

Research Article

THE ROLE OF GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE CORPORATE CULTURE IN IMPORT-EXPORT COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigates how Vietnamese import-export firms employ Green HRM, specifically green training, communication, rewards, and empowerment to cultivate a sustainable corporate culture. **Design/methodology/approach:** The research uses a qualitative design, conducting semi-structured interviews with managers and employees and triangulating these insights with international literature. **Findings:** Results reveal that hierarchical structures, psychological resistance, and conflicting business objectives impede Green HRM adoption, yet targeted training, participative management, and customized incentives can surmount these barriers and strengthen employee engagement in sustainability. **Originality:** This work offers the first industry-focused blueprint for integrating Green HRM in Vietnam's import-export sector, translating broad sustainability concepts into concrete HR practices.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management, Sustainable Corporate Culture, Employee Engagement, Vietnamese Import-Export, Sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The growing demand for sustainability in the environment has laid a major role on organizations to go green and help develop a more sustainable future (Elkington, 1997). GHRM emerges as a crucial strategy towards incorporating environmental considerations in organizational practices and thereby developing a sustainable corporate culture (Renwick *et al.*, 2013). GHRM, as a subset of Human Resource Management (HRM), is a broad array of activities to promote environmental sustainability through human resource practices. It encompasses policies, strategies, and practices related to environmental issues across the employee life cycle, including recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, and employee relations (Renwick *et al.*, 2013). GHRM practices can include implementing green work practices, promoting employee green behavior and environmental awareness, and integrating environmental considerations into decision-making.

The incorporation of GHRM into organizational practice is essential to establishing a sustainable corporate culture. The culture is typified by a collective dedication to environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic viability. By the enablement of a culture that embraces sustainability, organizations are able to promote a quality work environment, recruit and retain quality employees, improve their public image, and work towards a sustainable society (Jabbour, 2011). As the increasing awareness of the significance of GHRM in establishing a sustainable corporate culture is realized, there are challenges and opportunities yet to be tackled. One important challenge is that organizational resistance has to be overcome, and the needed resources and commitment have to be obtained for the implementation of GHRM efforts. Another is the intricateness of involving environmental factors within different dimensions of human resource management. However, there are immense opportunities for organizations to implement GHRM to achieve their sustainability goals (Ahmad, 2015). As Vietnam advances its sustainable

development agenda, businesses are increasingly pressured to adopt environmentally responsible practices, particularly in the import-export sector. This research "**The role of green human resource management in building a sustainable corporate culture in import-export companies**" examines the strategic role of GHRM in fostering sustainability by integrating eco-friendly HR practices into workforce management. By embedding sustainability in recruitment, training, and performance evaluation, companies can align with global environmental standards while enhancing employee engagement. Vietnamese enterprises, especially SMEs, can leverage GHRM to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and strengthen their competitive advantage in international markets. Additionally, as younger generations prioritize sustainability, adopting GHRM can help businesses attract and retain top talent, ensuring long-term success in a rapidly evolving economic landscape.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

GHRM

GHRM integrates environmental sustainability with HRM to make employees environmentally aware and synchronize organizational culture with sustainability goals. Renwick *et al.*, (2013) theorized GHRM as a model of HR policy, practice, and system that promotes employees' environmental responsibility by emphasizing the building of a culture of sustainability rather than compliance. This aligns with the increasing trend for organizations to incorporate environmental responsibility into total company performance.

Jabbour and Santos (2008) went even further to widen this definition by situating GHRM as a strategic tool that harmonizes environmental management with HR functions like recruitment, training, and performance appraisal. Their strategy emphasizes integrating environmental goals with corporate strategy to promote sustainable conduct at organizational and individual levels. Likewise, Hosein *et al.*, (2016) examined the real practice of GHRM with environmentally sustainable human resource practices, like job structuring and employee involvement, and emphasized the pragmatic aspects

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necessary for the development of ecological competencies among employees.

