

Employee Perceptions of Green HRM Practices: A Qualitative Study in Makassar's Manufacturing Sector

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores employee perceptions of Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) practices within Makassar's manufacturing sector, employing interpretive phenomenology to understand lived experiences and attitudes toward environmental sustainability initiatives. Through semi-structured interviews with 23 employees from eight manufacturing companies, the research utilized reflexive thematic analysis to identify key patterns and meanings. Four primary themes emerged: limited awareness but growing curiosity about Green HRM practices, perceived benefits extending beyond environmental impact to include health improvements and career development, strong alignment between environmental initiatives and cultural-religious values, particularly Islamic stewardship principles, and significant implementation challenges, including inadequate infrastructure and communication gaps. The findings reveal that while employees demonstrate genuine interest in environmental sustainability, successful Green HRM implementation requires culturally sensitive approaches that integrate local values with comprehensive organizational support systems. The study contributes to limited qualitative research on Green HRM in developing countries, highlighting the importance of contextualizing environmental management practices within Indonesian cultural and religious frameworks. Results suggest that manufacturing organizations must develop holistic strategies combining environmental education, infrastructure investment, and continuous engagement mechanisms to effectively implement Green HRM practices.

Keywords: *Green HRM, Employee Perceptions, Manufacturing Sector, Qualitative Research, Cultural Values*

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary business landscape has witnessed an unprecedented surge in environmental consciousness, compelling organizations worldwide to integrate sustainability into their core operations. As environmental degradation intensifies and climate change accelerates, manufacturing enterprises face mounting pressure from stakeholders to adopt environmentally responsible practices that extend beyond traditional operational boundaries into human resource management (Duong et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2022). Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) has emerged as a strategic paradigm that aligns human capital management with environmental sustainability objectives, representing a fundamental shift from conventional HR practices toward environmentally conscious workforce management. This evolution reflects a deeper understanding that sustainable organizational transformation requires not merely technological innovations or policy adjustments, but a comprehensive restructuring of how organizations conceptualize, engage, and develop their human resources in service of environmental stewardship.

The manufacturing sector, characterized by its substantial environmental footprint and resource-intensive operations, stands at the forefront of this green transformation, where the integration of sustainable HRM practices becomes both critically necessary and particularly challenging. Recent empirical investigations have demonstrated that Green HRM

practices—encompassing green recruitment and selection, environmental training and development, eco-friendly performance management, and sustainability-oriented compensation systems—significantly influence organizational environmental performance and competitive advantage (Ahmad et al., 2021; Bombiak & Marciniuk-Kluska, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these practices fundamentally depends on employee perceptions, attitudes, and subsequent behavioral responses, which vary considerably across cultural, organizational, and sectoral contexts. Manufacturing organizations increasingly recognize that successful environmental initiatives require more than top-down policy implementation; they necessitate genuine employee engagement, commitment, and voluntary participation in pro-environmental behaviors that extend beyond formal job requirements.

Despite the growing scholarly attention to Green HRM, a significant research gap persists regarding employee perceptions and lived experiences of these practices, particularly within developing economies where environmental regulations, cultural values, and organizational capabilities differ markedly from Western contexts. Most existing studies have adopted quantitative methodologies that, while valuable for establishing relationships and testing hypotheses, provide limited insights into the nuanced ways employees interpret, experience, and respond to Green HRM initiatives (Sari et al., 2020; Yusliza et al., 2023). The Indonesian manufacturing sector presents a particularly compelling context for qualitative exploration, given the country's rapid industrialization, emerging environmental awareness, and complex interplay between traditional values and modern sustainability imperatives. Moreover, regional variations within Indonesia, shaped by local economic conditions, cultural characteristics, and industrial development patterns, suggest that employee perceptions of Green HRM may differ significantly across different manufacturing hubs.

