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Green Human Resource Management Strategies In The Hospitality Industry: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

The hospitality industry faces pressure to balance business growth with environmental responsibility, and Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) has emerged as a strategy that links HR practices with sustainability goals. This study aims to synthesize recent evidence on Green HRM practices in the hospitality sector, the mechanisms linking them to work outcomes, and the challenges of their implementation. A systematic literature review was conducted following PRISMA principles, searching Scopus- and Web of Science-indexed journals published between 2021 and 2026. From an initial pool of 860 records, 30 articles met all inclusion criteria and were synthesized thematically. The findings show that Green HRM practices in hotels generally comprise green recruitment, green training, green performance management, and green reward, which influence environmental and sustainable performance through a series of mechanisms such as employee green behavior, environmental commitment, green knowledge sharing, work engagement, and green innovation. Green transformational leadership and organizational support act as reinforcers, while limited resources and low awareness are the main barriers. This review contributes by mapping the pattern of Green HRM relationships in hospitality and offering a research agenda, particularly for underrepresented local hotels in developing countries.

Keywords: Employee Green Behaviour; Environmental Performance; Green Human Resource Management; Hospitality Industry; Sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is growing rapidly as an engine of global tourism, yet its growth comes with a large environmental footprint. Hotel operations that run around the clock demand high consumption of energy, water, and materials, and generate significant

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waste (Nisar et al., 2022; Rubel et al., 2023). Pressure to manage these impacts has intensified as public environmental awareness rises, regulatory demands grow, and guests increasingly weigh environmentally friendly practices when choosing accommodation. In this situation, sustainability is no longer peripheral to strategy but has become a core element of a hotel's competitiveness and reputation.

Amid this shift, attention has moved from technology and physical facilities toward the role of people as the determinant of successful sustainability practices. Even energy-efficient technology will not be optimal without supportive employee behavior, so an approach that links the human resource management function with environmental goals is needed. Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) addresses this need by integrating environmental values and objectives into core HR practices, from green recruitment and green training to green performance management and green reward (Nisar et al., 2023; Rubel et al., 2023). Through this integration, hotels seek to make every employee an agent of sustainability who translates the organization's green policies into daily action.

As a field of study, Green HRM in hospitality is experiencing a surge of academic and practical attention. The systematic review by Alreahi et al. (2023) shows that the literature in this field is growing rapidly and shifting from conceptual discussion toward empirical testing of the relationships between green HR practices and various organizational outcomes. This surge is inseparable from the global sustainability momentum and from the post-pandemic awareness that business resilience must be built on an environmentally and socially responsible foundation. Recent evidence reinforces this relevance, showing that Green HRM contributes to hotel environmental performance (Mansour, 2023; Nisar et al., 2022), drives employee green behavior (Ababneh, 2021; Agrawal & Pradhan, 2023), and strengthens retention through green innovation (Hassanein et al., 2024).

As this attention grows, the study of Green HRM has become increasingly diverse and fragmented. Recent studies introduce a variety of intervening mechanisms, ranging from green knowledge sharing and environmental commitment (Rubel et al., 2023), through work engagement and personality attributes (Ababneh, 2021), to green innovation (Hassanein et al., 2024). Attention has also widened to contextual factors such as green transformational leadership and organizational support (Agrawal & Pradhan, 2023; Elshaer et al., 2024). This diversity enriches understanding on the one hand, yet on the other makes it difficult to draw a coherent picture of how Green HRM actually operates in the hospitality industry.

Here the research gap becomes evident. First, the accumulated evidence remains scattered across different practices, mechanisms, and outcomes without a synthesis that integrates them systematically. Second, most studies are cross-sectional quantitative

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studies concentrated in certain regions, so the context of local hotels in many developing countries, including small and medium-sized hotels, remains underrepresented. Third, barriers to implementation, such as limited resources and low environmental awareness, have not been examined in depth despite being decisive for adoption (Tanveer et al., 2024). The absence of a comprehensive synthesis makes it difficult for hotel managers and researchers to obtain a clear map of effective practices, working mechanisms, and challenges to anticipate.

