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# Green Human Resource Management Practices Among Palestinian Manufacturing Firms- An Exploratory Study

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**Abstract**
Organizations are increasingly finding it challenging to balance economic and environmental performance particularly those that face competitive, regulatory and community pressure. With the increasing pressures for environmental sustainability, this calls for the new formulation of strategies by the manufacturers in order to minimize their products and services negative impact on the environment. Hence, Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) continues to be an important research agenda among the researchers. In Palestine, green issues are new and still developing. Constant study is needed to fully understand and update information regarding this area. Objective: The aim of this paper is to explore the views and level of acceptance of GHRM practices among manufacturing firms in Palestine. Results: Through the use of e-mail survey, 121 responses were obtained to generate the results of the study. The result showed GHRM practices have been practiced to somewhat to a greater extent a firms in Palestine. Findings can be extended to study on the issues in further. Academicians and practitioners can apply this result to their research and business strategies on how to improve sustainable performance and to effectively implement GHRM practices.
**Keywords:** Green human resource management, Resources-based view, Sustainable performance.
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## 1. Introduction

The increasing interest in environmental sustainability and sustainable performance is creating a pressure on firms to pay more attention to their environmental footprints. This pressure is felt more in high polluting industries. In the context of Palestine, manufacturing industries is considered the highly pollutant industries and one of the areas employing the most personnel that having the highest footprint and impact on the external community (GIZ, 2014). Given the impact of the manufacturing industry on the environment, people and economy, the industry gives new opportunities to significantly contribute to sustainability (Abdullah et al., 2015). In Palestine, there are only a few studies that have been carried out on green human resource practices, This implies that the concept of green human resource in Palestine is still new and de (Masri & Jaaron, 2017) Therefore, ongoing studies are really encouraged to further strengthen and improve the existing literature on green human resource practices in Palestine notable study by Masri and Jaaron (2017) claimed there are a lot of firms in Palestine still at the rear and green human resource practices in their business approach. Hence, the above matters call for future studies to conduct in-depth investigation of the adoption and implementation of GHRM in Palestine.

Given that the industrial sector is also very significant to the Palestinian society, there is a need to adopt different environmentally friendly practices in order to properly manage environmental issues. A prominent study by Masri and Jaaron, (2017) claimed that there are a lot of manufacturing firms in Palestine, which have fallen behind and are yet to adopt any GHRM practices in their business approach. As is the case with other developing countries, there is, therefore, a widely agreed need to conduct further in-depth research into the implementation of GHRM in Palestine. Future research will assist regulators of this country in better introducing, promoting, and implementing these green practices via environmental protection campaigns, as well having certain benefits for and exerting certain pressures on organizations. GHRM practices are effective tools in making businesses sustainable. Responding to this need, this study aims at investigating GHRM practices in the context of the manufacturing firms in Palestine. Specifically, the study tries to find out the level of adoption of GHRM practices and the actual outcomes of GHRM practices in terms of sustainable performance. The manufacturing firms which applied green initiatives are of interest due to the assumption that these firms have established some capabilities on environmental protection, hence they have greater potential to adopt green practices to a higher extent.