This study will adopt this definition as put forward by Jabbour and Santos (2008). Their strategic alignment of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is strongly in line with the general theme of this thesis, which explores the dual role of GHRM in meeting environmental compliance and concurrently promoting a sustainable organizational culture. By considering GHRM as a component of business strategy, this study will investigate its role in changing organizational practice and behavior to reach long-term sustainability objectives. GHRM is thereby conceived as a strategic HRM practice that incorporates environmental management into the entire range of HR activities in order to affect both employee behavior and corporate culture in the quest for sustainability. This definition will serve as the baseline in describing how GHRM can be used to develop sustainable corporate culture among Vietnamese enterprises as envisioned in the goals of this study.

Key components of GHRM

GHRM comprises some of the key elements which are critical to the application of sustainability into organizational operations. Guerci *et al.*, (2016) identify three main aspects of GHRM: green hiring, green training and involvement, and green performance management and compensation. Green hiring is the first key aspect of GHRM. This consists of the incorporation of environmental considerations within the recruitment and selection of prospective workers. Green hiring is practiced by organizations that look for employees who demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and possess skills that are conducive to environmental objectives. Green training and involvement are another key aspects of GHRM, whose objective is to raise employees' awareness and expertise with regard to sustainability. It entails providing extensive training programs that educate employees on environmentally friendly methods and the organization's sustainability initiatives. The final element of performance management and compensation, which is referred to as green performance management and compensation, makes sure that environmental performance is integrated into the assessment of employees. Through this system, organizations set performance targets applicable to sustainability and measure employees against their performance in achieving the organization's environmental objectives. Such measurements may incorporate efforts in waste reduction or taking part in environmental activities. The integration of these three elements - green recruitment, green training and involvement, and green performance management and rewards - facilitates the encouragement of green behavior among employees and plays a very significant role in building a sustainable organizational culture. This integrated view ensures that sustainability is seen not merely as a compliance need but as a core part of the organization's DNA, defining its long-term success.

Sustainable corporate culture

Sustainable corporate culture, also called sustainable organizational culture, involves the incorporation of sustainability values in the central values, practices, and behavior of an organization. The concept is focused on fitting business operations into long-term environmental, social, and economic goals in a manner that will see the organization not only recording profitability but also having a positive impact on society's well-being, as well as on the environment. A sustainable corporate culture is ingrained in every level of an organization, affecting decision-making, resource allocation, and involvement between various stakeholder groups, such as employees, customers, and the community.

Linnenluecke and Griffiths (2010) argue that sustainable corporate culture is defined by the extent to which environmental and social sustainability is integrated into an organization's values, principles, and practices. It goes beyond compliance with environmental legislation to encompass a further commitment to sustainability that pervades all elements of the business. This kind of culture is generally observed in organizations that deal with environmental stewardship and social justice, adopting it as a core component of their strategic efforts.

Furthermore, a sustainable corporate culture extends beyond conformity to external regulations or attainment of sustainability certifications; it also includes building an internal ethos that engages employees to take proactive actions regarding sustainability. According to Epstein (2008), firms with a sustainability focus create a culture that empowers employees to innovate, enhance operating efficiency, and minimize environmental footprints. This creates a work environment in which sustainability is seen as a continuous process of betterment, not a destination.

A further key aspect of a sustainable corporate culture is its focus on long-term strategic thinking. According to Bansal and DesJardine (2014), firms with sustainable cultures make decisions that trade off short-term business demands with long-term environmental and social concerns. This involves taking a triple-bottom-line approach, in which firms evaluate their performance in terms not just of profitability but also from the perspective of social impact (people) and environmental impact (planet). For instance, an organization can decide to invest in renewable energy technologies that lower its carbon footprint, despite the lack of clear short-term financial gains from such investments.

Developing a sustainable company culture needs not only successful leadership but also a successful communication strategy. Schein (2010) claims that leaders in companies have a central role in the development of organizational culture through leading by example to exhibit sustainable behavior, setting standards, and formulating policies supporting sustainability. Through emphasis on sustainability, leaders establish the foundation for the remainder of the company so that all employees at all levels understand and are committed to sustainability objectives. Additionally, communication's significance can never be underestimated; organizations possessing a sustainable culture continuously communicate with their employees, customers, and other stakeholders regularly to attain greater transparency, accountability, and shared responsibility towards sustainability initiatives.

