Human resources professionals' perspective on green human resources management: An example of qualitative research in Türkiye

Türkiye'deki insan kaynakları profesyonellerinin yeşil insan kaynakları yönetimine bakış açısı: Bir nitel araştırma örneği

Nuray Turan[1] (iD)

[1]Assistant Professor, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Karaman, Türkiye,
nurayturan@kmu.edu.tr

ORCID: 0000-0001-6823-3992

Abstract

This study examines the perspectives of Human Resources (HR)professionals in Türkiye on Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices. In parallel with the increasing importance of environmental sustainability and social responsibility in the business world, the integration of HR departments into GHRM practices and their attitudes in this process are investigated. Using in-depth interviews as a qualitative research method, the views of 20 HR professionals from different sectors were collected. As a result of the analyses, 6 main themes related to GHRM were identified: the definition of GHRM, first impressions of HRM, potential benefits of HRM practices, initial phases of HRM practices, employee feedback, and the future of HRM. The results show that HRM provides strategic benefits, such as organisational efficiency, cost savings, employee engagement, and corporate reputation, by exceeding environmental sustainability goals. It also finds that HR professional leadership, employee engagement and training are critical to the effective implementation of GHRM. However, it is clear that GHRM will take time to spread rapidly across all sectors and that organisational barriers need to be overcome. This research highlights the importance of organisational internalisation of HRM and the promotion of sustainable business models.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Green Human Resource Management, Human Resource Professionals, Sustainability, Qualitative Research

Jel Codes: M12, M14, Q56

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de İnsan Kaynakları (İK) profesyonellerinin Yeşil İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi (YİKY) uygulamalarına yönelik bakış açılarını incelemektedir. İş dünyasında çevresel sürdürülebilirlik ve sosyal sorumluluğun artan önemi doğrultusunda, İK departmanlarının YİKY uygulamalarına entegrasyonu ve bu süreçteki tutumları araştırılmaktadır. Nitel bir araştırma yöntemi olan derinlemesine görüşmeler aracılığıyla, farklı sektörlerden 20 İK profesyonelinin görüşleri toplanmıştır. Analizler sonucunda YİKY'ye ilişkin altı ana tema belirlenmiştir: İKY'nin tanımı, İKY'ye yönelik ilk izlenimler, İKY uygulamalarının potansiyel faydaları, İKY uygulamalarının başlangıç aşamaları, çalışan geri bildirimleri ve İKY'nin geleceği. Bulgular, YİKY'nin çevresel sürdürülebilirlik hedeflerinin ötesine geçerek örgütsel verimlilik, maliyet tasarrufu, çalışan bağlılığı ve kurumsal itibar gibi stratejik faydalar sağladığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca, YİKY'nin etkin bir şekilde uygulanmasında İK profesyonellerinin liderliği, çalışan katılımı ve eğitim faaliyetlerinin kritik öneme sahip olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, YİKY'nin tüm sektörlerde hızlı bir şekilde yaygınlaşmasının zaman alacağı ve örgütsel engellerin aşılması gerektiği açıktır. Bu araştırma, İKY'nin örgüt içinde içselleştirilmesinin ve sürdürülebilir iş modellerinin teşvik edilmesinin önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi, Yeşil İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi, İnsan Kaynakları Profesyonelleri, Sürdürülebilirlik, Nitel Araştırma

JEL Kodları: M12, M14, Q56

Introduction

Today, organisations are becoming increasingly aware of environmental sustainability (Sulphey & Faisal, 2021; Karagiannis et al., 2022; Leal Filho et al., 2024). Various practices have been implemented in response, with GHRM emerging as an approach that raises employees' environmental awareness, supports sustainable business processes, and strengthens organisations' eco-friendly policies (De Oliveira et al., 2024; Soekotjo et al., 2025; Alfadel & Nalband, 2025; Faeni, 2025). However, the perception and adoption of GHRM practices largely depend on HRM professionals' attitudes towards environmental issues (Ren et al., 2018; Fawehinmi et al., 2024; Chowdhury et al., 2025).

Twenty-first-century organisations face multifaceted economic, social, and environmental challenges (Alkhatib et al., 2023), driving practitioners and academics to increasingly focus on sustainability (Vinkóczi et al., 2023). Increased environmental awareness has led more people to adopt green lifestyles to live more sustainably (Akandere ve Gümrah, 2025). As part of efforts to 'go green', GHRM has been proposed as a key facilitator for implementing green initiatives (Renwick et al., 2013). Human actions that contribute to climate change through wasteful use of resources and environmental damage highlight the importance of promoting environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviours among employees, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Syropoulos & Markowitz, 2022). HRM plays a crucial role in motivating sustainable prosocial behaviours and supporting green initiatives within organisations (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; Shafaei et al., 2020; Raut et al., 2020). Given the significant environmental impact of business activities (Uslu et al., 2022), effective HRM strategies are essential for advancing organisational sustainability goals.