Based on this discussion, this study aims to systematically synthesize recent evidence on Green HRM in the hospitality industry. Specifically, it addresses four questions: (1) what Green HRM practices are examined in the hospitality industry; (2) through what mechanisms Green HRM influences work and organizational outcomes; (3) what outcomes are reported from its implementation; and (4) what challenges and future research directions are identified. By answering these questions, the review is expected to contribute theoretically by consolidating fragmented evidence and practically by guiding hotel managers in designing more targeted and inclusive green HR strategies.

METHOD

Design and Approach

This study employs a systematic literature review following evidence-informed principles (Tranfield et al., 2003) and the PRISMA 2020 reporting protocol (Page et al., 2021). This approach was chosen so that the identification, selection, and synthesis of the literature proceed transparently and in a structured, replicable manner, thereby minimizing bias in drawing conclusions.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

The search was conducted in two reputable databases, Scopus and Web of Science, for articles published between 2021 and 2026. The search strategy combined keywords with Boolean operators: ("green human resource management" OR "green HRM") AND (hotel OR hospitality OR tourism OR resort) AND ("environmental performance" OR "green behavior" OR "sustainable performance" OR "pro-environmental behavior"). The search was directed at titles, abstracts, and keywords.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. The article is an empirical study or review published in a reputable scientific journal (indexed in Scopus or Web of Science).
2. Published between 2021 and 2026.
3. Written in English and available in full text.

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4. Focused on the hospitality, hotel, or tourism context.
5. Discusses Green HRM practices together with their antecedents, mechanisms, or outcomes.

The exclusion criteria were as follows:

1. Articles outside the hospitality, hotel, or tourism context.
2. Non-scientific materials such as non-indexed proceedings, popular book chapters, reports, opinion pieces, or preprints that have not been peer reviewed.
3. Articles that do not discuss Green HRM directly or mention it only in passing.
4. Duplicate articles.

Selection Process and Number of Articles

The selection followed the four PRISMA stages, namely identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. At the identification stage, the search in Scopus and Web of Science yielded an initial pool of 860 records, comprising 512 records from Scopus and 348 from Web of Science. After 236 duplicate records were removed, 624 records entered the screening stage. At the title-and-abstract screening stage, 505 records were excluded as irrelevant, leaving 119 articles assessed for eligibility through full-text reading. At the eligibility stage, 89 articles were excluded for specific reasons: 34 outside the hospitality or tourism context, 28 that did not directly discuss Green HRM, 15 that were not empirical studies or scientific reviews, and 12 whose full text could not be accessed. Thus, the final number of articles meeting all criteria and forming the basis of the synthesis was 30. The selection flow is visualized in Figure 1.

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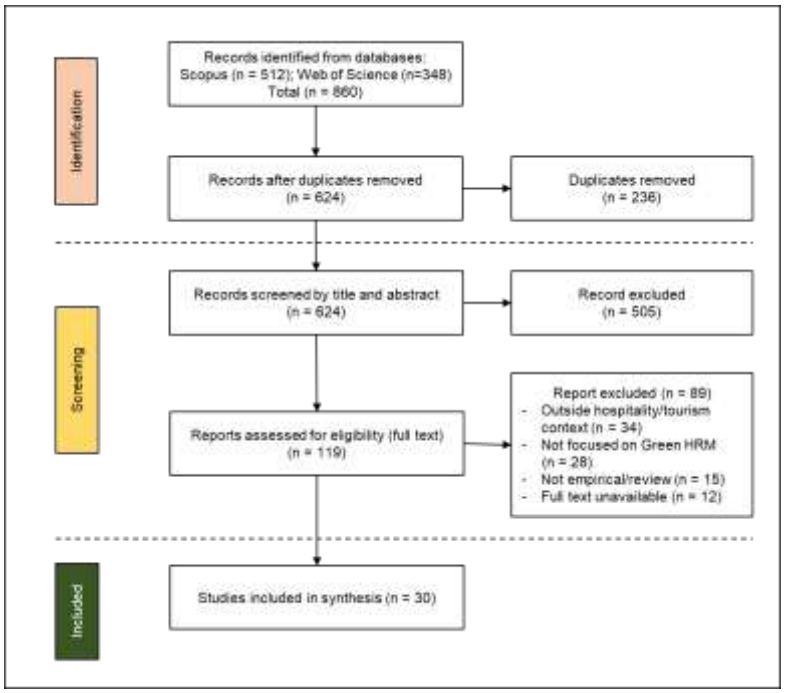