Sustainable corporate culture is defined within the realm of how organisations integrate environmental sustainability into their HRM practices. More precisely, it focuses on how GHRM fosters a culture whereby sustainability becomes integral to the daily business practices and employee behaviour. This definition aligns with a wider definition of sustainable corporate culture, defined as a general approach that not only complies with the law but also demonstrates a real commitment to long-term ecological and social welfare.

Relationship between GHRM practices and sustainable corporate culture

The relationship between GHRM practices and sustainable corporate culture is pivotal in shaping organizational success, especially as businesses face increasing environmental pressures. GHRM, which integrates environmental sustainability into HR practices, serves as a catalyst in building a sustainable corporate culture. The core premise of this relationship lies in how GHRM practices—ranging from green

hiring to green training and performance management—drive employees' environmental consciousness and embed sustainability into corporate values (Dumont *et al.*, 2017).

A key element of this link is the green hiring process that involves the recruitment of employees with not only the necessary competence but also a sustainability commitment (Guerci *et al.*, 2016). Recruit employees with a green mentality solidifies the foundation of a sustainable organizational culture because such employees are more willing to engage in conservation projects for the environment. Furthermore, green hiring sends a message that the organization values environmental responsibility, encouraging a cultural shift toward sustainability (Renwick *et al.*, 2018). When organizations prioritize sustainability at the hiring stage, they set the tone for a corporate culture that integrates long-term environmental goals with business strategies.

Green training and development also strongly support the link between GHRM and sustainable corporate culture. Through engagement in tailored training, workers are educated on environmentally friendly practices and their role in helping to achieve corporate sustainability objectives (Papademetriou *et al.*, 2023). The training develops an ecologically conscious labor force, which is crucial in embedding sustainability into organizational culture. When employees are aware of how their day-to-day activities may be aligned with the company's environmental objectives, they will more readily engage in behavior that reflects such values. Furthermore, training programs to support sustainability extend beyond compliance with environmental regulations and encourage cultural transformation through embedding sustainable practices in daily work activities (Bombiak, 2019).

Another aspect of this relationship is evident in the area of green performance management and rewards. Performance evaluations that incorporate environmental objectives along with financial objectives reinforce the organizational emphasis on sustainability (Renwick *et al.*, 2018). By rewarding employees for meeting environmental objectives, firms not only encourage employee participation in sustainability efforts but also make such practices part of the corporate culture. Additionally, non-financial incentives, such as recognition programs, can also promote a sustainable culture by rewarding achievements associated with environmental performance (Dumont *et al.*, 2017). This alignment of rewards and performance with environmental objectives ensures that sustainability becomes a core part of organizational life.

The interlink between GHRM and sustainable corporate culture is also seen in the way organizations address employee engagement and empowerment. Sustainable corporate culture thrives when workers at all levels are involved in making decisions related to sustainability (Renwick *et al.*, 2018). GHRM practices that encourage worker involvement in green practices create a sense of ownership and responsibility. Individuals who are actively involved in shaping the environmental policies of their organization are more inclined to incorporate sustainability into their daily operations, thereby fostering a culture that prioritizes long-term environmental objectives over short-term gains (Bombiak, 2019).

Research Gap

The link between sustainable corporate culture and GHRM is an emerging field that has garnered attention in recent years. However, the literature has a broad gap on specifically how GHRM practices shape and enhance sustainable corporate cultures in organizations. While numerous studies have examined different aspects of GHRM,

e.g., its effect on employee behavior and organizational performance, empirical research directly connecting GHRM to sustainable corporate culture is limited. For example, Renwick *et al.*, (2013) offered an extensive review of GHRM practices and advantages, but they did not discuss the particular cultural effects of these practices. Moreover, while GHRM's potential to foster employee engagement and commitment has been emphasized, the mechanisms through which these practices can shape an integrated, sustainable corporate culture are less researched. Most existing studies focus on theoretical frameworks rather than practical applications. Jabbour *et al.*, (2010) investigated the correlation. GHRM with improved environmental performance but without covering in their research practical case studies showing the integration of GHRM practices into corporate culture. This shortage is particularly noticeable in sectors that are not usually associated with sustainability initiatives, like manufacturing, where applying GHRM practices can play a crucial role in the change of organizational culture.

