Values

The cultural component of green leadership can help companies establish shared beliefs and norms. In order to extend their reach, leaders need to have different ways of communicating and making decisions, while actively promoting an environmentally friendly culture in the workplace including leading by example, giving positive feedback, and implementing green behaviors in their daily lives.

According to some scholars, environmentally conscious servant leaders encourage their employees to engage in green practices by modeling and reaffirming CSR principles [3]. Leaders can further promote a green culture by influencing employee behavior by incorporating environmental responsibility into the organization's image, showcasing sustainability success stories, and rewarding eco-friendly practices. Incorporating green principles into daily decision-making is another aspect of culture promotion. For example, leaders can create regulations that favor eco-friendly office supplies or promote low-carbon business travel. When employees see this consistency as a genuine signal, they are more likely to internalize environmental protection as a corporate priority. This shows how leaders strengthen green culture by aligning CSR values with daily routines, consistent with findings that eco-friendly environments and local cultural resources enhance organizational development [6]. It is also possible to promote subtle changes in daily life, such as using environmentally friendly office supplies and supporting waste recycling, to infuse the culture into the everyday.

### 2.3 Actions: Role-Modeling and Innovation Support

Green leadership is exercised daily at the operational level. Through implementing environmentally friendly practices such as recycling of materials, energy efficiency, and participating in green initiatives, leaders are able to lead by example for others to emulate.

Green innovation is encouraged by leaders who create a setting where employees are allowed to experiment with

new sustainable approaches [7]. To institutionalize green sustainability in their jobs and raise employees' awareness of the green culture of the organization, leaders might avoid engaging in activities regarding the experimentation of green production processes, the promotion of low-impact products, or the engagement of suppliers in circular economy practices. Moreover, action-level leaders ensure that policies and systems support environmental goals through environmental impact analysis of projects, building sustainability checkpoints into processes, and leading cross-sectoral "green working groups."

### 3. Green Leadership in HRM Practice

#### 3.1 Green Recruiting

Green leadership shapes recruiting by influencing the employer brand and the ability of job candidates to do so, which ensures that the company is pursuing values that are aligned with the recruiter's core values. Leaders committed to sustainability will ensure that job descriptions include environmental responsibilities and assess candidates' "green fit"-the alignment between their values and the organization's environmental mission-during interviews [4]. During the hiring process, it is common for leaders to involve behavioral interview questions about sustainability experience, case challenges that address environmental issues, or collaboration with green-focused universities and employment platforms. In this way, green hiring not only attracts people with the right skills but also builds a workforce that reinforces the organization's sustainability culture from day one, which has a positive effect on the company's cultural development and sustainability.

#### 3.2 Green Training

Once hired by the company, employees need to build capacity to translate environmental values into daily practice. Green leadership ensures that training programs include both general eco-literacy and role-specific sustainability skills, such as energy-efficient operations, life-cycle assessment, or sustainable procurement practices. Some scholars found that global human resource management practices, combined with green transformational leadership, increase green awareness and, in turn, drive green behaviors [5]. Leaders who allocate time and resources to sustainability training demonstrate that it is a business priority, not an optional activity. Therefore, incorporating green daily time into employee training is also necessary in order to be able to better build a green culture in the company.

#### 3.3 Green Performance and Motivation

After recruitment and training, leaders need to further consider sustainability. Performance management and incentives are important tools for integrating environmental goals into employee behavior in order to ensure long-term adherence. Green leadership ensures that sustainability-related KPIs (e.g., energy savings, waste reduction, or participation in green programs) are incorporated into performance appraisals.

Research suggests that combining CSR engagement and a clear green vision with employees' personal norms can improve employee retention [8]. Linking bonus or recognition programs to environmental achievements can further strengthen the link between sustainability and career success. This demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of leadership in combining environmental goals as well as employee motivation. In addition, some scholars emphasize that environmental leadership goes beyond traditional performance management by assessing specific green competencies such as stakeholder involvement in sustainability or cross-functional collaboration on environmental projects [2]. Thus, in a sense, green leadership has a positive impact on company employee motivation and efficiency.

#### 3.4 Green Employee Relations

Finally, the spread of a green culture among employees is also a reflection of green leadership. Green leadership also influences the quality of employee relations by creating channels for participation in sustainability decisions. Some scholars found that green behavior in the workplace increased when leaders led by example and supported environmentally friendly behaviors and when employees perceived CSR to be authentic [3]. Green leaders encourage the green voice of employees by recognizing their contributions and implementing actionable suggestions-autonomous communication by employees to improve environmental performance. At the macro-management level, global human resources management is also supporting this practice by creating structured feedback mechanisms, resourcing employee-led green initiatives, and publicly recognizing environmental contributions to enhance incentives and trust.

### 4. Mechanism Impact on Sustainable Development

Green leadership impacts sustainable development through a series of interconnected mechanisms that integrate long-term environmental and social goals with organizational strategy, culture and human resource practices. Effective use of these tools can translate leadership

commitments into quantifiable outcomes in the areas of CSR, human capital sustainability, and environmental performance.

#### 4.1 Enhancing Environmental Performance

Strategic leaders set specific environmental goals and allocate the funds needed to achieve them. Some scholars note that environmental leadership styles are more indicative of a company's environmental responsiveness than general leadership [2]. As a result, leaders who adopt environmentally focused practices (e.g., incorporating sustainability into decision-making criteria and providing incentives such as performance systems) are more successful in achieving measurable environmental outcomes. Green leadership ensures that daily actions promote environmental goals at the action level. For example, some scholars show how green leadership GHRM can be combined with green innovation and green transformational leadership to enhance environmental performance. Leaders do this by incorporating environmental KPIs into departmental scorecards, introducing new environmental technologies, and supporting employee-led initiatives to improve resource efficiency [7].