GHRM is a relatively new concept within the scientific community (Shaban, 2019; Islam et al., 2023), but it is developing rapidly due to growing environmental concerns and international standards that encourage organisations to adopt eco-friendly strategies (Perez et al., 2023). GHRM combines traditional HRM with environmental management and corporate social responsibility (Ciocirlan, 2018). Therefore, it is vital to examine how HRM can encourage green behaviour among employees through organisational leadership (Ahmad et al., 2015). It is also vital to examine how organisational leadership can encourage green behaviour among employees through HRM (Akandere, 2019). Despite being a new field of study, GHRM's positive environmental outcomes have fostered growing scholarly interest. However, further research is needed to understand its scope better and impact.

Since the 1987 Brundtland Report, attention to organisations' environmental relationships has intensified. Initial research concentrated on environmental management and responsible behaviours (Hines et al., 1987; Berry & Rondinelli, 1998; Cramer, 1998), while human resource functions began to be considered from a sustainability standpoint during the late 20th century (Dumont, 2015). Studies have examined the relationship between HRM and sustainability, as well as the increasing prioritisation of sustainability activities within HRM (Ehnert & Harry, 2012; Stankevičiūtė & Stankevičiūtė, 2018). Nevertheless, despite a substantial body of research, a comprehensive, multidimensional understanding remains limited (Xie & Lau, 2023).

Recent research in Türkiye has highlighted the role of GHRM within organisations (Kavgacı, 2021), sustainable HRM practices (Yavuz, 2022) and literature reviews on GHRM (Sağbaş & Uslu, 2022). Internationally, studies have examined the application of GHRM (Haddock-Millar et al., 2016; Guerci & Carollo, 2016), its conceptual definitions (Yong et al., 2020) and the development of its measurement scale (Tang et al., 2018). Some research has also considered the employee perspective (Seyedein & Mesbahi, 2020). However, a notable gap remains in the literature regarding the perspectives of human resource professionals in Türkiye, which this study aims to address. Thus, qualitative research was designed to make a unique contribution to theory and practice by examining GHRM from the perspective of HR professionals. GHRM is considered a current, time-consuming topic to understand and adopt.

The core research gap lies in understanding how human resource professionals perceive and interpret GHRM practices within their organisational contexts, particularly in Türkiye. While existing literature often focuses on technical or outcome-based aspects, it frequently overlooks the strategic role and attitudes of HR professionals, which are crucial for promoting green initiatives. This limits the development of context-specific strategies and theories, particularly in emerging markets with unique cultural and regulatory environments. Therefore, this study addresses this deficiency by exploring HR professionals' perceptions, experiences and attitudes towards GHRM in Türkiye.

The focus on human resource professionals in Türkiye is motivated by their pivotal role in adopting and integrating green human resource practices, shaping employee behaviours and embedding sustainability into organisational culture. Investigating their perspectives will enrich our global

understanding of GHRM and support the tailoring of sustainability strategies to local realities. Furthermore, given the pressing need for environmental action at both the global and national levels, examining GHRM in Türkiye is timely and relevant for policymakers and practitioners seeking to advance sustainable development goals.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the GHRM literature by offering a fresh perspective on HRM professionals in a developing country, emphasising the strategic and cultural dimensions beyond technical implementation. In practice, it provides human resource practitioners and organisational leaders in Türkiye with insights into the enablers and barriers to effective GHRM, offering actionable recommendations to enhance sustainability via human resource practices. In a broader context, the study addresses a gap in non-Western research by providing empirical data from a rapidly industrialising country that is facing particular environmental and regulatory challenges. This supports the development of locally relevant sustainability policies and interventions.

Literature review

HRM plays a crucial role in sustainable development. Increasing awareness of environmental sustainability and evolving regulatory frameworks have led organisations to adopt HRM as a strategic method for effective environmental management (Din et al., 2024). GHRM specifically examines the intersection of HRM and environmental management. It encompasses HR practices that encourage environmentally friendly behaviours among employees (Jong & Yusoff, 2016; Muisyo et al., 2022). GHRM integrates HR systems, practices and strategies with organisational sustainability goals, employee empowerment, and the fostering of a sustainable organisational culture (Renwick, 2013; Jabbour et al., 2019). Central to GHRM are HR practices that contribute to the economic, environmental and social sustainability of organisations (Benevene & Buonomo, 2020). This approach helps organisations to achieve financial, social and environmental objectives while managing the undesirable side effects and long-term impacts of their activities on the natural environment (Ehnert et al., 2016; Ren et al., 2018).

GHRM is characterised by seven key dimensions: green job design; green recruitment and selection; green training and development; green performance management; green compensation management; green occupational health and safety; and green employee relations (Shah, 2019). These dimensions encompass various HR practices, including recruitment, selection, training, development, motivation, and performance evaluation, all of which are geared towards advancing environmental objectives (Gilal et al., 2019; Aftab et al., 2022). By reconfiguring traditional HR functions through an environmental lens, GHRM aligns staffing, employee development, and performance appraisal with sustainability goals.

Importantly, GHRM signifies a paradigm shift in HR activities, as it systematically integrates environmental goals into all HRM subfunctions, including workforce planning, recruitment, employee motivation and development, and working condition design (Bombiak & Marciniuk-Kluska, 2018). This requires coherence and alignment between HR and other organisational functions to support environmental objectives (Jabbour, 2013). Examples of GHRM's strategic and innovative nature include recruiting and retaining environmentally conscious employees, providing environmental training, and including employees' environmental contributions in performance appraisals (Jabbour et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2019). Over the past decade, GHRM has gained increasing attention as organisations across sectors recognise the importance of adopting environmentally friendly HR practices to promote sustainability (Bahuguna et al., 2023; Kissi et al., 2024).

