



Green Human Resource Management Practices in Banking Sector of Pakistan: An exploratory Study

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Abstract

This study delves into the Phenomenon of green human resource practices and the status of their implementation in Pakistan's banking industry in terms of reducing the usage of paper, conservation of energy, adaptation of green buildings, etc. In this context, human resource management (HRM) plays a significant role in enhancing organisational effectiveness while mitigating ecological hazards. In this endeavour, senior HR professionals in the banking industry have been interviewed to gain some valuable insights regarding their awareness and extent of implementation of green HR practices in various banks. It has been evident that public banks are more adherent to the green banking policies extended by the State Bank of Pakistan, striving to implement green HR practices in their processes. However, some private banks also aspire to implement green HR practices in their daily processes, heading towards adopting cost-efficient green practices. Though the key role of HR professionals in leveraging green HR practices and cost-driven technological advancements (solar energy, etc.) leading to a pro-environmental agenda is witnessed from the analysis, Nonetheless, the true spirit of environmental concern is somehow lacking, and all the green measures are adopted backed by the cost-efficiency factor. Therefore, it is suggested that foremost, ecological consciousness needs to be developed among the employees to comprehend environmental concerns and play their individual part beyond their job description or duty to positively contribute towards the environment. Further, the current paper significantly contributes to the GHRM landscape while proposing a green conceptual framework for GHRM prospects.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management Practices (GHRM), Environmental Sustainability, Green Banking, Paperless Environment, Conservation of energy.



Introduction

Environmental sustainability, being a buzzword, has gained a global currency over the last few years, particularly in the business arena. The agenda of the organisations now places a high value on environmental conservation and the adoption of environmentally friendly practices (Testa et al., 2020a). To add, ecological awareness has been witnessed as one of the most notable trends in sustainability issues (Zawawi & Wahab, 2019), enabling businesses to adopt diverse and distinguishing strategies to improve their corporate social responsibility and gain a competitive edge (Wu et al., 2018). Specifically, pressure to alter the organization's behaviour towards catering ecological issues has come forth via many directions. National and domestic governments have developed rules aiming to mitigate environmental harm along with incentives to reward organisations promoting environmental preservation and conservation. Besides, business and government leaders and the conservation community are willing to adapt to the latest advancements, adding value to their natural capital through supply chains and state policies. Hence, a better approach is required to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals SDGs by 2030 (IUCN, 2017).

In the wake of environmental concerns, human resource management (HRM) experts can play their role in improving organisational effectiveness and efforts to reduce ecological threats, offering valuable opportunities to support the nature of mother earth as well as the well-being of its dwellers (Renwick, 2018).

GHRM practices such as setting green goals for employees, pro-environment learning, and considering green behaviours in performance appraisals, compensation, and rewards (Dumont et al., 2017) tend to holistically train the workforce with the required abilities, skills, and motivation through embedding ecological concerns and pro-environmental beliefs. An important responsibility for HR environmental executives could be assisting line managers in securing full staff support for adopting environmental policies. To do this, HR must cultivate supporters and build networks of problem-solvers eager to take action to alter the status quo (as in Ahmad, 2015, p. 9).

Likewise, employing green practices in the organisation for environmental protection is a demanding task, highly dependent on the readiness of the right staff and managers. Hence, organisations are required to develop a strong GHRM department to ensure the recruitment of environmentally friendly people and equip their existing employees` with the abilities needed to implement green practices through training programmes or by offering incentives such as rewards and special benefits (Mishra, 2017). Considering the growing ecological concerns



and the attainment of organisational sustainability, green HRM has also gained momentum in the last few years in developing countries, including Pakistan. Organizations located in Pakistan direly need to evaluate, monitor, and enhance management-related activities to successfully tackle the environmental concerns (Rehman et al., 2021).

Similarly, green banking, being an emerging trend, calls for added consideration. The banking industry is one of the most important stakeholders, standing responsible and accountable to provide an effective solution to the problem of environmental degradation. Banks adversely impact the ecosystem both directly and indirectly (Nath et al., 2014; Rehman et al., 2021). The direct ecological effect of banks is caused by their business processes. Banks have a dense network of branches that operate in most emerging nations, consuming a lot of energy and other necessary resources like paper. Though banks have a significantly lower direct environmental impact than other industries like manufacturing or transportation, However, the indirect adverse ecological impact of the banking industry (financial flow, including credit policies and immaterial flow, policies, culture, knowledge, information, etc.) is still a main cause for concern (Nath et al., 2014). Since the last decade, the banking industry has been steadily realising its involvement in environmental deterioration. Consequently, efforts have been put forward aiming to curtail adverse ecological activities and maximise the constructive contributions of banks towards an environmentally sustainable society via adopting green banking practices (Bukhari et al., 2020).