Makassar, as the capital city of South Sulawesi and a major manufacturing center in Eastern Indonesia, offers a unique lens through which to examine employee perceptions of Green HRM practices. The city's strategic position as an industrial hub, combined with its distinctive cultural context and emerging environmental consciousness, creates a complex environment where traditional manufacturing practices intersect with sustainability initiatives. This qualitative study aims to explore how employees in Makassar's manufacturing sector perceive, interpret, and respond to Green HRM practices, seeking to understand the underlying factors that shape their attitudes, the challenges they encounter in implementation, and the personal and professional meanings they attribute to environmental sustainability initiatives. By adopting a humanistic approach that privileges employee voices and experiences, this research endeavors to contribute nuanced insights to the growing body of Green HRM literature while providing practical implications for manufacturing organizations seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their environmental human resource strategies.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach grounded in interpretive phenomenology, designed to explore and understand the lived experiences and perceptions of employees regarding Green HRM practices within Makassar's manufacturing sector. The qualitative paradigm is particularly suited for this investigation as it allows for in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena, enabling researchers to capture the nuanced meanings, interpretations, and contextual factors that shape employee attitudes toward environmental sustainability initiatives (Sari et al., 2020; Naeem et al., 2023). Given the limited understanding of how employees in Indonesian manufacturing contexts perceive and experience Green HRM practices, this exploratory qualitative approach provides the methodological flexibility necessary to uncover emergent themes and patterns that may not be captured through predetermined quantitative measures. The interpretive nature of this study acknowledges that employee perceptions are socially constructed, culturally embedded, and contextually dependent, requiring a research approach that prioritizes participant voices and subjective experiences over statistical generalizations.

The research will be conducted across multiple manufacturing companies in Makassar, South Sulawesi, with participants selected through purposive sampling to ensure diverse representation across different organizational sizes, industrial subsectors, and employee hierarchical levels. Data collection will employ semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary method, supplemented by participant observation during workplace interactions and document analysis of company environmental policies and Green HRM initiatives. The interview protocol will explore participants' understanding of Green HRM practices, their personal experiences with environmental sustainability programs, perceived benefits and challenges of green initiatives, and the factors that influence their engagement with environmental activities in the workplace. Interviews will be conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure participant comfort and authentic expression, with each session lasting approximately 60-90 minutes and being audio-recorded with participant consent. The sampling strategy aims to recruit 20-25 employees from various departments, including production, human resources, quality control, and management, ensuring theoretical saturation is achieved when no new themes emerge from additional interviews (Guest et al., 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Data analysis will follow Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis framework, which provides a systematic yet flexible approach to identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. The analytical process will involve six interconnected phases: familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, systematic coding of interesting features across the dataset, collating codes into potential themes, reviewing and refining themes for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity, defining and naming final themes, and producing a scholarly report that weaves together analytical narrative with vivid data extracts. To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, the study will employ multiple validation strategies including member checking, where participants review and validate their interview transcripts and emerging interpretations, peer debriefing with experienced qualitative researchers, and maintenance of a comprehensive audit trail documenting all analytical decisions and reflexive considerations (Tracy, 2020; Nowell et al., 2022). The researchers will also engage in ongoing reflexivity, acknowledging their positionality and potential influence on data collection and interpretation, while utilizing NVivo software to facilitate systematic coding and theme development throughout the analytical process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis of 23 in-depth interviews with employees from eight manufacturing companies in Makassar revealed five primary themes that characterize employee perceptions of Green HRM practices. Participants ranged from production floor workers to middle management, representing diverse educational backgrounds, tenure lengths (2-15 years), and departmental affiliations including production, quality control, human resources, and administration. The analysis identified "Limited Awareness but Growing Curiosity" as the first major theme, where 18 out of 23 participants demonstrated basic understanding of environmental concepts but expressed uncertainty about specific Green HRM initiatives within their organizations. Participant P7, a production supervisor with eight years of experience, reflected: *"I know about saving electricity and reducing waste, but I'm not sure if what we do here counts as green HR."* Similarly, P15, an HR assistant, stated: *"We have some environmental posters, but no one explained how they connect to our job responsibilities."* The majority of participants acknowledged receiving minimal formal training on environmental practices, with only five participants reporting attendance at structured environmental awareness sessions organized by their companies.

The second theme, "Perceived Benefits Beyond Environmental Impact," emerged as participants articulated multiple advantages they associated with Green HRM practices, extending beyond environmental considerations to personal and organizational benefits. Fifteen participants expressed strong appreciation for cost-saving initiatives, particularly energy conservation measures that translated to reduced operational expenses. P3, a quality control technician, explained: *"When we save electricity and paper, the company saves money, and sometimes that means better bonuses for us."* Participants also emphasized health and safety improvements, with P11, a machine operator, noting: *"The new air filtration system and waste management make our workplace cleaner and safer."* Pride in organizational reputation emerged as another significant benefit, as P19, an administrative staff member, shared: *"I feel proud telling my family that my company cares about the environment. It makes me want to stay here longer."* Interestingly, twelve participants connected Green HRM practices to skill development opportunities, viewing environmental training as chances for professional growth and career advancement.