GHRM promotes greener workplaces by combining traditional HR practices with innovative approaches such as green training, green performance management and green rewards. These play a vital role in fostering sustainable work environments (Yong et al., 2020). HR professionals, particularly those in senior positions, play a pivotal role in adopting and leading GHRM behaviours within organisations (Liu et al., 2024). In some contexts, environmental responsibilities have even been integrated into HR functions (Haddock-Millar et al., 2016), with HR professionals playing a coordinating role in promoting sustainability and environmental awareness among employees (Sathasivam et al., 2021). Empirical evidence further supports the positive influence of GHRM practices and HR professionals' pro-environmental attitudes on employees' voluntary green behaviours (Zhang et al., 2023). The extent to which organisations prioritise green issues is also linked to the integration of corporate HR strategies with performance management systems (Marcus & Fremeth, 2009).

In the Turkish context, research on GHRM practices has increased in recent years. The importance of environmental sustainability in Turkish businesses is growing, with many companies using HRM as a strategic tool to achieve environmental goals (Demiray & Tat, 2026; Haydaroğlu, 2026). In his research, Oncer (2019) emphasises that organisations need to integrate HR processes with green practices to

ensure environmental sustainability and develop an environmentally conscious organisational culture. Similarly, Günaydın et al. (2025) argue in their study that GHRM is particularly important in Turkey, where SMEs have a large share of the economy, in contributing to the spread of sustainable production and environmental responsibility by increasing environmental awareness in these businesses. However, while it is recognised that GHRM practices play a significant role in helping Turkish businesses adapt to environmental sustainability, these practices are not yet widespread, particularly in certain regions, and require further development (Kişi, 2025). This is because, although Turkish businesses acknowledge the importance of GHRM, the recommended applications are not fully implemented in practice, limiting their impact on environmental performance (Polat, 2025). As a result, the relevant national and international literature on HRM practices has increased rapidly.

Method

This study employed one qualitative research method, specifically the structured interview technique (Kallio et al., 2016). This method was chosen to collect standardised responses from HR professionals regarding their perceptions and thoughts about GHRM, and to identify similarities and differences in these views for comparison.

Problem statement, research question and sub-questions

Despite growing national and international interest in GHRM (GHRM), there is still a limited in-depth understanding of how HR professionals perceive and interpret it, even though they play a central role in implementing and coordinating these practices. As previously mentioned, existing literature tends to focus on the technical aspects or outcomes of GHRM, often overlooking the strategic role of HR professionals in developing and promoting green initiatives. This gap is particularly pronounced in the Turkish context, where empirical research on GHRM from practitioners' perspectives is scarce. This shortage hinders both theoretical development and the creation of context-specific strategies. Therefore, this study aims to address this issue by examining HR professionals' perceptions, experiences and attitudes towards GHRM practices. The study aims to provide valuable insights into the practical applicability of these practices, the challenges faced and their potential contribution to sustainability goals. The main research question and sub-questions are as follows:

The main research question of this study is: "What are the perceptions and perspectives of HR professionals regarding GHRM?" Based on this central question, the following sub-questions are proposed:

Sub-question 1: *What are HR professionals' general opinions about the concept of GHRM?*

Sub-question 2: *What do HR professionals think about the potential benefits that GHRM practices offer to organisations?*

Sub-question 3: *According to HR professionals, what are the effects of GHRM practices on employees?*

Sub-question 4: *How do HR professionals perceive the future development of GHRM?*

Sub-question 5: *Based on their experiences, what are the examples and characteristics of GHRM practices observed by HR professionals?*

Development of the interview form

In the initial phase of the study, a literature review on GHRM and GHRM practices was conducted, and based on this review, a set of 13 questions was developed. Following feedback from two academic experts, necessary revisions were made, and the questions' validity was confirmed. Subsequently, a pilot study was conducted with three HR professionals, and based on the outcomes, the main study was initiated. The final version of the interview form included 13 questions along with 9 demographic variables. The questions were designed to explore how HR professionals define GHRM, how it is perceived within an organisation, the process of its implementation, its effects on employees, and its perceived significance for the future. Sample questions include: "What does GHRM mean to you, and could you share your general opinions about this concept?" and "In your view, what kind of benefits has the implementation of GHRM practices brought to your organisation?" Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Social Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee at Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University.

Data collection

The researcher collected the data for this research in April 2025 through face-to-face and Zoom/Google Meet interviews with HR professionals from 15 organisations engaged in sustainability efforts. The

researcher informed the participants that ethical approval had been obtained for the study, that the information collected via the interview form would remain confidential and be used solely for scientific purposes, and that participation was entirely voluntary. Qualitative data collection was carried out using purposive sampling. Although not random, this technique maintains rigour in qualitative research by enabling researchers to select participants with relevant experiences or characteristics (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Additionally, various factors contribute to the quality and reliability of the research, and addressing each aspect of rigour requires attention to these factors (Campbell et al., 2020). In purposive sampling, the sample size is determined by 'data saturation' (Suen et al., 2014). In this study, interviews continued until no new information or themes emerged. In this study, data saturation was reached after the 15th interview, when no additional information or themes emerged; thus, the managerial insights relating to the topic were fully captured.