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process

Data Extraction and Analysis

Each included article was extracted for information on author and year, country context, design and method, the Green HRM practices examined, intervening and reinforcing variables, and main findings. The analysis was conducted thematically by grouping the findings into themes of Green HRM practices, linking mechanisms, outcomes, the role of leadership and reinforcing factors, and implementation challenges.

Results and Discussion

Characteristics of the Included Studies

The 30 included articles were published between 2021 and 2026 and show a clear growth trend, with publications concentrated in 2023 and 2024. Their geographical distribution is broad but uneven. Asia and the Middle East dominate, such as Pakistan (Abbas et al., 2023; Ahmed et al., 2024; Sheikh et al., 2024), Egypt (Alyahya et al., 2023; Suliman et al., 2023; Uslu et al., 2023), India (Bangwal et al., 2025; Gupta & Arora, 2025), and the United Arab Emirates and Jordan (Hassanein et al., 2024; Mansour, 2023). The Southeast Asian context is represented by Malaysia (Nisar et al., 2023) and Vietnam (Ha et al., 2025), with Indonesia appearing in studies of hotels in Padang (Zamzami et al., 2024) and Medan (Lubis et al., 2024), while Europe is represented by the Portuguese

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tourism sector (Gomes et al., 2024). This concentration suggests that existing findings should be interpreted with attention to the cultural and regulatory context of each setting.

In terms of method, most articles are quantitative empirical studies relying on structural equation modeling, particularly partial least squares, with samples of hotel employees and managers. This pattern reflects methodological maturity but also a limitation, because the dominant cross-sectional design makes causal inference over time difficult. Two articles are reviews, namely the systematic review by Alreahi et al. (2023) and the bibliometric mapping by Pandey et al. (2026), which help situate the direction of the field, including shifts in the theoretical frameworks used.

Theoretically, the reviewed studies draw on several main lenses. Pandey et al. (2026) show that the field largely uses the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity and Resource-Based View frameworks, while other studies link Green HRM to leadership theories such as green transformational leadership and environmentally specific servant leadership (Alyahya et al., 2023; Suliman et al., 2023). This diversity of lenses enriches understanding but also complicates integration. The mapping of themes and studies is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Mapping of themes and studies

Theme	Focus	Example studies
Green HRM practices	Recruitment, training, performance management, reward, green involvement	Nisar et al. (2023); Xiang & Deng (2026); Lubis et al. (2024); Gupta & Arora (2025)
Behavioral mechanisms	Green behavior, environmental OCB, green creativity	Ababneh (2021); Ma et al. (2024); Abualigah et al. (2023)
Attitudinal and cognitive mechanisms	Environmental commitment, green knowledge sharing, work engagement	Rubel et al. (2023); Bangwal et al. (2025); Suliman et al. (2023)
Organizational outcomes	Environmental performance, sustainable performance, green competitive advantage, retention	Nisar et al. (2022); Abbas et al. (2023); Alshehri et al. (2024); Hassanein et al. (2024)
Reinforcers and challenges	Green leadership, green psychological climate, green culture, adoption barriers	Elshaer et al. (2024); Uslu et al. (2023); Sheikh et al. (2024); Tanveer et al. (2024)

source: Processed Data by Researchers, 2026

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Green HRM Practices in the Hospitality Industry