## 2. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses:

### First- Green Human Resource Management:

Green human resource management stems from both Human Resource Management literature and Environmental Management literature. In other words, by adding the 'green' component into human resource management involves addressing the influence and relationships between Human capital and the natural environment. As Jabbour (2015) posits that with the addition of a green component, the influences and relationships between human resource management and the natural environment are intertwined. Therefore, more studies are to be called upon to investigate and further explain the concept behind this green area especially in the context of Palestine (Masri & Jaaron, 2017). Indeed, human resource management is an important function of management that deals with the most valuable assets of an organization which is human resources (Ahmad, 2015). These intangible assets (i.e., human capital) are contributing more than tangible assets in creating value (Bakar & Ahmad, 2010). The resources-based view (RBV) is a well-established theory provides the conceptual assumptions for the GHRM field of research (Arulrajah & Opatha, 2016). RBV suggests that companies may increase their competitiveness by developing critical resources (i.e., human resources activities) and capabilities (Barney et al., 2011; Ray et al., 2004). The environmental activities can produce strategic resources that are difficult to imitate (Jabbour, 2015; Wagner, 2011). The relationship between an organization's capabilities and its competitive advantage (organization's sustainable performance) has been carefully debated in the previous literature (Clemens and Bakstran, 2010; Solovida et al., 2017). RBV has been a theoretical lens to understand the greening of firms (Yusliza et al., 2017). To that end, based on the RBV theory, in this work, an original research model is articulated, relating megatrends in the field of GHRM considered here as a unique source of companies' competitiveness. By understanding GHRM practices, organizations can improve their environmental performances in a sustainable manner (Arulrajah et al., 2016). In addition, GHRM can also motivate staff, and this motivation may generate foundations of competitive advantage which lead to achieving superior environmental performance (Chiappetta et al., 2017). Firdaus and Udin (2014) stated that many firms implement GHRM to benefit their employees and financial performance. Besides the environment, GHRM also increases the retention of talent pool (Patel, 2014). Haddock-Millar et al. (2016) highlighted the significance of putting 'greening' functions as the main factor in improving financial and environmental performance. Apart from that, Wagner (2013) claimed that organizations that invested in social responsibilities had gained tangible benefits in respect to customer and employee satisfaction, excellent staff recruitment, and innovation, which are likely to strengthen the firm social performances. As mentioned by Rezaei-Moghaddam (2016), those manufacturing firms that invested in social programs took an important step to reinforce GHRM. In the case of social performance, it is important for organizations to ensure that their production operation is comprised of social activities that are incorporated with the action that can enhance the effect of plant actions on internal communities (i.e. staff) and external communities (i.e. customer and suppliers) (Pullman et al., 2009).

### Second- Sustainable Performance

Sustainability necessarily involves a commitment to employees and the wider community, so researchers maintain that the human resource function within an organization can be an effective force for moulding a culture of sustainability (Wirtenberg et al., 2007). This is, of course, contingent on actions taken to change various aspects of human resources, such as the empowering of employees, employee rewards, a demonstration of commitment from management, etc. Such changes in organizations are facilitated by the integration of environmental management into human resource management (Renwick et al., 2013). Ricardo et al. (2011) suggest for GHRM to be sustainable firms should be developed of human resource strategies, policies, and practices that support the social, economic, and environmental dimensions, simultaneously in order to achieve firm sustainability. In general, sustainability in GHRM aims to enhance performance by environmental management and innovation (Jabbour & Santos, 2008) Moreover, seeking the balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental completeness (Bansal, 2005). Therefore, to achieve sustainable performance, firm should consider adopting green practices in their business operations as the way to be sustainable and find ways on how to collaborate with their staff to effectively sustain in the business without neglecting its environment and social performance.

## 3. Research Methodology:

**Sampling size:** The study population entails manufacturing firms in the most industrial pollutant sectors (i.e., food, chemical and pharmaceuticals industries) in Palestine in the years 2017/2018. The Palestinian Federation of Industries was contacted to get information on manufacturing organizations such as locations, name of an organization, year of foundation, contact information, a number of employees, etc. Based on the database provided, the total available population of firms was 220. However, in order to meet the objectives of this study, the criteria of the participating firms are manufacturers that implement green practices; researchers directly contacted each organization's human resource manager (the study survey respondents) are through a telephone call to inquire about availability of all or some of green practices in place before electronically sending the survey. Out of 220

manufacturing firms, 160 of them adopt GHRM practices and accepted to participate in the study. To increase the validity and internal consistency of the survey instrument, it was pilot-tested with five human resource managers and expert practitioners before its full deployment among targeted manufacturing organizations. This pilot-testing process, as recommended by Masri and Jaaron, 2017 provided suggestions for rearranging various items/elements of practices which were taken into consideration before its full scale usage. The reason why these companies are selected because they represent the largest sector in terms of sales, employment and contribution to the economy. In addition, the manufacturing sector has been debated as a tremendous contributor to the quality and environmental problems in Palestine. Thereby, any effort to improve environmental performance of this sector can produce substantial benefits. For this reason, this sector is therefore a natural choice to study the effect of green practices on sustainability performance.

**Questionnaire Design:** In this study, GHRM practices have three dimensions: green hiring (GH), green training and involvement (GTI), and green performance management and compensation (GPC). Following similar studies on GHRM practices of Guerci et al. (2016), and Longoni (2016), the study uses a 5-point Likert scale for all dimensions of green human resource practices. The scale ranges from 1= "Not at all" to 5= "Very high extent". For sustainable performance, the performance is defined as the actual impacts of green human resource practices adoption on environmental, economic and social performance of the firm. Measurement items for the performance were developed from previous studies (see Table 1). For these three types of performance, this study adopts five-point Likert scale that ranges from '1=Not at all" to "5=highly significant", with statements signifying the performance actually realized by a firm during the last three years.