Data analysis

Content analysis was used, and four stages were applied as outlined by Harwood & Garry (2003). First, the data were coded; then, themes were identified. Subsequently, the codes and themes were organised, and finally, the findings were described and interpreted. Interview audio recordings and written forms were transcribed and analysed.

To ensure the study's trustworthiness, several strategies were employed in line with qualitative research standards (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Reliability was enhanced by using the percentage agreement method proposed by Miles and Huberman (2018). The researcher conducted the coding process twice, with a one-week interval between sessions. The calculated agreement rate of 78% falls within the acceptable range of 70–80%, indicating satisfactory coding reliability. To strengthen credibility, data triangulation was employed by collecting data from 20 HR professionals working in different sectors. This diversity of sectors enabled GHRM practices to be examined from multiple perspectives. Additionally, direct quotations from participants were used to provide rich and detailed descriptions of the findings. Dependability was enhanced by clearly documenting the coding procedures, theme development stages and data analysis steps. An audit trail was maintained throughout the research process. Codes and themes were developed by referring to relevant literature, established scales and conceptual frameworks. Confirmability was ensured by grounding interpretations in participants' statements and maintaining transparency throughout the analysis. The researcher also repeatedly reviewed the data to minimise subjective bias.

Findings

The study population consists of HR professionals employed by organisations in Ankara, Izmir, and Istanbul that are either green businesses, candidates for green transformation, or involved in sustainability initiatives. A green business is defined as an enterprise that aims to protect the environment, minimise environmental damage, redesign its product design, packaging, and production processes accordingly, integrate ecological values into its organisational culture, and fulfil its responsibilities toward society within the framework of social responsibility (Odeyemi et al., 2024; Ashraf et al., 2024).

The decision to focus on HR professionals from Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir is based on the fact that these cities are among the most economically developed and industrialised in Türkiye. They are key hubs for business, finance, trade, and the service industry, hosting the headquarters or regional offices of many national and international private-sector companies. They also attract a significant share of the country's skilled workforce, particularly in white-collar professions such as human resources (Istanbul Chamber of Industry, 2024; Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), 2024, 2025).

The sample comprises 15 HR professionals working at the aforementioned organisations in Izmir, Istanbul, and Ankara, Türkiye. The sample was selected using the maximum variation sampling method, which aims to explore similarities and differences across diverse cases and to reflect the diversity of individuals who may be stakeholders in the research problem, even within a small sample. However, generalisation to the wider population is not possible using this method (Palinkas et al., 2015). Therefore, maximum variation sampling was chosen due to the inability to reach all HR professionals in organisations of this nature throughout Türkiye.

Among the participants, 5 are women, and 10 are men. The average age is 42. Eleven participants are married, and four are single. Each HR professional has more than 5 years of experience in the field. Educationally, 9 hold undergraduate degrees, 5 have master's degrees, and 1 has a doctoral degree. The

participants' length of service as human resources professionals ranges from five to 35 years, with an average of 13.9 years.

Table 1 presents the participants' employment sectors and roles. The table shows 15 human resources professionals. They work in various sectors. The table also shows their positions. The participants come from a variety of fields and primarily hold middle- and senior-level HR roles.

Table 1: Participants' Sectors and Roles

Participant ID	Sector	Role
P1	Metal Industry	Assistant HR Manager
P2	Food Production	HR Manager
P3	Green Tech Start-up	HR Manager
P4	Banking	HR Specialist
P5	Banking	HR Manager
P6	Automotive	HR Director
P7	Machinery Manufacturing	HR Director
P8	Machinery Manufacturing	HR Director
P9	Automotive	HR Specialis
P10	Food Machinery	HR Training Manager
P11	Machinery Manufacturing	HR Specialist
P12	Hospitality	HR Consultant
P13	Environmental Consultancy	HR Manager
P14	Education and Consultancy	HR Manager
P15	Logistics and industry	HR Manager

The rationale for selecting HR professionals as the sample group stems from the lack of prior national and/or international qualitative studies that investigate the perceptions of HR professionals working in green businesses toward GHRM. It is notable that even in organisations not classified as green businesses, only one qualitative study has explored HR professionals' perceptions of GHRM (Karanfil, 2024). Conversely, the literature frequently features quantitative studies involving broader employee populations (Kesen & Öselmiş, 2021). Therefore, the choice of HR professionals in green businesses as the study sample is considered a unique approach.

Based on interviews, six main themes were identified in the study: Definition of GHRM, First Impressions of GHRM, Potential Benefits of GHRM Practices for Organisations, Initial Steps Toward Implementing GHRM Practices, Employee Feedback on GHRM Practices, and The Future and Dissemination Potential of GHRM. Direct participant quotations related to the themes and sub-themes are provided below. In the quotations presented under each theme, the participants are coded as HRP1, HRP2, … HRP18. For example, HRP2 refers to the second HR professional who participated in the study, while HRP11 refers to the eleventh participant. Below are the main themes and sub-themes identified through content analysis, along with selected quotations that exemplify these themes.