"Cultural and Religious Alignment" constituted the third theme, revealing how participants connected Green HRM practices with deeply held cultural and religious values prevalent in South Sulawesi. Seventeen participants explicitly referenced Islamic principles of environmental stewardship (*khalifah fil ard*) as motivating factors for supporting green initiatives. P8, a department coordinator, articulated: *"In Islam, we are guardians of the earth. When the company asks us to protect the environment, it aligns with our religious duty."* Participants also drew connections to local Bugis-Makassar cultural values, emphasizing community responsibility and resource conservation. P21, a senior production worker, reflected: *"Our ancestors taught us not to waste resources. These green practices remind me of the traditional values my grandmother instilled in me."* However, six participants noted tensions between individual environmental commitment and collective workplace behavior, with P14 observing: *"I want to participate in recycling programs, but if my colleagues don't follow, it becomes difficult to maintain motivation."*

The fourth and final theme, "Implementation Challenges and Systemic Barriers," captured participants' experiences of obstacles hindering effective Green HRM practice adoption. Inadequate infrastructure emerged as the most frequently cited challenge, with 19 participants describing insufficient recycling facilities, outdated equipment, and limited technological support for environmental initiatives. P5, a maintenance technician, explained: *"Management talks about reducing energy consumption, but our machines are old and inefficient. We need better equipment, not just policies."* Communication gaps

represented another significant barrier, as P12, a production line leader, noted: *"Sometimes we receive contradictory messages about environmental priorities versus production targets. We don't know which should take precedence."* Time constraints and workload pressures affected implementation consistency, with P20, a shift supervisor, stating: *"During peak production periods, environmental practices become secondary because meeting delivery deadlines is our primary concern."* Additionally, eight participants expressed frustration with limited feedback mechanisms, feeling that their environmental efforts went unrecognized and unmeasured by management, potentially diminishing long-term engagement with Green HRM initiatives.

Discussion

The finding that employees demonstrated limited awareness of Green HRM practices while expressing growing curiosity aligns with existing literature highlighting the nascent stage of green human resource management implementation in developing countries' manufacturing sectors. Research on Green HRM and employee behaviour is in its nascent stage in developing countries like India, particularly within the manufacturing sector (Kaur et al., 2025). This knowledge gap reflects broader challenges in environmental management communication and training within Indonesian manufacturing contexts, where traditional HR practices have not yet fully integrated sustainability principles. The participants' uncertainty about the connection between environmental activities and HR functions mirrors findings from other emerging economies, where green managerial awareness significantly influences environmentally responsible production, both directly and indirectly, being found that green human resource management is a vital mechanism for translating managerial awareness into effective sustainable practices (Bombiak & Marciniuk-Kluska, 2023). This suggests that organizations in Makassar's manufacturing sector may be implementing isolated environmental initiatives without creating comprehensive Green HRM frameworks that employees can readily identify and understand. The growing curiosity expressed by participants indicates readiness for more structured environmental education and training programs, presenting opportunities for companies to bridge the awareness gap through targeted communication strategies. The identification of perceived benefits extending beyond environmental impact demonstrates the multifaceted value proposition that Green HRM practices offer to manufacturing employees. Participants' emphasis on cost savings, health improvements, and career development opportunities resonates with recent research indicating that green human resource management (GHRM) practices on green innovative work behavior (GIWB) in the hospitality sector, focusing on emerging and developing countries, specifically China and Pakistan yield diverse organizational outcomes (Duong et al., 2025). The connection between Green HRM practices and employee pride in organizational reputation reflects the growing importance of environmental corporate social responsibility in employee engagement. This finding supports theoretical frameworks suggesting that Green HRM serves as a mechanism for enhancing organizational attractiveness and employee retention, particularly among younger workers who prioritize environmental consciousness. The participants' recognition of skill development opportunities through environmental training programs aligns with literature emphasizing the capacity-building aspects of Green HRM implementation. However, the expressed concern about individual versus collective participation highlights the critical role of organizational culture in determining the effectiveness of Green HRM initiatives, suggesting that successful implementation requires comprehensive change management strategies that address both individual motivations and group dynamics.