The concept of green banking is highly dependent on developing HR in financial terms via FinTech. FinTech, also known as financial technology, has a significant impact on all facets of financial services and revolutionises the financial sector through virtual transformation (Goldstein et al., 2019). In this regard, the usage and advancement of AI in the financial sector are not without their difficulties, particularly in terms of human capital. Therefore, banks must either design hybrid technology models that encourage improved human capital performance, reinterpret some job descriptions, and divide activities between human capital and machines (Santoso et al., 2021).

Researchers across the globe explored green banking and conceptualised it as operating businesses in such areas and in such a manner that improves the overall reduction of external carbon emissions and internal carbon footprints (as cited in Rimi, 2016, p. 63). In Pakistan, the banking sector is one of the key sectors for economic development and progress and is contributing to environmental degradation by using excessive amounts of natural resources.



The past unsustainable and environmentally hazardous practices of one of the most important players in a country's economy, namely the banks, might be linked to the current environmental deterioration in Pakistan. One of the biggest consumers of numerous resources, including paper and power, is the banking industry in Pakistan, which hasn't proactively addressed environmental sustainability in its operations in the past (SBP, 2017c). In view of the current scenario, the environmental consciousness of banks` may accelerate eco-friendly activities through convincing corporate partners to maintain the green ecology via green investment plans. In this regard, HRM practices in the banking industry tend to stabilise the corporate values, environmental strategy, and financial goals, ensuring the constant implementation of a balanced strategy across the firm (as in Rimi, 2016, p. 60). Thus, HRM practices focused on recruitment, development, appraisal, and rewarding banks` employees for desired performance and innovative green banking services are considered novel concerns of banking administration (Rimi, 2016). Though many scholars have studied the significance of green HRM in promoting eco-friendly behaviours among employees, it is still a less-explored domain in the field of HRM. To add, extant literature dealing with green HRM primarily offers Western perspectives (Renwick et al., 2013). Hence, in view of the importance of Asian economic development and environmental crises, it is equally imperative to explore the phenomenon in the Asian context as well (Mishra, 2017). Referring to the current discussion on going green, the present study delves in the phenomenon of GHRM practices in Pakistan`s banking industry. Various studies examined GHRM in Pakistan`s context and evaluated the benefits of pro-environmental HR organisations in diverse sectors via different mediators and moderators. Studies performed by Husain et al. (2019); Hameed et al. (2020); Amjad et al. (2020, 2021); Ahmad et al. (2021); Umrani et al. (2021); Kafil et al. (2021); Rehman et al. (2021); Nisar et al. (2021); Malik et al. (2020); Khan et al. (2022) suggested that countries like Pakistan should encourage and promote green HR practices, as green firms tend to have more sustainable practices when compared to other traditional competitors.

Moreover, GHRM research has also contributed to the banking industry (Ali et al., 2020; Gill et al., 2021; Jamal et al., 2021), wherein Ali et al. (2020) explored the interconnection of green intellectual capital, green HRM, and green social identity towards a sustainable environment in Islamic banks. Gill et al. (2021) analysed the impact of green human resource management practices on organisational citizenship behaviour. Whereas Jamal et al. (2021) studied green human resource management practices and corporate sustainability in banking



and other industries in Pakistan and established the significance of green factors or elements associated with HRM practices. However, these studies focused on empirically identifying the causal relationship between GHRM practices and their outcomes via organisational green performance and employees` green innovative and extra-role behaviours. Yet GHRM practices are a nascent area for study and require further scrutiny. Furthermore, only a handful of studies deal with green HR in the banking sector, specifically in Pakistan. Therefore, this paper offers new avenues related to green HR practices and seeks to determine the perception and awareness of HR professionals towards green initiatives and the extent of implementation of GHRM practices to promote organisational eco-friendly performance in Pakistan`s banks. In the said pursuit, GHRM dimensions, namely, green job analysis, green recruitment and selection, green training and development, including FinTech, green performance management, green compensation management, and ISO certification, are considered the core GHRM practices with a focus on mitigating the direct environmental impacts of the banking sector through green building, a paperless environment, reducing carbon footprints, and conservation of energy. The current study also aims to develop a comprehensive and state-of-the-art conceptual framework for eco-friendly initiatives after determining the current status of GHRM practices specifically in Pakistan`s banking industry, which would hopefully benefit stakeholders and scholars. As a result, it intends to fill a void by significantly contributing to the body of knowledge related to GHRM and the banking sector. Considering the conceptual view, Sohail et al. (2020) indicated a need to study the banking industry from the perspective of green HRM practices while linking it with some aspects of digitalization. In addition, Saifuddin et al. (2020) recommended exploring the phenomenon of GHRM in organisations other than the FMCG sector in Pakistan`s context. Further, in one of the Indian studies, Mishra (2017) suggested the vital role of human resource professionals in promoting GHRM practices. To add to this, Rimi (2016) reviewed literature to propose a best-practise green HRM model for banking performance in Bangladesh.

