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Original Article (Quantified)

Structural Modeling of the Effect of Green Human Resource Management on Green Behavior with the Mediating Role of Environmental Awareness and the Moderating Role of Managers' Green Commitment

Mahboubeh Rahat Dahmardeh¹, Mostafa Taheri², Mahdie Taboli³

1- Department of Management, Faculty of Management-Economics-Accounting, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

2- Department of Management, Faculty of Management-Economics-Accounting, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

3- Department of Accounting, Faculty of Management, Economics and Accounting, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) on green behavior, considering the mediating role of environmental awareness and the moderating role of managers' green commitment in the food industry of Zahedan. In terms of its objective, the research is applicable; regarding its execution method, it is quantitative; and in terms of its nature and methodology, it is descriptive-correlational. Standard questionnaires based on a 5-point Likert scale were applied to collect research data. The content validity of the instrument was confirmed by specialists and experts, and Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were applied to assess the reliability of the instrument. Following the distribution of the questionnaires, the validity of the instrument was measured through three methods: construct validity (outer model), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for all variables was estimated to be greater than 0.5. SPSS and SmartPLS 3 software were applied for data analysis. The results of structural equation modeling by SmartPLS software indicated that Green Human Resource Management, environmental awareness, and managers' green commitment all play an effective role in strengthening employees' green behaviors and advancing the organization's environmental goals. Furthermore, environmental awareness as a mediating factor and managers' green commitment as a moderating variable facilitate and reinforce the path toward institutionalizing environment-friendly behaviors and adopting a sustainable professional lifestyle.

Keywords:

Green Human Resource Management, Green Behavior, Environmental Awareness, Managers' Green Commitment.

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Corresponding Author: Mahboubeh Rahat Dahmardeh

Email: dahmardeh.m@pnu.ac.ir

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Today, environmental crises and social pressures have compelled organizations to think beyond economic goals and focus on **sustainability**. In this context, the food industry plays a decisive role in environmental health due to its high level of resource consumption, waste generation, and potential pollution (Jain et al., 2026). The first step toward achieving a sustainable environment is to identify the factors that threaten it and take action to reduce their impact. Accordingly, the environment has now emerged as a global issue for everyone, including organizations (Valor et al., 2025), to the extent that preventing environmental degradation and striving to improve environmental quality are among the major challenges facing organizations (Wang et al., 2025). Recently, employees' green behavior in the workplace has become a central focus of organizational researchers, as evidence suggests that employees' individual behavior can play a significant role in improving an organization's environmental performance. Employees' green behavior refers to sustainability-enhancing or sustainability-undermining behaviors displayed by employees, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, that are also measurable. To demonstrate green behavior, environmental awareness is the first step. Environmental awareness is a multidimensional concept and influences individuals' information, knowledge, attitudes, tendencies, behaviors, intentions, actions, and practices. This awareness is linked to psychological factors and affects individuals' willingness to engage in activities, form attitudes, and exhibit environmentally responsible behavior (Miah et al., 2025).

Since the foundation and infrastructure of any organization lie in its human resources, and given the importance of considering the reciprocal relationship between human beings and the environment, the integration of environmental management into human resource practices is known as Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), which aims to help organizations improve environmental performance by enhancing the positive role of employees and their environmentally related activities (Pazhouhan et al., 2026). To achieve this goal, having truly green employees—from recruitment and selection to performance appraisal—who can assist organizations in attaining this objective is essential. Therefore, a Green Human Resource Management system has become one of the fundamental principles of organizations. In recent years, human resource managers have joined organizational green movements. Since human resource management plays an important role in shaping organizational culture, structure, strategy, and policy development, it also has a key role in achieving sustainable development. Green Human Resource Management refers to all actions undertaken in the transformation, implementation, and continuation of a system so that an organization's human resources remain conscious of environmental concerns in both their professional and personal lives. GHRM means implementing strategies to raise awareness of green practices in order to promote and sustain sustainable business activities, thereby helping organizations create a more environmentally friendly atmosphere (Samadi et al., 2025).

The mere existence of Green Human Resource Management policies—such as green training or green rewards—does not guarantee environmentally friendly behavior in the workplace. Many employees, despite the presence of such policies, may fail to understand the necessity of these actions due to insufficient environmental awareness, causing such programs to fail. In fact, the absence of a mediating mechanism capable of transforming employees' environmental knowledge into action is one of the fundamental challenges facing organizations. Moreover, in industrial settings such as the food industry in Zahedan, the role of managers as behavioral role models is highly prominent. An issue often overlooked is that if employees observe a lack of green commitment among senior managers, they may lose

motivation for green behavior even when their environmental awareness is high. The contradiction between organizational slogans and managerial practices can neutralize the effectiveness of green human resource strategies. In the food industry of Zahedan, given the region's specific climatic conditions and the necessity of optimal resource management, this fundamental question arises: Does Green Human Resource Management affect green behavior through the mediating role of environmental awareness and the moderating role of managers' green commitment?