Leaders should instill a sense of environmental responsibility in all employees. By setting an example, environmentally conscious servant leaders can encourage employees to adopt greener behaviors. As long as employees behave responsibly, the team and the company's overall green metrics will continue to improve.

#### 4.2 Enhancing Corporate Social Responsibility

Green leadership also enhances a CSR profile by integrating environmental stewardship into broader social and ethical responsibilities, which encompasses a company's obligations to its stakeholders, including employees, communities, customers and the environment. Integrating sustainability into CSR ensures that environmental initiatives are not isolated projects but are part of a company's overall approach to responsible business.

Some scholars note that a clear green vision combined with CSR engagement can positively influence employee retention by fostering personal norms [8]. This means that when employees perceive the company's initiatives to be genuine, they are more likely to align their actions with the organization's sustainability goals, while leaders get the credibility they deserve, again earning the trust of stakeholders. For stakeholders external to the company, transparently communicating environmental achievements, such as publishing ESG reports or energy saving and emission reduction targets, can enhance the credibility of CSR. Other scholars emphasize that sustainable leadership mediates between GHRM practices and organiza-

tional commitment, suggesting that leadership credibility in CSR is as important internally (for employees) as it is externally (for stakeholders) [9].

Finally, green leaders should integrate CSR into GHRM, and HR departments can provide employees with a variety of activity possibilities, including promoting environmental volunteering or working with local communities on sustainability projects. These practices are emphasized as an integral part of the employee experience, thus creating a stronger connection between employees and the organization's social mission.

#### 4.3 Talent Retention and Green Career Development

Human capital sustainability is important in today's competitive labor market. Millennials are increasingly motivated by purpose-driven work. Organizations that provide meaningful opportunities to contribute to the SDGs are invaluable for a company culture that attracts, retains and develops top talent. That is, retaining talent and supporting employees in developing careers that align with environmental values. In today's competitive labor market, employees, especially millennials, are increasingly motivated by purpose-driven work. Organizations that provide meaningful opportunities to contribute to the SDGs can attract, retain and develop top talent.

Here are some effective ways to attract talent/retain talent for growth. First, retaining talent highlighted the concept of 'green personal-organizational fit', whereby the fit between personal environmental values and organizational culture can increase employee engagement and reduce turnover [4]. Employees are more likely to remain loyal over time if their personal beliefs are reflected in the leadership's sustainability agenda. Therefore, it is more important for the leadership to focus on cultivating the fitness between employees and the company's culture, and to enhance employees' sense of belonging and engagement by participating in various environmental activities. Second, career path and development. Green leadership promotes career development by creating sustainability-related positions and skill-building opportunities. Some scholars noted that green transformational leadership enhances the impact of GHRM on green behaviors by increasing self-efficacy [10]. This suggests that leaders who invest in sustainability training not only enhance organizational capabilities but also provide employees with the skills to enhance their internal and external career prospects, providing motivation for employees to receive incentives, promotions, and other rewards.

Third, employer branding and recruitment advantages. Some scholars state that green leadership drives innovation, which itself attracts talent [7]. When organizations

are seen as leaders in sustainability innovation, they attract professionals eager to work in forward-thinking environments. This brand strength can further promote talent retention by boosting employee pride and identification with the organization. As a result, companies need to raise the bar for their leaders to be able to lead the company in innovation while ensuring green leadership.

Forth, promote employee engagement through empowerment. Successful green leaders also retain talent by creating a culture of high engagement. Through green proposal programs, cross-functional project teams, or innovation challenges, employees who feel empowered to contribute to sustainability decisions are more motivated and less likely to leave. This is consistent with the findings on the importance of role modeling and CSR perceptions in encouraging green behaviors in the workplace [3].

Over time, the combination of synergy, opportunity, and empowerment creates a sustainable talent ecosystem. Employees will not only be retained but will develop into sustainable leaders and pass on the organization's green agenda to future leaders.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to explore how green leadership can drive sustainable practices in human resource management, and the findings are clear: leadership is critical. If leaders are not committed to sustainability and integrate their vision into the HR system, environmental goals are likely to remain at the level of rhetoric rather than action.

The research shows that green leadership works in three keyways. First, it enhances strategic clarity by setting measurable environmental goals and aligning them with HR processes. Second, it builds organizational culture, shapes employee expectations, and encourages employees to see sustainability as part of their daily work. Third, it provides practical mechanisms, such as green recruitment, eco-literacy training, and performance systems linked to environmental outcomes. When these elements work synergistically, the organization creates a reinforcing cycle: leadership sets the vision, HR builds capacity, and employees take action to validate and reinforce sustainability goals.

These impacts have both practical and theoretical implications. In practice, organizations should invest in leaders who not only understand sustainability but also know how to integrate it into their HR systems. This includes designing hiring processes that attract environmentally conscious candidates, providing training that deepens environmental skills, and creating reward systems tied to green performance. Theoretically, this research contributes to an understanding of how leadership and human resource man-

agement are intertwined in the pursuit of sustainability.

Looking forward, future research could test these mechanisms across industries and cultural contexts, helping us better understand the most effective elements of green leadership. For organizations, the message is simple: sustainability is more than a policy; it is a people-centered journey. By empowering leaders to live with green values by example and integrating these values into human resource practices, organizations can move toward a self-sustaining growth model that balances economic success with environmental and social responsibility.

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