Moreover, most of the research on GHRM has been done in Western settings, with a significant void in research that targets non-Western organizations or particular operating models. Research by Truong *et al.*, (2021), for instance, emphasizes the role of cultural context in influencing HRM practices; however, such research does not offer guidance on how GHRM can be adapted to fit the specific nature of manufacturing systems in Vietnam. A research work by Malik *et al.*, (2019) explains that GHRM practices lead to higher organizational commitment, but they do not clarify how this commitment is translated into a sustainable culture that emphasizes environmental and social responsibility. It is important for organizations to learn about these mechanisms if they are to integrate GHRM into their strategic objectives.

There is a pressing need for empirical research that not only offers unequivocal proof of the linkage between GHRM practices and sustainable corporate culture but also examines the contextual, cultural, and perceptual nature of the relationship. To this end, the current study uses qualitative method so as to examine how GHRM practices such as green training and sustainable performance management influence corporate culture. The research aims to make theoretical contributions to the relationship between HR practices and sustainability as a foundation for future research within the same field. At a practical level, it offers suggestions to Vietnamese import-export firms on how to implement GHRM strategies in order to improve environmental performance as well as employee commitment and corporate reputation.

Research Questions

This research seeks to explore how the integration of environmentally conscious practices within HRM can foster long-term sustainability in organizations, particularly in the context of Vietnamese enterprises. To accomplish the previously stated objectives, this research aims to respond to the following questions:

1/ How do people in business perceive the roles of GHRM in building a sustainable corporate culture?

By answering this, Vietnamese enterprises can gain insights into how GHRM goes beyond regulatory compliance to instill a deeper, more permanent cultural shift towards sustainability, positioning them competitively in both local and international markets.

2/ What are the obstacles faced by Vietnamese enterprises when they try to foster a sustainable corporate culture through practicing GHRM?

Addressing these obstacles is vital to understanding why some organizations struggle to integrate GHRM despite its potential benefits. Insights from this question aim to provide a clearer picture of the gaps and opportunities for improvement in Vietnam's sustainability journey.

3/ What practical strategies and suggestions can be made to effectively implement GHRM practices to build a sustainable corporate culture in Vietnamese businesses?

This question focuses on offering practical, actionable solutions for Vietnamese enterprises. Many companies in Vietnam, particularly SMEs, face challenges in integrating sustainable practices due to limited resources or lack of expertise. This question is essential in addressing those challenges by identifying strategies that can help businesses overcome obstacles, capitalize on opportunities, and embed green practices into their HR operations.

METHODOLOGY

The research approach employed in this research is qualitative research. The reason for selecting this type of research lies in its aptness to explore the way that GHRM practices aid in the establishment of a sustainable corporate culture in Vietnamese businesses. The most important features of this approach are the conduct of research in actual business settings, where the researcher is utilized as the main tool for the gathering of data. There will be multiple sources of data collection, for instance, interviews and focus groups with workers, HR managers, and general directors. The research will also be inductively guided, focusing on the meaning of GHRM experience for participants, and is emergent by design, allowing flexibility as new information is gained during the course of the study. A sustainability and organizational culture conceptual framework will be utilized to inform the data analysis, echoing an intensive and philosophical exploration of the subject (Creswell, 2014). Since this research aims to determine the role of GHRM in building sustainable corporate cultures within Vietnamese companies, and provide tangible guidelines for practice, qualitative research is a productive choice. It allows for a rich, nuanced look at the subject matter and will facilitate an in-depth appreciation of how these practices impact sustainability initiatives within the business environment.

Procedure and participants

The data for this study was collected through primary research using a qualitative methodology. The primary data collection method involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with 10 participants from Vietnamese import-export enterprises. This approach was chosen to explore the role of GHRM in building a sustainable corporate culture, the challenges faced during implementation, and practical strategies to overcome these obstacles. Semi-structured interviews provided the flexibility to probe deeper into specific areas of interest while allowing new themes and ideas to emerge during the discussion. The interviews were recorded and transcribed once they were completed.

The interview protocol was structured into three sections based on the AMO framework proposed by Renwick *et al.*, (2013), which examines GHRM practices through the lens of developing green abilities, motivating green employees, and creating green opportunities. Each section corresponded to key thematic areas

identified in the study, ensuring alignment with the research objectives.