Theoretical Framework

Green Human Resource Management and Green Behavior

Some studies have shown that Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has a clear impact on employees' green behaviors (Daud et al., 2026). The results indicate that employee training and involvement in GHRM practices are the primary factors driving commitment, green behaviors, and organizational citizenship behaviors toward the environment. This is while many environmental management researchers have investigated environmental management practices for green behaviors and waste minimization in various sectors (Arshad et al., 2025).

Green Human Resource Management and Environmental Awareness

Green Human Resource Management focuses on training employees in green practices and increasing their environmental awareness, environmental efficiency, environmental participation, and environmental performance (Wang et al., 2025). Some of the underlying strategies of GHRM include investing in employees who are concerned about environmental issues, making employees aware of organizational environmental processes, empowering them to participate in these processes, and creating an eco-friendly organizational culture (Sharif et al., 2026).

Kühner et al. (2026), in a study titled "Leveraging the Twin Transition: The Role of Workplace ICT Use on Employees' Green Behavior," found that the strategic use of technology in the workplace not only enhances operational efficiency but also acts as a key driver for strengthening employees' green behavior.

Othami et al. (2025), in a study titled "Strategic Drivers of Employee Green Behavior: The Role of HRM Alignment, Culture, and Leadership," demonstrated that a green organizational culture acts as a powerful motivator and, through the mediating variable of green self-efficacy, leads to the reinforcement of sustainable behaviors among employees.

Methodology

In terms of its objective, the study is applicable, and in terms of method, it is descriptive-correlational. The statistical population comprises all employees working in the food industries of Zahedan (Industrial Town, Mirjaveh Road) who are involved in the organization's operational and executive processes. Given that the total population size was 800, the sample size was determined as 260 through Cochran's formula for finite populations. The research sample was selected through simple random sampling.

The data collection instrument was a standard questionnaire. The results of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability tests, utilized to assess the reliability of the research instrument, are reported in the relevant tables. To examine the instrument's validity, content validity (expert judgment) was employed and confirmed. Then, after distributing the questionnaire, the instrument's validity was assessed by three approaches: construct validity (outer model), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity. The AVE values for all research

variables were greater than 0.5, indicating optimal validity. To test the research hypotheses, structural equation modeling was conducted through SmartPLS3 statistical software.

Research Findings

The analysis of the research model showed that Green Human Resource Management in the food industry of Zahedan is a key driver in institutionalizing employees' environmental behaviors, and that this effect is facilitated through the development of green awareness as a mediating factor. The findings also confirmed that senior managers' green commitment acts as an accelerator, strengthening the link between human resource tools and employees' behaviors, and plays a decisive role in the effectiveness and sustainability of this behavioral model in the industry.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of the research findings indicates, in the first step, that Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has a positive and significant impact on employees' green behavior. This profound link between organizational structure and individual action demonstrates that when human resource subsystems—from recruitment to rewards—are redesigned based on sustainability criteria, employees unconsciously align their behavioral patterns with the organization's green expectations. This finding is consistent with the framework presented by Ghaemi et al. (2025) in their meta-synthesis model, as they also consider green processes to be the core pillar of forming environmental behaviors. In fact, as emphasized by Alem et al. (2022), Green Human Resource Management transforms green behavior from a marginal activity into an intrinsic duty by making sustainability a part of the professional identity.

In explaining why behavior changes, it must be noted that Green Human Resource Management also has a significant impact on environmental awareness. Organizations cannot succeed by relying solely on instructions; they must change the employee's mindset. The findings of this research in this regard showed that green human resource practices enhance employees' knowledge and understanding of ecological challenges. These results align with the perspective of Alirezai et al. (2022), who believe that green training and participation in environmental projects transform individuals' level of awareness from abstract concepts into applied knowledge. The importance of this knowledge enhancement becomes clear when we realize that environmental awareness, in turn, has a significant impact on green behavior. According to the findings of Rubel et al. (2025), awareness is an essential prerequisite for action; an employee who has become aware of the destructive consequences of human activities on the Earth moves toward protective behaviors, such as waste reduction and energy consumption optimization, with greater intrinsic motivation.

The results showed that environmental awareness plays a mediating role in the relationship between Green Human Resource Management and green behavior. This means that green human resources first sows the seeds of awareness in the minds of employees through training and participatory mechanisms, and it is then this awareness that acts as a psychological stimulus, leading to the emergence of sustainable green behaviors. This mediating role, which has also been confirmed in the research of Alirezai et al. (2023), proves that without engaging employees' perception and cognition, organizational green policies remain only at the surface level and do not lead to real behavioral change.

The findings showed that senior management's green commitment has a direct impact on green behavior. According to the theory of green transformational leadership (Wang et al., 2025), when senior managers adhere to green values in practice beyond formal statements, they serve as behavioral role models for personnel.

Finally, the research findings indicated that senior management's green commitment plays a moderating role in the relationship between Green Human Resource Management and green behavior. This finding is consistent with the view of Sharif et al. (2026) regarding the importance of the leader's role in reinforcing green innovations.