THEME 1: Definition of GHRM

It is noteworthy that HR professionals define GHRM as a system that is environmentally and nature-conscious, aligned with sustainability, and that contributes to corporate image and competitive advantage. In summary, participant statements emphasise that GHRM plays a critical role in helping organisations achieve their sustainability goals, adopt environmentally friendly business processes, and gain a competitive edge. The sub-themes developed in this context, along with selected participant quotations, are presented below.

Theme 1.1: Environmentally Conscious HR Processes

HRP2: "It refers to HRM planning and managing processes by taking the environmental (nature) factor into account."

HRP10: "It expresses the integration of environmental and sustainable policies into HR processes and the harmony between humans and the environment."

HRP7: "I would describe it as the reorganisation of HRM processes in business and development activities to be nature-conscious and to keep the carbon footprint at a minimum."

Theme 1.2: Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility

HRP3: "GHRM aims to protect both nature and employees by integrating environmentally friendly policies into HR processes. GHRM is not just an eco-friendly approach but also a business strategy that enhances company sustainability and ensures employee satisfaction and productivity. Therefore, I believe GHRM has become a necessity rather than a trend."

HRP6: "It involves the inclusion of ecological practices into the field of HR policy."

HRP8: "Green HRM practices refer to methods aimed at raising awareness among employees about sustainability and encouraging the achievement of internal environmental goals."

Theme 1.3: Corporate Image and Competitive Advantage

HRP4: "GHRM strengthens the company's image and increases awareness of social responsibility. It creates an eco-friendly working environment and contributes to the long-term success of organisations."

HRP3: "With the adoption of environmentally friendly practices through GHRM, the company's reputation in the eyes of the public will improve. It enhances the company's competitive power in the sector. It boosts brand value and creates strategic benefits by fostering customer and employee loyalty."

HRP4: "It is important in terms of bringing ecological awareness to the business and its personnel. A company's environmentally friendly image increases market share and provides a competitive advantage."

THEME 2: First Impressions of GHRM

According to participant statements, although GHRM initially caused uncertainty or confusion, it was eventually perceived as an innovative and valuable approach. Additionally, a strong belief emerged that integrating environmental sustainability into HR processes could contribute not only to environmental goals but also to employee satisfaction and the organisation's competitive advantage. Selected participant quotations are provided below.

Theme 2.1: Uncertainty and Confusion

HRP3: "When I first heard about GHRM practices in our company, I must admit I was a bit confused. As someone who has worked in the banking sector for many years, I had never really considered the impact of environmental sustainability and green practices in the HR field. However, my initial impressions evolved. I realised that not only does HPRM protect the environment, it also significantly contributes to the company's overall efficiency, employee motivation and corporate culture. Initially, I was curious about how this process would be integrated into HR and how employees would receive it. In a traditional sector such as banking, there was some uncertainty about implementing environmentally friendly practices and sustainability strategies. Nevertheless, it didn't take me long to realise that such practices could enhance the company's image and the way we do business."

HRP1: "At first, I anticipated it would be a challenging process in terms of paperwork.Because the employees said it was a bit tiring, and it seemed like a challenging period to me as well."

Theme 2.2: Evaluation as a Positive and Innovative Approach

HRP4: "When I first heard about GHRM practices, I was quite excited because this concept seemed like a valuable, innovative approach that highlights environmental responsibility and sustainability in the business world. I considered it a powerful opportunity to generate long-term benefits for both employees and the company, to raise environmental awareness, and to make the workforce more motivated and productive. These practices are not only aimed at protecting the environment but also include strategic goals such as strengthening the company's image, raising employee awareness, and fulfilling social responsibility. I believed GHRM would be beneficial not only for environmental goals but also for organisational purposes, increasing employee satisfaction and engagement. The idea that this approach would make the company more sustainable and provide a long-term competitive advantage greatly impressed me."

HRP5: "When I heard about GHRM, I saw it as a strategy with great potential for both environmental and human-centred positive transformation, and I was eager to take an active role in it."

HRP11: "It caught my attention the first time I heard about it, because sustainability and environmental awareness now hold significant importance in the business world. Especially integrating it into HR processes made me think it could contribute to employee engagement and company reputation."

THEME 3: Potential Benefits of GHRM Practices for Organizations

For HR professionals, GHRM is considered a strategic advantage that offers potential benefits such as cost savings, operational efficiency, and enhanced corporate reputation. It is also noted that GHRM contributes to building a sustainable corporate structure that strengthens employee engagement while fulfilling environmental and social responsibilities. Selected participant quotations are provided below.

Theme 3.1: Operational Efficiency and Cost Savings

HRP4: "By increasing efficiency, costs are reduced — for example, through energy savings and waste management."

HRP10: "With digitalisation, paper usage can decrease. Online interviews can reduce candidates' use of vehicles and overall energy consumption."

HRP11: "Thanks to GHRM, we can achieve cost savings and operational efficiency through environmentally conscious projects. Additionally, enhanced credibility is an extra benefit for the organisation. Practices like energy savings and waste management reduce costs."

Theme 3.2: Environmental Impact and Social Responsibility

HRP1: "It benefits the environment more than it benefits us."

HRP9: "Implementing GHRM practices in our company reduces our environmental footprint, improves social sustainability, and contributes to our environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance."

Theme 3.3: Employee Engagement and Corporate Image

HRP4: "It increases employee engagement because being part of an environmentally conscious organisation boosts motivation."