All interviews were done in Vietnamese, and only the sections of the research that were cited were translated into English.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol is designed based on the results gathered from the questionnaire, including open questions to explore further information. It includes a heading (date, place, interviewer, interviewee), instructions for the interviewer to follow standard procedures, and main questions.

Data analysis techniques

In this study, a qualitative approach is employed for data analysis, following Creswell's (2014) six-step framework for analyzing qualitative data. This structured methodology ensures that the analysis is thorough, accurate, and reflective of the research objectives, specifically focused on the role of GHRM in building a sustainable corporate culture in import-export companies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The role of GHRM in building a sustainable corporate culture

First, the result reveal that GHRM is a necessary strategic approach to embed sustainable values inside companies. Most participants stressed the need of GHRM initiatives involving training employees on sustainable practices and creating performance assessments based on green criteria in coordinating employee behavior with long-term sustainability goals. These methods improve environmental awareness as well as the corporate identity and help to build an ethical corporate identity. Moreover, the study shows that GHRM significantly increases environmental awareness within organizations. Participants consistently underlined how GHRM acts as a catalyst for a complete knowledge among employees about their obligations in lowering environmental effects. By inspiring conscientious conduct and combining individual contributions with organizational sustainability, this knowledge helps to develop a sustainable business culture. Ultimately, GHRM is not only a fad but also required strategy for companies aiming at creating a sustainable corporate culture. Including eco-consciousness into HR procedures inspiring group responsibility among staff members allows businesses to correctly align their operational strategy with more general sustainability goals.

Difficulties in GHRM implementation

In Developing Green Abilities

The shortage of qualified green candidates seriously impedes the expansion of choosing green candidates in Vietnam's import-export business. Low environmental awareness in the industry helps to explain some candidates' lack of the required technical competence and sustainability dedication.

Additionally, the lack of efficient green training courses aggravates the situation. The shortage of training programs that are specific to the industry and useful tools like instruments for tracking the sustainability effect are also holding back progress. Therefore, integrating sustainability into major activities will help to improve operational as well as environmental performance.

Difficulties in Motivating Green Employees

The two main topics that come up for motivating employees are Performance Management and Pay & Reward Systems. Both areas have significant challenges that hinder employee engagement and alignment with sustainability objectives, reflecting global trends while also highlighting specific issues in Vietnam.

Lack of honest and open evaluation systems is a major issue with Performance Management. Vietnamese workers often find it difficult to see how their efforts to be more environmentally friendly impact their overall work, which results in disengagement. Therefore, open communication and staff involvement in the creation of green goals can help to fix this problem and improve alignment. Another issue is a change in communication and thought patterns, where employees, especially those in lower-level roles, find it difficult to connect green goals with their everyday tasks. This is exacerbated by a lack of motivation because green goals are often perceived as an additional burden rather than an essential obligation. Clear communication, participative management, and realistic goal setting are necessary to increase involvement and decrease resistance. A third challenge is the lack of incentive and pressure from green targets, a global problem as well. In Vietnam, Green goals are often considered as an additional burden taking time away from their main responsibilities.

In terms of Pay & Reward Systems, organizations struggle with designing appealing yet relevant green rewards. Employees are more familiar with traditional rewards such as financial bonuses; eco-friendly awards do not consistently align with their immediate needs. Additionally, inconsistent evaluation of environmental contributions across departments leads to disparities in incentive distribution, fostering inequitable attitudes. To overcome this, businesses must ensure that environmental incentives are meaningful to all employees and tailored to their specific responsibilities and contributions. Finally, maintaining long-term motivation through environmental rewards is tough. Employees sometimes overlook the long-term benefits of environmentally responsible incentives, particularly when compared to immediate financial gains. Effective internal communication, the integration of financial and non-financial incentives, and the recognition of individual contributions are all critical for maintaining motivation.

Difficulties in Providing Green Opportunities

Within the framework of Vietnamese enterprises adopting GHRM for a sustainable culture, two principal issues are Employee Involvement and Empowerment & Engagement.