Another recent scholarly contribution by Anjum et al. (2022) focused on green HRM practices, focusing on electronic HRM to highlight its contribution to workplace sustainability in Bangladesh's banking sector. Therefore, the current study is based on findings and suggestions extended by Mishra (2017) while taking some insights from Saifuddin et al. (2020), Rimi (2016), Sohail et al. (2020), and Anjum et al. (2022) in terms of the prominent roles of GHRM practices, electronic HRM, and HR professionals in



stimulating green initiatives. Hence, this paper would categorically offer a substantial input to the current academic discourse on going green.

Significance of the study

The study is significant as it addresses the increasing importance of environmental sustainability and social responsibility in business operations. The banking sector in Pakistan is one of the largest and most influential sectors in the country, making it an ideal sector to be investigated for the adoption of green HRM practices. The current paper seeks to shed light on green HR practices in Pakistan's banking sector. Therefore, it tends to enable stakeholders to get meaningful insights into the implementation of GHRM practices. Further, the proposed conceptual framework offers practical significance for senior HR professionals and managers in terms of leveraging their key role towards environmentally friendly HR practices.

Research scholars can also benefit from gaining an understanding of the status of GHRM practices while taking into consideration future green HR trends and study recommendations.

Research Questions:

Major questions which this research is trying to answer are:

1. What is the perception and awareness of human resource managers regarding green human resource management and its policies?
2. What is the status of GHRM practices and policies in Pakistan's banking sector?
3. What are the future prospects for GHRM practices in Pakistan's banking sector?

Assumptions:

In this paper, it is assumed that HR managers have some knowledge regarding green HR practices and policies. The reason for this is that few studies on GHRM practices in Pakistan's banking sector have been conducted (Ali et al., 2020; Gill et al., 2021; Jamal et al., 2021), indicating some awareness of GHRM practices.

Review of Literature

Considering the pivotal role of GHRM practices in attaining pro-environmental organisational performance and ecological sustainability, many academic studies have been dedicated to the phenomenon of green HR practices. Bringing forward the green agenda, scholars including De Souza Freitas et al. (2012), Jackson et al. (2011), and Renwick et al. (2016) opined that HRM is a paramount element in ensuring a green culture. Therefore, embedding green practices in employees' management will most likely augment the sustainability of firms. Green HRM research has been categorically started among scholars



since 2016, when many authors and researchers conducted studies dealing with GHRM, namely (Ahmad et al., 2015; Yong et al., 2019; Dumont et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2019). Moreover, researchers have established the fundamental role of HRM in enabling advancements in green HRM by implementing green recruitment and selection processes, providing green training and development to enhance employees' environmental management capacities, and introducing suitable rewards, appraisals, and performance evaluation (Yong et al., 2019). Hence, keeping in view the context of this topic, the literature review has been subdivided into two sections. In the first part, existing literature has been reviewed to identify various green human resource practices across the world. In the second phase, scholarly work related to conceptual or exploratory studies dealing with the status, trends, and policies of GHRM has been under discussion.

Dimensions of GHRM Practices

Mishra (2014) opined that GHRM is the process of employing every worker's boundaries to motivate and practically involve them in creating environmental awareness. (As cited in Shah, 2019, p. 2). Considering the GHRM practices, many research endeavours tried to identify the key green attributes for future research prospects. In this pursuit, Ahmad (2015), Siyambalapatiya et al. (2018), Shah (2019), Tang et al. (2017), Mishra (2014), and Renwick et al. (2013) (for details, see Yong et al., 2019) explored and proposed a diverse set of GHRM dimensions in different contexts. This study explores the following green HR dimensions while adopting chunks of GHRM practices from Mishra (2017), Shah (2019), and Ahmad (2015), taking into account their relevance to the current study.

Green job analysis and design are related from a green management perspective. According to Shah (2019), they can be used to identify a variety of work roles and responsibilities related to environmental management. Obeidat et al. (2018) further endorsed the critical role of ecological awareness in fostering organisational sensitivity towards environmental problems, consequently promoting green HR practices in work places. Environmental orientation promotes a strong environmental value system within the organisation and aids staff in appreciating the significance of environmental issues, serving as a vehicle for enforcing the adoption of green HRM practices. Shah (2019) maintained that a company's environmental protection goal requires multidisciplinary teamwork. Many companies have now established environmental positions that focus only on the organisation's green management aspects. Likewise, few firms have also included eco-friendly tasks and obligations into their current employment designs.