**Table 1**: Construct and Measures.

| Construct | Items | Source |
|---|---|---|
| Green performance management and compensation | Our top managers and executives know their specific green goals and responsibilities. | Longoni et al. (2016) Guerci et al. (2016) |
| | Our top managers and executives evaluation includes environmental performance. | |
| | Our employee's evaluation includes environmental performance. | |
| | Reward of non-monetary incentives for achieving targeted environmental performance. | |
| | Payment of variable compensation according to environmental performance. | |
| Green training and involvement | Providing environmental training to employees to increase environmental awareness. | |
| | Providing environmental training to top managers and executives to increase environmental awareness. | |
| | Environmental responsibility is part of the job description. | |
| | Our employee's involvement on environmental issues. | |
| Green hiring | Selecting applicants who are sufficiently aware of greening to fill job vacancies. | |
| | Employees become preferable through their environmental commitment. | |
| Environmental performance | Lower discharge of noxious chemicals into the air and water. | Zhu et al. (2013) Zhu et al. (2008) |
| | Lesser waste and recycling of materials during the manufacturing process. | |
| | Increase in the usage of renewable energy and sustainable fuels. | |
| | Enhancement in the company's environmental state. | |
| | Reduction in the frequency of environmental mishaps. | |
| Social performance | Employees' health and safety. | De Giovanni (2012) Abdullah et al. (2015) |
| | Improving community health and safety. | |
| | Development of economic activities. | |
| | Providing inducements to engage local employment. | |
| | Lowering the adverse impact of products and processes on the local community. | |
| Economic performance | Reduction in cost of acquiring materials. | Zhu et al. (2005) Green & Inman (2005) |
| | Reduction in cost of energy utilization. | |
| | Reduction in fee for treatment and discharge of waste. | |
| | Reduction in penalty for environmental mishaps. | |
| | Average return on sales and investment over the past two years. | |
| | Average profit and profit growth over the past two years. | |
| | Average growth in market share over the past two years. | |

## 4. Results

**Demographic Profile:** The demographic of the respondents are tabulated in Table 2. The demographics of the sample selected to achieve the purpose of this study. Table 1 shows that 55.3% of the respondents work in food industry, 39.7% are in chemical industry and 5% in pharmaceutical industry. Additionally, it was found that 24% of respondents' manufacturing firms have from 20 to 49 employees, 25.6% from 50 to 99 employees, and 22.3% from 10 to 19 employees, 11.6% employ less than 9 employees, 10.7% from 100 to 249, while only 5.8% employ more than 250 employees.. The last descriptive statistic was the ISO 14001 certified firms. Table 1 shows that almost 24% of the firms surveyed are ISO 14001certified, while 55% of the firms surveyed have a formal plan to adopt it within one year. This, in turn, confirms that the GSCM and GHRM information provided is from the firms that implemented some sorts of green practices and therefore can be deemed reliable.

**Table 2**: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

| Demographic Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Industry sector** | | |
| Food industry | 67 | 55.3% |
| Chemical industry | 48 | 39.7% |
| Pharmaceutical industry | 6 | 5% |
| **Number of employees in the organization** | | |
| Less than 9 employees | 14 | 11.6% |
| 10-19 | 27 | 22.3% |
| 20-49 | 29 | 24.0% |
| 50-99 | 31 | 25.6% |
| 100-249 | 13 | 10.7% |
| More than 250 | 7 | 5.8% |
| **ISO 14000 certified firms** | | |
| currently exists | 29 | 24% |
| No plans to implement | 25 | 21% |
| Plan to implement within 12 months | 67 | 55% |

**Descriptive Statistics:** Table 3 shows the summary of mean value and standard deviation of all the variables. As depicted in the table, among the three practices in GHRM practices, mean value of GH is the highest (3.516), followed by GTI (3.026) and GPC (2.786). This indicates that the responding firms pay more attention towards GH than GTI and GPC. In addition, the mean score of the total indicators was m = 3.073 (see Table 3), which is considered as a moderate level. This is not surprising because the. Palestinian manufacturing organizations are still in early stages in adopting of GHRM practices within their operations (Masri & Jaaron, 2017). For sustainable performance, mean value of environmental performance is the highest (3.32), followed by social performance (3.26) and economic performance (3.12). This indicates that these green firms are performing better in environmental performance and social performance rather than economic performance.