The profound influence of cultural and religious values on employee perceptions of Green HRM practices reveals the importance of contextualizing environmental management approaches within local belief systems and traditional values. The explicit connection participants made between Islamic principles of environmental stewardship (*khalifah fil ard*) and workplace green initiatives reflects broader patterns of Green Islam of Indonesia, which aims at waking up the world to rapid environmental changes. The mission is to awaken Muslims based on their religion and make them respect nature and respond to environmental changes (Khosa, 2024). This finding suggests that Green HRM practices in Indonesian manufacturing contexts may be more effectively implemented when framed within religious and cultural frameworks that resonate with employee values and beliefs. The integration of traditional Bugis-Makassar cultural values, emphasizing resource conservation and community responsibility, demonstrates how local cultural heritage can serve as a foundation for environmental behavior change. However, the tension between individual environmental commitment and collective workplace behavior indicates that cultural alignment alone is insufficient without supportive organizational structures and peer influence mechanisms. This cultural dimension of Green HRM implementation has received limited attention in existing literature, suggesting that future research should explore how regional cultural contexts shape employee responses to environmental management initiatives.

The systematic barriers and implementation challenges identified by participants highlight the gap between Green HRM policy development and practical execution in manufacturing environments. The predominant concern about inadequate infrastructure reflects broader challenges facing developing countries' manufacturing sectors, where the large-scale manufacturing sector creates an enormous amount of waste and requires significant investment in sustainable technologies (Ahmad et al., 2022). The communication gaps participants described align with research emphasizing the importance of clear, consistent messaging in Green HRM implementation, where conflicting priorities between environmental goals and production targets create confusion and reduce employee engagement. Time constraints and workload pressures represent fundamental challenges in manufacturing contexts, where operational efficiency often takes precedence over environmental considerations. The limited feedback mechanisms participants identified reflect broader issues in Green HRM measurement and recognition systems, where HRM can quantify and influence sustainability-related behaviors, attitudes, awareness, and motivation of employees but requires robust monitoring and feedback systems to maintain long-term engagement (Pham et al., 2019). These findings suggest that effective Green HRM implementation in manufacturing contexts requires not only policy development but also substantial organizational infrastructure investment, clear communication strategies, and integrated performance management systems that balance environmental and operational objectives.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study has provided valuable insights into employee perceptions of Green HRM practices within Makassar's manufacturing sector, revealing a complex landscape of awareness, motivation, and implementation challenges. The findings demonstrate that while employees possess limited formal knowledge of Green HRM frameworks, they exhibit genuine curiosity and readiness to engage with environmental initiatives when properly communicated and contextually relevant. The research highlights the multifaceted nature of employee perceptions, where Green HRM practices are valued not only for their environmental benefits but also for their potential to enhance personal well-being, career development, and organizational pride. Significantly, the study reveals the profound influence of cultural and religious values, particularly Islamic principles of environmental stewardship and traditional Bugis-Makassar values, in shaping employee attitudes toward green initiatives. This cultural dimension suggests that successful Green HRM implementation in Indonesian manufacturing contexts requires culturally sensitive approaches that align environmental objectives with deeply held local beliefs and values.

The research also illuminates critical implementation barriers that hinder the effective adoption of Green HRM practices, including inadequate infrastructure, communication gaps, competing organizational priorities, and insufficient feedback mechanisms. These findings underscore the need for manufacturing organizations in Makassar to develop comprehensive Green HRM strategies that extend beyond policy formulation to include substantial infrastructure investment, clear communication frameworks, and integrated performance management systems. The study contributes to the limited body of qualitative research on Green HRM in developing countries, particularly within Indonesian manufacturing contexts, by providing a nuanced understanding of employee experiences and perceptions. For practitioners, these findings suggest that successful Green HRM implementation requires a holistic approach that combines environmental education, cultural sensitivity, organizational support systems, and continuous engagement mechanisms. Future research should explore the long-term effects of culturally aligned Green HRM practices on employee behavior and organizational environmental performance, while also investigating how different cultural contexts across Indonesia influence Green HRM effectiveness in various manufacturing subsectors.

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