Additionally, prior research (Ahmad, 2015) laid out green recruitment and selection as a fundamental component of GHRM. In such a manner, the candidates can be drawn to organisations that promote green indicators. Job candidates gather information regarding a company's environmental performance and express a desire to work for one that fosters a culture of sustainability. Thus, using green employer branding to attract candidates who are conscious of environmental issues is beneficial. As a result, it is essential that businesses employ green standards when hiring and evaluating job candidates. Additionally, when analysing jobs, hiring companies can stress environmental factors. Questions and concerns about green information, standards, and viewpoints can be raised in this fashion (Shah, 2019). Jeronimo et al. (2020) maintained the importance of careful green recruiting to make sure that businesses only choose candidates that already have an environmental perspective and fit in. It has been commonly observed that companies aren't the only ones looking for eco-friendly staff; also, applicants look for greener businesses based on their belief that doing so will increase their chances of finding employment, improve their career prospects, and foster long-term sustainability (as cited in Amrutha & Geetha, 2020, p. 24).

Nowadays, talent in the financial sector is gaining currency. In addition to professional skills in finance and economics, financial sectors also need to include the integration of financial knowledge, technology, innovation, and the capacity for sustainable FinTech development, enabling human resources to be prepared for the demands of the contemporary digital era. Numerous innovation offerings from the FinTech sector demonstrate the need for innovative people in the sector, namely for creative thinking and practical skills (Santoso et al., 2021). Hence, FinTech can be considered one of the important aspects of considering green training and development in the banking industry.

Furthermore, Jabbour and Santos (2008) indicated green performance management (GPM) as an activity for assessing employees' outcomes by offering rewards for green management practices. Furthermore, Tang et al. (2018) believed GPM to be made of four components: providing green goals, developing green criteria for practices, assessing individuals' green outcomes, and practising disbenefits. In such a manner, fostering green targets includes transforming the planned eco-friendly objectives into action for the staff. Appraising managers' green results serves as a key player in green management, making them responsible for green performance (Renwick, 2013). Similarly, setting green indicators for performance requires the development of various benchmarks for appraising and



communicating green rules to the staff (Ahmad, 2015). In this way, organisations need to employ the most effective approach to achieve excellent green performance (Shah, 2019). Yet another important pro-environmental HR practise is green compensation management (GCM). It can be referred to as the act of utilising rewards, planned to recruit and rouse workers to accomplish pro-environmental goals (Mandip, 2012; Jabbour et al., 2010). Jackson and Seo (2010) emphasised that rewards play a significant role in fostering individual performance and leading to the organisation's goals. However, then again, Tang et al. (2018) hypothesised that alongside monetary motivators, workers should be paid with non-monetary rewards like green acknowledgment, green tax incentivization, and green travel benefits. In continuation of the green compensation management debate, Another key HR dimension is CSR, which is often handled by an HR team or carried out closely in conjunction with the HR department in many firms (Mishra, 2017). According to pro-environment experts, environmental responsibility is seen as a moral concept that serves to emphasise being ethical and the rights to comprehend ecological responsibility and obligation (Aarnio-Linnanvuori, 2019). Hence, the concept of CSR must be incorporated into business practices to ensure economic viability over the long run. Being a corporate citizen, banks have a social obligation just like any other company, industry, or person. In order to ensure long-term growth, green banking must be made more widely recognised, and companies may implement it as a CSR policy. In addition, the concept of "green banking" offers loans to firms that seek to adopt more environmentally friendly practices in their everyday operations, energy efficiency programmes, and renewable energy projects (Prabhu et al., 2021).

ISO certification, preferably ISO 14000, relates to environmental management. ISO certification has been dealt with as a GHRM practise by Mishra (2017) since human resource management practices such as performance appraisal systems, communication, training, and competency mapping are linked with ISO certification (Mishra, 2017).