HRP8: "Employees are more likely to feel a sense of loyalty toward companies that prioritise sustainability. Those working in eco-friendly companies tend to be more productive than others."

HRP11: "It strengthens our corporate reputation."

HRP6: "In addition to enhancing corporate reputation and brand value… employees with consumer awareness are more inclined to work for companies that emphasise green practices."

THEME 4: Initial Steps Toward Implementing GHRM Practices

HR professionals indicated that implementing GHRM practices begins primarily with strategic planning supported by top management, followed by training and awareness initiatives, and ultimately embeds itself in corporate culture through concrete applications. Participants also emphasised that the process is not limited to environmentally friendly steps but evolves into a structure that encourages employee participation and is open to continuous improvement. Selected participant quotations are provided below.

Theme 4.1: Strategic Planning and Top Management Support

HRP2: "It has become a framework requiring compliance with sustainability principles in all management processes."

HRP3: "In the process of implementing GHRM practices in our company, top management support was first secured, and the contribution of GHRM to strategic goals was emphasised."

HRP4: "We integrated GHRM strategies into our HR processes, such as prioritising environmentally conscious candidates in recruitment. The process aims to increase environmental awareness at all levels of the organisation and continues through continuous improvement."

HRP10: "Under the umbrella of sustainability, all departments reviewed their workflows. A Sustainability Commission was established."

Theme 4.2: Training and Awareness Activities

HRP5: "Staff were informed about the subject."

HRP6: "Before implementation, training sessions were held to raise employee awareness. Departmental meetings were conducted, and roadmaps were drawn to initiate the process."

HRP10: "Employees received training on sustainability topics."

Theme 4.3: Concrete Practice Examples

HRP1: "We have green star certification..."

HRP3: "Paperless office practices were introduced, technological infrastructure was updated to ensure energy efficiency, and recycling processes were initiated. We also launched projects such as 'Green Initiatives' to promote employee participation."

HRP4: "Practical steps like green office initiatives were implemented. Improvements were made across waste management, energy efficiency, and digitalisation. Volunteer teams were formed to engage employees in the process, and their feedback was regularly collected. We also integrated GHRM strategies into HR processes, such as preferring candidates with environmental awareness in recruitment. The aim is to increase environmental sensitivity throughout the organisation and ensure continuous improvement."

HRP9: "Some of our GHRM practices include reducing paper usage in the office, switching to electric vehicles, introducing flexible and hybrid work options to reduce carbon emissions, prioritising healthy and plant-based food, eliminating single-use plastics in the office, separating and recycling packaging waste, using low-energy office equipment, and conducting meetings via online platforms whenever possible."

HRP11: "Within our Integrated Activity Report, we monitor 51 different Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) under the title of Sustainable Human Resources. We also launched an award program to support projects that accelerate sustainability. Through this program, projects focused on climate, people, and innovation are recognised and rewarded."

THEME 5: Employee Feedback on GHRM Practices

According to HR professionals, employee feedback plays a critical role in the institutional adoption of GHRM practices. Despite initial confusion and resistance, participants noted that increased awareness and the realisation of tangible benefits led to a positive shift in employee attitudes over time. This highlights the importance of employee participation and internalisation for the sustainable integration of GHRM into the organisation.

Theme 5.1: Initial Challenges and Resistance (Perceived Difficulty/Complexity)

HRP1: "We received some feedback from employees indicating that it was somewhat exhausting (e.g., paperwork forms, etc.)."

HRP2: "Although it didn't make much sense to many employees at first, the concept was eventually learned and understood over time."

HRP13: "It was challenging; convincing the company executives or partners was even more difficult."

HRP3: "Some employees were concerned that the changes under GHRM would create an extra workload."

Theme 5.2: Gradual Adoption and Positive Change

HRP2: "As the concept was learned and understood, it became something people took ownership of and embraced."

HRP3: "Over time, as the benefits of practices like paperless offices and recycling became clearer, employees began to see how this transformation contributed to work efficiency and reduced company costs. Even those who initially had low environmental awareness adapted to the process through training. As a result, feedback shifted positively, and employees began to support GHRM practices."

HRP4: "During the integration of GHRM practices into our company, feedback from employees was quite positive. They indicated that changes like energy conservation in the office, waste management, and reduced paper use were easy to adopt. Many employees were eager to contribute innovative and creative ideas. Overall, the environmental awareness fostered by GHRM enhanced employees' commitment to their jobs and the company."

HRP10: "Employees responded positively, even if belatedly, and the innovative mindset was incorporated into the company's core values."

Theme 5.3: Positive Participation and Support

HRP11: "Our award program is considered quite prestigious by employees. This is the area where they are directly involved, and every year our teams develop dozens of nature-beneficial projects. These projects reflect employees' commitment to sustainability and social benefit and aim to help solve societal and environmental issues in earthquake-affected regions. The depth of participation and the quality of the projects are the best indicators of employees' internalisation of GHRM."

HRP6: "We observed that growing environmental and climate awareness in society is also reflected among our employees. Feedback and participation were positive."

HRP9: "Sustainability practices in our company were supported and embraced by employees. They even began to reflect similar practices in their personal lives."