A significant challenge in Employee Involvement is the lack of awareness and concern among employees. A significant number of workers in Vietnam perceive sustainability initiatives as unrelated to their core duties, resulting in disengagement. Employees in departments not directly associated with production find it challenging to understand how their tasks contribute to sustainability objectives. Concise communication and relatable stories are essential for closing this divide. Another challenge is work pressure and overload. The respondents agree that adding green projects to their already heavy schedule causes employees to feel overwhelmed. Vietnamese companies should adapt such approaches to improve involvement and properly balance responsibilities.

When it comes to Empowerment & Engagement, the first barrier to empowerment is psychological barriers and low confidence. Vietnamese workers frequently perceive green projects as the domain of senior management, leading to their hesitance in

contributing ideas. Participant 4 suggested that training courses and open communication platforms can enhance employee confidence and foster inclusiveness. The tension between hierarchical structures and green initiatives poses an additional challenge. The rigid hierarchical structures within Vietnamese companies can limit lower-level employees' engagement in discussions regarding sustainability. The implementation of hybrid models in Vietnam may align with cultural norms and enhance employee engagement. Finally, competing priorities present considerable challenges. Short-term business objectives frequently take precedence over long-term sustainability goals, both in Vietnam and worldwide. Several interviewees highlighted that organizations focused on revenue tend to deprioritize environmental initiatives. International practices demonstrate the necessity of integrating sustainability with overarching business metrics, ensuring that environmental objectives are perceived as fundamental rather than peripheral.

Issues related to employee involvement, empowerment, and engagement highlight both universal challenges and specific contexts within Vietnam. Addressing issues requires culturally adaptable solutions such as inclusive leadership, transparent communication, and manageable workloads. Integrating local expertise with global best practices can assist Vietnamese companies in overcoming these challenges and advancing environmentally sustainable initiatives.

Implications

Theoretical implications

This research makes a significant contribution to the growing body of literature on GHRM through its focus on its strategic role and also dilemmas in incorporating sustainability into organizational operations. GHRM is shown to play an important role in aligning HR functions and sustainability objectives, particularly in the case of Vietnam's rapidly growing import-export sector. Through incorporating environmental values in developing employees' capabilities, motivating them and providing them with opportunities, companies are able to produce employees who take an active role in organizational performance as well as environmental sustainability (Renwick *et al.*, 2013).

The study also illustrates the application of GHRM to tackle Vietnamese enterprises' specific challenges in dealing with the lack of green-oriented candidates and the ineffective green training programs. These obstacles are exacerbated by the mounting pressure from domestic and international markets to go green, coupled with the incongruence between conventional business agenda and environmental agenda. Furthermore, the study underscores the usefulness of the AMO (Ability, Motivation, Opportunity) model in examining how GHRM can help achieve the integration of sustainability into organizational operations. The use of the AMO model in GHRM provides valuable insight into how organizations can improve their environmental performance by improving the abilities, motivations, and opportunities of employees (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000; Renwick *et al.*, 2013). By emphasizing these three factors, organizations can successfully bridge the green skills gap and align employee behavior with sustainability goals.

Finally, this research makes a pertinent contribution to the knowledge of GHRM's ability to enhance competitive advantage in an economic environment that has been globalized. As the demand for sustainable solutions increases, GHRM may have a significant role to play in making Vietnamese businesses more environmentally efficient while concurrently establishing the trust and loyalty of consumers and business partners (Tuan *et al.*, 2022).

Practical implications for directors and HR managers

As global sustainability concerns intensify, organizations worldwide, including Vietnamese import-export companies, are integrating GHRM practices to align business operations with environmental goals. For directors and HR managers in these organizations, focusing on GHRM is crucial in fostering a sustainable corporate culture that not only meets environmental regulations but also drives employee engagement, retention, and organizational success.

Training and awareness are the cornerstones of building a sustainable corporate culture, particularly in the context of Vietnamese import-export companies where traditional business practices are still evolving to meet modern sustainability standards. Training should be offered not only to management but also to frontline employees, as they are key to implementing sustainability practices in the day-to-day operations of import-export businesses. Global tendencies indicate a rising demand for sustainability competences, with multinational corporations such as Unilever and IKEA incorporating sustainability into employee training programs (Deloitte, 2023). The same models can be duplicated by Vietnamese businesses, offering workshops, seminars, and webinars on green procurement, sustainable supply chain management, and carbon footprint reduction. Furthermore, given that many local businesses may lack knowledge about green technologies and sustainable practices, HR managers must ensure that training programs are accessible and relevant. In the Vietnamese import-export sector, training initiatives should also address how global sustainability trends, such as carbon neutrality and zero-waste goals, directly affect their business operations.