In addition, the majority of office work is managed on paper; however, with the introduction of IT, paper usage has decreased. Today's e-business and learning practices have altered office practices, turning them into paperless workplaces. A "paperless office" is a place of business where official documents and other papers are significantly transformed into automated procedures; thus, paper usage is either reduced or eliminated. The approach greatly minimises paper usage, costs associated with paper-related activities like copying, printing, and storing, as well as time spent searching through paper documents. (Ahmad,



2015). Similarly, Mishra (2017) emphasised the importance of paper recycling in order to reduce the amount of paper consumed. Ahmad (2015) emphasised that the office's energy conservation efforts could have a significant environmental impact. Offices all over the world have undertaken a number of energy-saving strategies to lessen their influence on the environment and provide more effective and environmentally friendly services. These practices include asking employees to turn off computers, TVs, and lights when leaving, using 100% renewable energy, and installing solar lighting. HR technologies like e-HR are thought to be able to aid management and workers. Moreover, encouraging the widespread use of energy-efficient light bulbs and fixtures, which use at least two-thirds less energy than standard ones, is substantial for reducing energy consumption.

Pakistan`s National Environmental Policies:

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Pakistan Environmental Protection Act, 1997, in collaboration with the World Bank and United Nations, have established certain National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQs) for organisations, including banks operating in Pakistan, to minimise environmental impacts (IH&SMEFD Circular, 2017). Policies or guidelines proposed for green banking by the State Bank of Pakistan include environmentally and ecologically resource-efficient activities in support of an improved environment. Adopting green culture as an organisational approach in which banks and DFIs must consciously make efforts to consider environmentally friendly activities Banks need to promote eco-friendly practices, helping banks and their clients identify and manage ecological hazards and reduce their carbon footprints. Further, the Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) is a mandatory legal requirement in Pakistan for specific industries that helps in identifying the foreseeable impacts of a proposed project on the environment and determining the likely adverse environmental effect for requiring the preparation of an environmental impact assessment. Finally, abiding by National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQs) (IH&SMEFD Circular, 2017).

Implementation and Adoption of GHRM Practices:

A portion of academic studies deals with the status, trends, practices, and policies of GHRM and their conceptual execution. In the said endeavour, Rimi (2016) reviewed a global GHRM perspective through a systematic literature review and proposed a conceptual GHRM model for harnessing green service innovation in the banking industry of Bangladesh. Findings propose that the banking sector is required to focus on utilising its HRM to ensure the



competency and preparedness of the workforce towards eco-friendly performance. As a result, best HRM practices can lead to green banking services.

In continuation of the "green HR phenomenon, Mishra et al. (2017) unveiled the status of GHRM practices in Indian manufacturing organisations. The study proposed that the firms had specific existing practices of GHRM; however, these practices were neither officially coordinated under GHRM drives nor industriously followed. Only three organisations offered environmental training, despite the fact that the researchers found all organisations making efforts to enhance pro-environmental orientation in informal ways. In the selection process, accessing green personalities and skills was not considered. Only features of production and machinery were analysed during performance appraisal and remuneration, and no green behaviours were monitored during the appraisal process. However, just two firms made a direct connection between rewards and environmentally friendly actions like voluntarily planting trees and encouraging others to waste less.

Yet in another study dealing with the GHRM implementation aspect, Al-Romeedy (2019) pointed out the negligence of Egyptian travel agencies in implementing GHRM practices: green job design, green recruitment, green training, green induction, performance assessment, and green rewards. The author found managerial constraints and constraints related to the employees themselves to be the two major constraints in the application of GHRM practices. Further, the study endorsed that the Egyptian travel agencies must clarify sustainability and green practices, incorporate the environmental aspect into business goals, and create a set of environmental targets that are integrated into the agency's overall strategy.

In Pakistan`s context, Saifuddin et al. (2020) examined the GHRM practices and policies in Pakistan`s local and international FMCG organisations from managers` perspectives.

Analysis indicated that very few FMCG organisations were endeavouring to execute green HRM practices in Pakistan. In some cases, a few members shared that their firms are generally engaged with corporate social responsibility (CSR) exercises, but no particular HR strategy has been laid out in their firms, which could be said to be a "green approach. On the other hand, a portion of the members from multinational corporations showed positive reactions with respect to the execution of green management and methodologies.

Considering the GHRM adoption, Tsymbaliuk et al. (2021) in yet another study proposed that every HRM function should adopt GHRM practices. It has to incorporate things like creating organisational structures focusing on responsibility for putting environmental policy into action; institutionalising employment and positions in charge of environmental concerns,



such as green HRM and finance; building up sustainable objectives and environmental KPIs; forming an environmental protection culture among workers; and improving employees' green skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

After reviewing the scholarly work, it has been evident that the concept of GHRM and its implementation still require further scrutiny, specifically in emerging and developing countries.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study is qualitative and inductive in nature while employing thematic analysis. Since the topic under study requires insight into GHRM practices in Pakistan`s banking industry, the study has been conducted through interviews with the company`s senior HR management to determine the green HR practices and the extent of their implementation.