**Table 3**: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

| Construct | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Green performance management and compensation (GPC) | 2.786 | 0.67 |
| Green training and involvement (GTI) | 3.026 | 0.64 |
| Green hiring (GH) | 3.516 | 0.83 |
| Environmental performance | 3.320 | 0.72 |
| Social performance | 3.260 | 0.77 |
| Economic performance | 3.12 | 0.67 |

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

In general, the results of the descriptive analysis showed that manufacturing firms in Palestine are receptive towards GHRM practices and aware that good integration among human resource members has potential in generating better sustainable performance. In this study, the main research goal was to investigate the adoption level of GHRM practices among manufacturing organizations in Palestinian context. Findings illustrate that organizations appear to use GHRM practices at a moderate level among surveyed organizations. Indeed, this is not surprising results since the Palestinian manufacturing organizations still in an early stage of adopting GHRM practices within their operations and still did not take the full advantage of GHRM practices (Masri & Jaaron, 2017). In more details, the findings of the study revealed that GH is the most highly adopted than GTI and GPC among manufacturing organizations. These outcomes indicate that the Palestinian manufacturing organizations pay more attention towards GH than GTI and GPC practices.

Even though there are limited examples of firms that have been implementing green criteria in their hiring

processes in the literature (Jabbour, 2011), the practice of "GH" was the highly frequent adopting practice at Palestinian manufacturing firms. This outcome highlights the fact that human resource managers regard sustainable performance as a priority in their firms. Similarly, Masri (2016) highlighted the significant role of environmental recruiting in greening Palestinian manufacturing organization and improving their environmental sustainability performance. Author stated that manufacturing firms should select applicants who are sufficiently aware of green importance to fill job vacancies through (i) designing job specifications that attract such candidates for recruitment and (ii) include green elements during interview process that investigate applicants' readiness towards environmental issues. In addition, the effective execution of environmental management system can only be attained if the right candidate with the right skills and competence is engaged for the right job (Ashraf et al., 2015).

The GTI was found in this study to be the second ranking of GHRM practices adoption among surveyed organization. One possible explanation of this is that this kind of practices need some investments which are exhausting in numerous firms due to economic restraints (Masri & Jaaron, 2017). And would cause the manufacturer to utilize more economically feasible practices than GTI. Therefore, Palestinian manufacturing firms focus on employing already qualified environmental competencies as being more important, more efficient and less costly than it is to organize formal training courses, leadership, and management training on environmental issues. (Masri, 2016). Indeed, comparable findings were observed in other emerging countries (e.g. India), where firms utilize economical GHRM practices to take advantage of the benefits of environmental performance (Rani & Mishra, 2014). Consequently, this indicated that if Palestinian manufacturing firms invest more in their GTI agenda, thus they will be able to transfer their level of GHRM implementation to more advanced level. Furthermore, it is clear that improved green training with efficient involvement for workforces leads to achieve higher levels of green sustainable performance in longer terms (Daily et al., 2012). Additionally, the result advocates that GTI plays a better role in dissemination environmental values and principals via involving with and prioritizing sustainability issues (Jabbour, 2013). Teixeira et al. (2012) stated that environmental training is one of the best vital tools to develop HRM and assist the changeover to a more sustainable community. In addition, firms adopting GSCM practices should empower their employees through green awareness and skills by means of green training (Teixeira et al., 2016). Nejati et al. (2017) accentuated that GTI plays significant role in the implementation of GSCM successfully. Jabbour et al. (2016) affirm that the success of green practices will depend on providing an adequate environmental awareness and training to managers and employees. Ramus, 2002 stated that workforces who were informed and educated about green changes and policies are more likely to engage willingly in green demeanours. Consequently, manufacturing firms need to include staff in formal education programs aimed at developing and encouraging green behavior and learning about how to make significant environmental changes. Despite the incremental costs of these programs, they are useful in the long run for environmental sustainability.
Lastly, the analysis demonstrates that GPC is the weakest group of adopted GHRM practices by the surveyed firms. Even though the fact that the earlier literature suggest that GPC can be beneficial for adopting GHRM (Jackson et al., 2011) also it is noteworthy that findings suggest that "GPC" are not extensively used within Palestinian manufacturing firms. One possible explanation that according to Fernandez et al. (2003) the individuals are motivated using different ways so it can be difficult to successfully implement a reward system that works for all employees. In addition, Masri (2016) stated that this poses a problem for manufacturing firms concerning the resources necessary to connect rewards with individual motivation. Author concludes that rewards and compensation system are not used to the extent as other methods especially in manufacturing firms with large numbers of employees.

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