A sustainable culture needs good and open communication at all levels of the organization. In Vietnamese import-export businesses, which are usually rigid hierarchical organizations, human resources managers' role is to help create an environment of tolerance in which employees are attracted to engage in conversations regarding sustainability (Hosain *et al.*, 2016). HR should ensure that sustainability is embedded into the company's mission, vision, and values, which are communicated regularly to employees through internal newsletters, meetings, and events. A supportive culture involves not only top-down communication but also a bottom-up approach where employees at all levels can contribute ideas and feedback on sustainability practices. Directors should encourage an organizational climate where innovation and sustainability are rewarded. For instance, providing platforms for employees to present green project ideas, such as energy-saving initiatives or waste-reduction strategies, can increase engagement and motivation (Singh *et al.*, 2020). International companies like Nike have successfully implemented initiatives that promote employee involvement in green projects by creating open forums for feedback and innovative solutions.

To sustain employee engagement in green initiatives, it is essential to implement effective motivation and reward systems. In Vietnamese import-export companies, where traditional rewards such as financial bonuses are prevalent, green rewards should be designed to appeal to employees' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Financial incentives, such as bonuses tied to meeting environmental targets, can drive short-term engagement. However, intrinsic rewards can be more enduring, such as public recognition or career advancement opportunities for leading sustainability initiatives (Shafaei *et al.*, 2024). Most importantly, rewards need to align both with workers' needs and also organizational sustainability goals. For example, employees in the logistics and transportation industry may value rewards aligned with personal development, such as green supply chain management

professional certifications (Singh *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, as the global business environment places increasing pressure on companies to adopt sustainable practices, organizations like Patagonia have pioneered holistic reward systems that combine both environmental performance and corporate responsibility into their reward mechanisms (Tuan *et al.*, 2022).

A crucial aspect of GHRM in Vietnamese import-export businesses is embedding sustainability into the company's core strategy, ensuring that green goals are not secondary but central to the organization's business model (Hosain *et al.*, 2016). This involves aligning sustainability objectives with broader business goals, such as operational efficiency, profitability, and market competitiveness. Directors should ensure that green objectives are incorporated into strategic planning, risk management, and business development processes. Furthermore, HR managers should create support systems that enable employees to implement sustainability practices effectively. Establishing a framework for sustainability that includes clear policies, sustainability task forces, and cross-departmental collaboration will ensure that sustainability efforts are both coherent and impactful across all company levels. A key consideration for Vietnamese import-export businesses is aligning their sustainability strategies with both national and international regulations. HR managers should stay informed about both local and international sustainability trends to ensure that their organizations remain competitive in an increasingly eco-conscious market.

In addition, building external partnerships with non-governmental organizations, government agencies, and other businesses can amplify sustainability efforts. Collaboration can provide access to shared resources, knowledge, and tools for advancing sustainability goals. For example, in Vietnam, organizations such as the Vietnam Business Council for Sustainable Development (VBCSD) offer platforms for businesses to collaborate on sustainable practices. Directors and HR managers should encourage participation in such initiatives to enhance the company's visibility as a sustainability leader.

Practical implications for candidates and employees

For Vietnamese import-export staff, particularly those in operational and logistics roles, training and capacity development are instrumental in propelling the company's green agenda. Foreign research has ascertained that workers who receive training in green practices are more likely to engage in green activities and possess green goals (Tang *et al.*, 2018). For workers, it is required to find work in occupations that provide opportunities for learning and developing greater skills in green technology and sustainable practices, including supply chain management and adhering to green regulations.