Data Collection Method

The present study relies on primary data. Taking into consideration the motive of the present paper, conducting interviews was a suitable option for data collection. Mishra (2017), Saifuddin et al. (2020), and Sohail et al. (2020) also conducted interviews to study GHRM practices in India and Pakistan`s context. Likewise, Leidner et al. (2019) used interviews to collect data from sustainability advocates in a wide European context regarding green HR challenges. In addition, Anjum et al. (2022) also conducted interviews to explore the influence of e-HRM on GHRM practices in Bangladesh.

Population

Frame of Reference

The survey method has been employed considering a target population of HR heads to share their opinions and information regarding GHRM practices and hence their implementation. The reason for selecting them is the probability that, being in senior-level positions, they have certain knowledge about the presence of GHRM practices in their organisations and are also aware of their implementation. Moreover, they gained leverage to implement and improve green HR practices in their organisations. Secondly, GHRM is a relatively nascent phenomenon among the masses, and it is justifiable to focus on the management wing rather than employees.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

This study employs stratified sampling techniques to select banks and collect relevant and appropriate data from the respondents. Pakistan`s banking industry is comprised of around 31



banks, of which five are in the public sector, 22 are private, and 4 are multi-national banks (SBP, 2017). In this paper, the banking industry has been divided into three strata pertaining to the size or number of branches operating in Pakistan. Considering the stratification, the first stratum encompasses banks with almost 1500 branches or more. Banks operating with more than 500 branches fell into the second stratum. In this regard. Considering the third stratum, banks with fewer than 500 branches have been part of the research sample. Moreover, this paper only focused on national banks, excluding the foreign sector, which can distort the findings of this study owing to the differences in practices and policies between national and international banks. In addition, banks with their head offices in Karachi remained the focus of this study. In the said endeavour, the researcher visited the head offices of the selected banks and interviewed senior HR professionals.

Instruments Selection

The interview questions were framed to understand the status of GHRM practices in the banking sector. Interview questions have been outlined while taking some insights from prior studies done by Mishra (2017) and Saifuddin et al. (2020), but with modifications and additional questions as per the motive of this study. Considering the objective of the present research, an open-ended interview was conducted using a specialised and tested interview question list. The interview protocol has been formulated from the perspective of HR management and validated by both field and domain experts prior to conducting the actual interviews. Further, the interviews have been conducted after obtaining consent from the target population. The saturation point was attained in the fifth interview; however, two more interviews were conducted to validate the findings.

Discussion and Analysis

Thematic Analysis

The analysis covers basic ideas extracted from the interviews. The responses have been documented and presented in the form of themes using a thematic analysis. The main ideas identified from the analysis are as follows:

Awareness and perception of HR professionals

Considering the awareness of HR professionals, it has been found that HR experts, including heads of HR departments, are very well aware of environmental concerns. One of the respondents expressed it as "I am an aspirant to green practices". Another stated "Adopting green practices is a need of the hour". Other respondents also advocated environmentally friendly HR practices and their significance for ecological sustainability. To this end,



Saifuddin et al. (2020) indicated that the idea of green HRM among the HR experts of FMCG organisations in Pakistan is obscure. HR professionals are not completely cognizant of the advantages that they can get from retaining workers, improving employee satisfaction, and increasing efficiency and overall organisation productivity by carrying out green strategies. Hence, in the present case of the banking industry, HR professionals seem to be aware of green practices and have expressed their environmental concerns. However, they still need to fully grasp the connection between green HRM practices in terms of green recruitment, training, compensation, rewards, etc. for going greener.

Implementation of Green HR Practices and Policies

Analysis of implementing green HR practices and policies demonstrated diverse patterns. Public financial institutions seemed to be more adherent to the green banking agenda and policies extended by the State Bank of Pakistan, such as green buildings and a paperless environment. HR professionals in the public sector emphasised that "50 to 60 percent of paper usage has been reduced," indicating the inclusion of green building in their practices. Private banks, though not showing much environmental commitment relative to the large public banks, are aspiring to and in the process of adopting green banking in true spirit. The respondents from these banks also confirmed the existence of a paperless environment and the conservation of energy by maintaining moderate temperatures.

Green job design has been adopted and, to some extent, implemented in the concerned banks. Pakistan's public banks falling in the first stratum contain a specific green job and design framework and a dedicated department dealing with environmental concerns and taking green initiatives for pro-environmental outcomes, with the exception of another bank falling in the second stratum. In this regard, people are hired, particularly to accomplish green tasks. One of the respondents titled the specific wing "environment and safety department," which undertakes all the green tasks and pro-environmental initiatives. Some private banks in the second and third strata also hinted at the creation and development of a dedicated green department in the future.