The reviewed literature consistently portrays Green HRM as the integration of the environmental dimension into core HR functions. The most frequently operationalized practices comprise five elements: green recruitment and selection, green training, green performance management, green reward, and green involvement (Nisar et al., 2023; Xiang & Deng, 2026). When mapped onto the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity framework summarized by Pandey et al. (2026), green training builds ability, green performance appraisal and reward build motivation, while green involvement and leadership provide the opportunity for employees to act in environmentally friendly ways. This mapping shows that Green HRM is most effective when run as a complete system rather than as a single isolated practice.

Among the five practices, green training and involvement often emerge as the main drivers because they shape employees' environmental knowledge and awareness. Nisar et al. (2023) show that in Malaysian hotels, green training together with green performance management and compensation jointly foster pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors, and a similar pattern appears in the Indonesian context through green training, green commitment, and green information management that drive the green performance of hotel employees in Medan (Lubis et al., 2024). Gupta and Arora (2025) broaden this picture by linking Green HRM to more comprehensive sustainable organizational practices, so that green practices do not stop at the individual level but become embedded as organizational habits.

Nevertheless, the synthesis also reveals an imbalance of attention across practices. Green training has received far more research attention than green recruitment and selection, which is rarely tested on its own. This gap implies that understanding of how hotels attract and screen talent aligned with environmental values remains limited, even though this stage determines the quality of the HR input before subsequent interventions take effect. Strengthening research on green recruitment therefore becomes an important avenue for development.

Mechanisms Linking Green HRM to Outcomes

The most prominent theme of this synthesis is that Green HRM influences organizational outcomes through intervening mechanisms rather than directly. Employee green behavior is the most frequently tested mediator. Ababneh (2021) found that the effect of Green HRM on green behavior flows through work engagement and is shaped by personality attributes, while Paul et al. (2026) and Gomes et al. (2024) show that green behavior bridges Green HRM toward environmental performance. In the realm of citizenship behavior, Ma et al. (2024), Ahmed et al. (2024), and Sheikh et al. (2024) highlight the role of organizational citizenship behavior for the environment as an

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important channel for environmental outcomes, affirming that employees' contributions stem not only from formal tasks but also from voluntary actions beyond the job description.

Beyond behavior, attitudinal and cognitive mechanisms are also prominent. Rubel et al. (2023) show that green knowledge sharing and environmental commitment mediate the effect of socially responsible HRM on hotel employees' environmental performance, and this environmental commitment is reinforced by Bangwal et al. (2025). Green work engagement also serves as a bridge, especially when linked to leadership (Suliman et al., 2023). Notably, several studies have begun to test more complex mediation chains, such as the serial mediation model proposed by Naderi Koupaei et al. (2025), indicating that Green HRM works through several sequential psychological stages before culminating in outcomes. These findings show that the relationship between Green HRM and performance is layered and cannot be reduced to a single pathway.

Innovation- and creativity-based mechanisms complete the picture. Green innovation and eco-innovation have been shown to mediate the path from Green HRM toward employee retention and green competitive advantage (Alshehri et al., 2024; Hassanein et al., 2024; Zamzami et al., 2024), while green creativity emerges as a creative output stimulated by Green HRM and reinforced by leadership and a green psychological climate (Abualigah et al., 2023; Alyahya et al., 2023). Thus, Green HRM not only changes employees' routine behavior but also opens space for innovation and creativity that support organizational advantage more strategically.

Outcomes of Green HRM

The most frequently reported outcome is environmental performance. Several studies consistently find that Green HRM, both directly and through intervening mechanisms, improves hotel environmental performance (Abdelwahed et al., 2024; Mansour, 2023; Nisar et al., 2022; Sheikh et al., 2024). Ha et al. (2025) extend the scope of outcomes to environmental cost performance, linking Green HRM to the efficiency of environmental impact management and thus connecting it to economic considerations. This cross-context consistency strengthens the conviction that environmental performance is the most empirically established outcome in the Green HRM hospitality literature.