THEME 6: The Future and Dissemination Potential of GHRM

From the perspective of HR professionals, GHRM practices are expected to become more widespread in the future. They will likely become mandatory, especially for companies aiming to contribute to sustainability goals. Participants noted that GHRM not only provides environmental benefits but also contributes to corporate culture, brand value, and employee engagement. Although the adoption of these practices may take time in certain industries and companies, factors such as regulations, consumer demands, and the pursuit of competitive advantage are expected to accelerate the wider acceptance of GHRM. Selected participant quotations are provided below.

Theme 6.1: Belief in Contribution (Positive Evaluation)

HRP3: "I firmly believe that GHRM practices contribute to our company's sustainability goals, and I see this contribution not only environmentally, but also as a transformation reflected in the company culture and employee motivation."

HRP11: "The widespread adoption of GHRM practices is inevitable. Especially for companies that want to increase employee engagement and brand reputation, GHRM will become a necessity. Topics like carbon footprint reduction, waste management & recycling, and nature/environment projects play a key role in sustainability targets."

Theme 6.2: Contribution to Brand Value

HRP1: "It contributed to the company's PR and promotional efforts."

HRP3: "Implementing GHRM not only increases a company's brand value but also builds stronger trust with customers and business partners."

HRP8: "With GHRM strategies, an institution can establish a culture centred on sustainability. This allows both environmental contributions and organisational success to be achieved."

Theme 6.3: Environmental + Social + Economic Contribution

HRP4: "Creating green supply chains, applying environmentally focused HR policies... companies are expected to report their environmental impacts transparently. We make concrete contributions in areas such as eco-friendly office practices, energy efficiency, and waste management. As a result, energy consumption has decreased, paper usage in offices has been significantly reduced, and recycling rates have increased."

HRP9: "We have observed that GHRM has a positive impact on the company, not only environmentally and socially but also economically."

HRP12: "Increasing these practices especially improves the efficient management of business processes and contributes positively to both brand image and the company's service to a sustainable world and future, benefiting both the organisation and society as a whole."

Theme 6.4: Sceptical Attitudes

HRP2: "Unfortunately, it's a concept unknown to many institutions and will likely remain so for a long time. Its dissemination will take time."

HRP13: "I don't believe it will contribute to sustainability goals. The targets are clear: low cost, high profit."

Theme 6.5: The View That GHRM is Inevitable and Will Become Widespread

HRP4: "The automotive sector is one where environmental impacts are significant, and I believe GHRM will play an increasingly critical role in this area. Eco-friendly production methods, energy efficiency, waste management, and sustainable supply chains are especially important for the industry's future. The widespread adoption of these practices is definitely possible. Many automotive companies are already making significant strides in producing eco-friendly vehicles and reducing carbon emissions. This trend will accelerate the sector-wide acceptance of GHRM. Moreover, increasing environmental regulations and consumer demand for green practices will support its expansion. Companies in this sector should view GHRM not only as environmental responsibility but also as an opportunity to gain a competitive advantage, reduce costs, and build more sustainable business models. Therefore, broader acceptance and dissemination of GHRM in the sector is highly likely."

HRP11: "Yes, especially in our sector (logistics and industry), the importance of GHRM practices is growing. It plays a critical role in reducing operational costs and ensuring environmental sustainability. Green HR strategies offer significant benefits, including reducing carbon footprints, improving energy efficiency, and managing waste. With the influence of future regulations, customer expectations, and corporate social responsibility initiatives, the widespread adoption of GHRM practices is inevitable. For companies aiming to enhance employee engagement and brand reputation, GHRM will become essential."

In summary, all main themes and sub-themes are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Main and Sub-Themes

Main Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Definition of GHRM	1.1 Environmentally Conscious HR Processes
	1.2 Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility
	1.3 Corporate Image and Competitive Advantage
Theme 2: First Impressions of GHRM	2.1 Uncertainty and Confusion
	2.2 Evaluation as a Positive and Innovative Approach
Theme 3: Potential Benefits of GHRM Practices	3.1 Operational Efficiency and Cost Savings
	3.2 Environmental Impact and Social Responsibility
	3.3 Employee Engagement and Corporate Image
Theme 4: Initial Steps Toward Implementing GHRM	4.1 Strategic Planning and Top Management Support
	4.2 Training and Awareness Activities
	4.3 Concrete Practice Examples
Theme 5: Employee Feedback on GHRM Practices	5.1 Initial Challenges and Resistance
	5.2 Gradual Adoption and Positive Change
	5.3 Positive Participation and Support
Theme 6: Future and Dissemination Potential of GHRM	6.1 Belief in Contribution
	6.2 Contribution to Brand Value
	6.3 Environmental + Social + Economic Contribution
	6.4 Sceptical Attitudes
	6.5 GHRM is Inevitable and Will Become Widespread

Discussion

This study provides valuable insights into how HR professionals perceive GHRM, its importance within organisations and how its practices are adopted. These insights directly address the research problem by revealing HR professionals' perceptions of, and understanding of, GHRM in organisational contexts.

The qualitative data analysis reveals that GHRM has evolved from an environmental sustainability initiative into a strategic approach that contributes to organisational success. This finding addresses the research problem by showing that GHRM has become a strategic tool that goes beyond environmental concerns. The critical role of HR professionals in this transformation, the importance of employee involvement and the integration of GHRM into corporate culture all emerge as key elements of this process. This suggests that leadership and employee engagement are crucial for effectively internalising GHRM.