Green recruitment and selection found to be a common practise nowadays in terms of advertising jobs online, conducting online interviews, online job orientation, and on-boarding, hence reducing carbon footprints. One respondent named the online recruitment platform "Rozi.pk". Considering employer green branding in recruitment processes, public banks emphasised strategies such as "Net Zero" and "Environmental and Social Governance" for enhancing environmental and other social advancements. However, another important



aspect highlighted by the majority of respondents as their strategic mission and employer positioning was mainly the concept of "diversity and inclusion." In the context of green training and development, the majority of respondents provided positive feedback. Large banks have to some extent facilitated green training and development programmes, particularly in terms of conservation of energy and less paper usage, by promoting cost-efficiency campaigns. One HR professional mentioned "Austerity Drive" to facilitate cost-efficient outcomes. To add, almost all the concerned banks have adopted software such as LMS, Oracle, and Disciple to manage their daily activities, reducing paper usage, as each employee has been provided training to use these software's` to record their daily tasks, attendance, etc., and management is being equipped with basic digital skills to oversee the operational tasks relevant to the workforce. Moreover, most of the training has been conducted on Zoom. Further, training in Fintech has also been the practise among the majority of banks to provide customer-friendly practices, such as online banking, digital wallets, etc. Some public banks also provide online account creation services. Hence, aiming at decreasing the cost and carbon footprint while positively contributing to the environment Green orientation is offered at orientation and on-boarding programmes.

The concept of green performance management is still in its infancy, and the majority of banks do not have a proper system of green key performance indicators for employees and their measurements. However, the respondents ensured that they are heading towards developing green KPIs and a green performance management system in the near future. Further, public banks have taken certain steps, such as developing key green KPIs specifically for senior-level positions in environmental departments.

Referring to green compensation management, a respondent from one of the public banks mentioned the presence of rewards and other perks associated with green performance only for senior-level staff working in the green department. HR heads of two public banks highlighted the provision of voluntary leaves for tree planting and cleaning drives biannually. The respondent from one of the public banks added another subsidised green compensation offered to the staff in the form of "Sher Sawari" cab service on ad-hoc relief for six months. The motive was to enable three or four staff members to share the same cab rather than travelling in separate individual vehicles, thereby consuming less fuel, which is cost-effective as well as environmentally friendly. A senior HR professional from a second-tier private bank hinted at the presence of work flexibility as a green compensation while adopting the 50%



work from home concept, thus helping in carbon reduction. Further, the majority of the HR professionals highlighted the subsidised financing of solar systems to the staff.

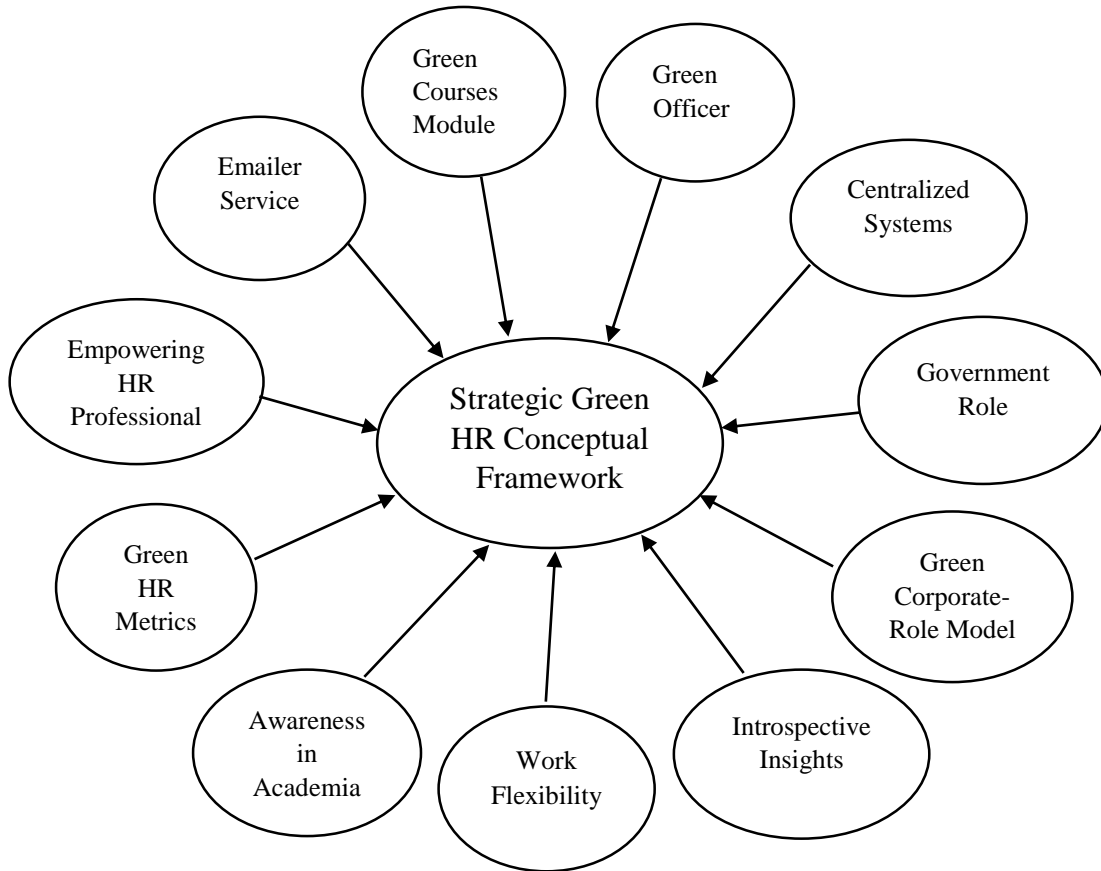
Most of the banks under study were ISO 9001-certified. However, the respondents had no fair idea regarding ISO 14000, which particularly addresses environmental management. The majority of banks considered green CSR a paramount element and mentioned their green banking policies for sponsoring or financing projects considering environment-friendly practices, energy conservation, solar energy installation, etc.