The scope of outcomes also extends to sustainability and competitive advantage. Nisar et al. (2023) link Green HRM to sustainable performance that combines environmental, social, and economic dimensions, while Abbas et al. (2023) highlight its contribution to the environmental and social sustainability of hotels. At the strategic level, Green HRM is associated with green competitive advantage through innovation (Alshehri et al., 2024; Zamzami et al., 2024), positioning it as a source of differentiation in a

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hospitality market that increasingly attends to environmental issues. This expansion of outcomes shows that the benefits of Green HRM do not stop at reducing environmental impact but reach overall business sustainability.

Beyond environmental and strategic outcomes, several studies highlight the benefits of Green HRM in the HR domain itself. Hassanein et al. (2024) found that Green HRM strengthens employee retention through green innovation, indicating that green practices also function as an attraction and a bond for employees. This finding aligns with studies linking Green HRM to individual green performance (Gomes et al., 2024; Lubis et al., 2024; Mansour, 2023). Green HRM therefore has a dual character, improving an organization's environmental performance while strengthening talent management, and thus deserves to be positioned as a human resource management strategy rather than a standalone environmental program.

The Role of Leadership and Reinforcing Factors

The synthesis shows that the effectiveness of Green HRM is shaped by the leadership context. Green transformational leadership plays an important role in directing and inspiring employee green behavior (Agrawal & Pradhan, 2023; Elshaer et al., 2024; Suliman et al., 2023), and Elshaer et al. (2024) specifically found that green organizational support mediates the effect of leadership on green behavior. Another form of leadership, environmentally specific servant leadership, is also identified as an important antecedent of hotels' green creativity (Alyahya et al., 2023), and servant leadership is likewise discussed in relation to green performance (Mansour, 2023). These findings affirm that leaders' commitment cannot be merely declarative but must be embodied in real support and example.

In addition to leadership, several contextual factors act as reinforcers or boundary conditions. The green psychological climate serves as both a reinforcer and a bridge in the relationship between Green HRM and its outcomes (Alshehri et al., 2024; Uslu et al., 2023), green organizational culture moderates the effect of Green HRM on environmental performance (Sheikh et al., 2024), and a green innovation culture strengthens the path toward environmental performance (Paul et al., 2026). These factors show that the impact of Green HRM depends heavily on the organizational atmosphere in which it is implemented.

At the individual level, employees' values and characteristics also determine the success of Green HRM. Value congruence between employees and the organization strengthens green behavior (Agrawal & Pradhan, 2023), environmental sensitivity and altruism strengthen the link between Green HRM and green behavior (Uslu et al., 2023), while environmental awareness and personality attributes serve as drivers (Ababneh, 2021; Mansour, 2023). This pattern affirms that the success of Green HRM is not entirely

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structural but results from the interaction between the system the organization designs and the willingness and values employees bring.

Challenges and the Critical Perspective

Despite its broad benefits, the implementation of Green HRM in hospitality is not without obstacles. Tanveer et al. (2024) identify several challenges, ranging from limited resources, implementation costs, and low environmental awareness to resistance to change. These barriers tend to weigh more heavily on small and medium-sized hotels with limited resources, so that the adoption of Green HRM risks producing a gap between large and small hotels. Such challenges affirm that the success of Green HRM is not merely a matter of designing practices but also of overcoming structural and cultural constraints.

Several recent studies have also begun to highlight a critical side that has so far received little attention. Ahmed et al. (2024), for example, introduce a double-edged sword perspective, showing that Green HRM may produce effects that are not always positive on employees' environmental citizenship behavior, depending on the accompanying mechanisms and conditions. This finding is important because it balances the dominant narrative that tends to emphasize the benefits of Green HRM, while reminding us that excessive green demands may impose an additional burden on employees.