Empowerment of employees lies at the center of building a sustainable organizational culture. The AMO (Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity) framework contends that for workers to engage actively in environmentally-sound behavior, they must possess the ability, motivation, and opportunities (Jiang *et al.*, 2012). Prospective employees would do well to work for companies that provide them with the opportunities to engage in decision-making concerning environmental matters so that they do not remain passive recipients of top-down green diktats. By encouraging open communication and establishing idea exchange channels, organizations can harness the innovative capacity of their employees, thereby increasing employee satisfaction and organizational sustainability (Hosain *et al.*, 2016). For employees, engaging in green practices assists the organization in achieving its sustainability objectives while simultaneously aiding personal development and a feeling of responsibility for work.

Encouragement and reward are crucial in motivating employees towards green practices.

Extrinsic rewards in the form of bonuses or green rewards like electric car incentives are utilized to give immediate motivation to employees. Job candidates must take the initiative to choose organizations that implement such reward programs, as these can demonstrate the company's actual commitment to sustainability. Employees who believe their green efforts are appreciated are more likely to sustain their interest, and they tend to be better positioned for career development in a corporation committed to sustainability. Candidates and employees must align their own values with their employers' sustainability goals. For employees, alignment with the firm's sustainability goals ensures that their day-to-day operations, from procurement to logistics and customer care, become aligned with the overall environmental agenda. Employees, when they realize their contribution to the overall sustainability plan, relate more to the company's success and get motivated and perform better.

In conclusion, for Vietnamese import-export company employees and candidates, embracing GHRM practices has valuable personal and professional benefits. By emphasizing training, empowerment, motivation, and sustainability alignment, employees can enhance their competencies, contribute effectively to green initiatives, and achieve long-term success amidst the rapidly evolving business landscape. As the world increasingly turns toward sustainability, those who can demonstrate environmental responsibility will be at the forefront of corporate success.

Study limitations and future lines of research

Despite its contributions to understanding the role of GHRM in fostering a sustainable corporate culture in Vietnamese import-export companies, this research has several limitations. Firstly, the study's sample size consisted of a limited number of respondents in a single industry and might not necessarily represent the entire range of views in different industries in Vietnam. Secondly, this research was based primarily on qualitative research techniques, including interviews and case studies. Qualitative research provides deep understanding of participants' experiences and opinions but may be vulnerable to interviewer bias and individualistic perspectives of respondents (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Mixed methods, blending quantitative data to corroborate qualitative findings, have the potential to create stronger and more comprehensive findings. Third, the study was particular to Vietnamese companies in the import-export sector, which have particular problems associated with global trade and sustainability practices regulations. Findings may not always be generalized across industries or geographies. Lastly, the study has addressed the area of GHRM from the perspective of employees and HR managers but did not explore more universal macroeconomic and policy considerations that influence the adoption of GHRM. Future research can explore several avenues to further enhance our understanding of GHRM in the realm of sustainable corporate culture. First, expanding the research criteria to include a larger sample size in conjunction with a wide range of industries, including sectors like manufacturing, retail, and agriculture, would allow for comparisons of GHRM practices and shed light on sector-specific challenges and opportunities (Renwick *et al.*, 2013). Second, future studies could delve into the impact of specific GHRM practices on organizational measures such as employee engagement, performance, retention, and environmental sustainability. Long-term research would reveal the way GHRM impacts sustainability over time, giving a thought-provoking appreciation of the long-term influence of GHRM on businesses (Nawaz Khan, 2023). The other most significant thing for future study is to analyze the role of leadership in implementing

GHRM. Though this study was derived from the perceptions of employees, the role of top management in launching green initiatives is crucial. They may be studied with respect to how they influence green practice implementation and their effectiveness, respectively, towards developing a culture of sustainability. It is equally important to explore the relationship between GHRM and corporate social responsibility and their complementary roles towards establishing sustainability. A research project on their convergence in Vietnamese firms could develop an even more thorough plan for corporate sustainability (Hosain *et al.*, 2016). Lastly, future research can also investigate how technological advancements, and digital tools can facilitate improved GHRM practices. With digitalization becoming a growing part of business operations, research can examine how digital technologies like artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and sustainability reporting tools can aid GHRM initiatives and facilitate firms in adopting green practices (Singh *et al.*, 2020). By addressing these gaps, subsequent research can provide meaningful knowledge on how Vietnamese companies can leverage GHRM to build sustainable corporate cultures.

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