Participants reported that, although GHRM initially caused confusion and uncertainty, it gained acceptance over time as its tangible benefits became evident. This relates to the research problem by showing how perceptions evolve as employees experience the benefits of GHRM practices. It highlights the importance of employee training, awareness-raising activities and leadership support for successful implementation. The research problem suggests that organisational strategies that support both employees and environmental goals are crucial. This finding is consistent with the existing literature, which emphasises that GHRM is a multifaceted strategy that enhances employee engagement, strengthens corporate reputation, and provides a long-term competitive advantage, rather than merely the formulation of eco-friendly policies (Jabbour et al., 2010; Benevene & Buonomo, 2020). Thus, the study confirms and extends these insights within the examined context. The findings also suggest that HR professionals play a pivotal leadership role in fostering a culture of sustainability within organisations. This directly addresses the research problem by identifying leadership as a key factor in embedding GHRM in organisational practices. Furthermore, environmental, economic and social goals should be considered together, and GHRM contributes to all aspects of corporate sustainability, not just environmental objectives (Ehnert et al., 2016; Ren et al., 2018). This demonstrates that GHRM serves as a strategic tool that aligns sustainability with organisational performance, relating to the study's objective of examining organisational impacts.

It is expected that GHRM will not spread at the same pace across all industries, but external factors such as regulations, growing consumer awareness and the need for competitive advantage are anticipated to

accelerate its broader adoption (Bahuguna et al., 2023; Kissi et al., 2024). This insight addresses the research problem by highlighting contextual factors that influence the adoption of GHRM across sectors. In this context, organisations should view environmentally focused policies as both strategic opportunities and responsibilities. This interpretation clearly distinguishes between observation and implication, providing actionable insight.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that GHRM reduces environmental impact and provides significant organisational-level contributions, offering theoretical and practical value to the literature. These findings answer the research question by showing how GHRM influences HR strategy, employee engagement and organisational sustainability. Further enriching the field is expected to be the focus of future research, which will explore the impacts of GHRM across different industries and organisational structures in greater depth. This aligns with the study's aim to promote a comprehensive understanding of GHRM adoption and its organisational effects.

Research implications and contributions

Theoretical implications and contributions

This study expands the literature on GHRM by showing that it goes beyond environmental goals and plays a role in strengthening employee engagement, organisational reputation, and operational performance. The findings highlight that GHRM brings a strategic perspective to HR functions and connects sustainability objectives with business outcomes. Rather than being a purely technical process, GHRM emerges as a management model shaped by company culture, leadership, and employee participation. Additionally, the study emphasises the transformative role of HR professionals in GHRM and suggests a valuable link between leadership and sustainable HR practices. GHRM should therefore be understood not only as an extension of environmental management, but also as a key element in strategic HR thinking.

Practical implications and contributions

The results show that successful GHRM implementation depends on HR professionals taking the lead with a clear strategic vision. It's important not only to adopt green HR policies but also to communicate them effectively across the organisation. This includes revising hiring practices, training programs, and performance evaluations to reflect environmental goals. Encouraging employee participation through regular feedback and awareness activities can help embed GHRM into the company culture. In the long term, strong support from top management and the inclusion of sustainability in corporate strategy are key to lasting success.

Contextual implications and contributions

This study addresses a significant gap by focusing on Türkiye's unique economic and environmental context, characterised by rapid industrialisation alongside growing sustainability challenges. While HR professionals play a crucial role in implementing green initiatives, their perspectives in this setting are underexplored. Academically, the study expands GHRM literature beyond Western-centric research by providing empirical insights from a developing country with distinct organisational cultures and regulatory frameworks. In practice, it offers policymakers and organisations valuable insights into developing effective, locally tailored sustainability strategies.

Limitations and future directions

This study has a few limitations. First, it focused on HR professionals in specific industries and regions in Türkiye, so the findings may not apply to all sectors and countries. Second, as a qualitative study, it relies on subjective experiences, which may limit generalizability. Third, it emphasises short-term impacts and does not explore the long-term effects of GHRM. Lastly, it does not fully account for external factors such as regulations and economic conditions, which could influence how organisations adopt GHRM.

Also, the study focused on HR professionals in Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara — the three largest cities and the main private-sector hubs in Türkiye — where the majority of HR representatives from major firms are based. While this metropolitan focus was chosen for data collection, it may limit the generalisability of the findings. Future research could broaden the scope by examining regional disparities, considering differences by company size and industry, or including all seven regions of Türkiye.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that GHRM is a strategic tool that not only achieves environmental sustainability, but also enhances organisational efficiency, strengthens employee engagement and improves corporate reputation. The effectiveness of these practices hinges on the leadership of HR professionals, active employee participation and the integration of green values into organisational culture.

In line with the existing literature, the findings confirm that GHRM is a multidimensional construct encompassing both technical and social aspects. Its pivotal role in enabling sustainable organisational transformation is therefore clear. Looking ahead, the broader adoption of GHRM will be influenced by external factors such as regulatory frameworks, market competition and stakeholder expectations, as well as internal dynamics, particularly an organisation's commitment to sustainability.

In this regard, GHRM emerges as a vital mechanism for advancing not only corporate sustainability goals but also broader societal change.

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