Taking both into account, the implementation of Green HRM needs to be designed proportionally. Adequate resource support, clear communication, and leaders' example are prerequisites for green practices to be accepted without provoking resistance or fatigue. Attention to equitable adoption across hotel scales is also important so that the benefits of Green HRM are not enjoyed only by large, well-resourced hotels.

Integrated Discussion and Research Agenda

Overall, the synthesis of thirty studies reveals a consistent pattern, namely that Green HRM in the hospitality industry operates through a causal chain linking green HR practices with environmental, sustainability, and competitive outcomes via behavioral, attitudinal, and innovation mechanisms of employees. This pattern reinforces the idea that employees are central actors in translating the organization's green policies into real action, consistent with the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity and Resource-Based View frameworks summarized by Pandey et al. (2026). The dual benefit of Green HRM, for the environment and for talent management alike, makes it relevant as an integral human resource management strategy.

Nevertheless, the review records several gaps that open an agenda for future research. First, methodologically, the evidence is dominated by cross-sectional

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quantitative designs, so longitudinal and qualitative research is needed to capture the dynamics of Green HRM over time and the meaning behind its practices. Second, contextually, studies are concentrated in a few regions, and although Indonesia has begun to appear (Lubis et al., 2024; Zamzami et al., 2024), the number remains limited and does not yet span the diversity of regions and business scales, including the small and medium-sized hotels that face greater adoption barriers (Tanveer et al., 2024).

Third, theoretically and substantively, considerable room remains. The critical side and the potential negative effects of Green HRM have only begun to be explored (Ahmed et al., 2024), while green recruitment practices and the boundary conditions that determine the effectiveness of Green HRM have not been widely tested. Consistency in measuring constructs also needs to be strengthened so that findings across studies can be more readily compared and integrated. Future research is therefore advised to broaden the context to local hotels in developing countries, adopt longitudinal and qualitative designs, and examine the boundary conditions and critical side of Green HRM so that this strategy can be applied more precisely, inclusively, and sustainably.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review of thirty articles concludes that Green HRM has developed into a human resource management strategy that links HR practices with sustainability goals in the hospitality industry. The practices examined center on green recruitment, green training, green performance management, green reward, and green involvement, which, when mapped onto the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity framework, form a mutually reinforcing system. These practices do not influence outcomes directly but through a series of behavioral, attitudinal, and innovation mechanisms, such as employee green behavior, environmental citizenship behavior, environmental commitment, green knowledge sharing, work engagement, and green innovation and creativity. The culmination of this causal chain is environmental performance, sustainable performance, green competitive advantage, and strengthened employee retention, so that Green HRM proves to have dual benefits for both the environment and talent management.

The review also affirms that the effectiveness of Green HRM is contextual. Green transformational and servant leadership, green organizational support and culture, the green psychological climate, and employees' environmental values and awareness act as reinforcers or boundary conditions that determine how far Green HRM has an impact. At the same time, its implementation faces real barriers, especially limited resources and low awareness that weigh more heavily on small and medium-sized hotels, as well as the emerging critical side of effects that are not always positive. Green HRM therefore needs to be designed proportionally, supported by adequate resources, clear communication,

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and leaders' example, so that its benefits can be realized without imposing an excessive burden on employees.

Theoretically, this review contributes by consolidating scattered evidence into a more coherent pattern of practices, mechanisms, outcomes, reinforcers, and challenges, while mapping the direction of the Green HRM hospitality field. Practically, these findings guide hotel managers to prioritize green training and involvement, strengthen supportive leadership and culture, and attend to equitable adoption across business scales. However, this review is limited to English-language articles from the Scopus and Web of Science databases within the 2021 to 2026 window, so studies in other languages and publications outside that period are not covered. Future research is therefore advised to broaden the search base and period, adopt longitudinal and qualitative approaches, and deepen the study of local hotels in developing countries, including Indonesia, so that Green HRM strategies can be developed more precisely, inclusively, and sustainably.

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