Emerging Themes

This study extends some emerging themes suggested by the senior HR professionals, which serve as a strategic green HR conceptual framework and can be substantial for banking as well as other industries;

1. Environmental awareness should be fostered among employees through the communication of green agendas and the sharing of achievements of key green milestones through the e-mail service quarterly over the year.
2. Developing a green course module for employees' green upskilling
3. Centralised systems should be introduced in terms of futuristic technology for centralised smart offices, such as electricity sensors as adopted in the West.
4. Provision of a "taking charge position to HR professionals, enabling them to initiate and frame green HR practices.
5. Developing green HR metrics and rewarding an organisation, department, or individual on the basis of such metrics
6. government's role in fueling the green agenda.
7. Provide awareness in academia, as today's students are the future capital force.
8. need for introspective insights, a capacity leading to green transformations.
9. Banks and other organisations must strive to be green corporate role models.
10. There is a green officer in every office or premise who oversees the green practices, such as making sure that lights, air conditioners, computers, or other electronic gadgets are switched off when someone leaves, the office is clean, there are no wastes, etc.
11. Flexibility and work-from-home options should be given to employees.

Figure 1
Green Conceptual Framework



Conclusion and Way Forward

Having analysed the awareness of HR senior professionals, it has been evident that most respondents are well aware of the current ecological concerns and the role of HR in mitigating them. Nonetheless, some of the HR experts, being cognizant of environmental issues, could not reflect on the key role of HR in leveraging green HR practices to contribute to the green agenda. However, some HR experts mentioned their individual green efforts rather than the proper formalised green framework postulated by the banking authority so far. Considering the implementation of green HR policies and practices, the majority of banks, specifically the public sector and large banks, are making efforts to mitigate the adverse environmental impacts while adhering to the green banking policies. However, private banks, with some exceptions, are gradually shaping their practices to comply with the green banking policies extended by the State Bank of Pakistan through consuming less paper, conserving energy, and adopting green buildings, ultimately leading to cost efficiency. Among the core green HR practices, green job design has been implemented by public banks, with the



exception of one private bank in the second strata. Other private banks are yet in the process of creating green job vacancies for handling environmental concerns. Green recruitment has been realised through digitalizing all the recruitment processes. However, only a few banks position their employer branding from a green perspective.

Further, green performance has not been focused on so far, except for a few public banks considering the green element in managing the performance of senior environmental officers. Compensation management for green initiatives such as providing subsidised solar systems to employees is offered by the majority of banks. However, only two public banks mentioned subsidised green cab service, annual leave for voluntary plantations, etc., and green awards for senior green officers accomplishing pro-environmental tasks.

Moreover, green training and development have been mainly driven by digitalization. In this context, training in fintech and environmental awareness in onboarding and orientation sessions are highlighted. Nevertheless, no dedicated training programmes have been designed so far to promote green HR practices among employees. To add to this, the majority of banks considered green CSR a paramount element leading to reducing indirect adverse environmental impacts through sponsoring eco-friendly projects.

In conclusion, though HR experts are somewhat conscious of ecological concerns, the banking industry merely tries to go green owing to two key driving forces, namely, cost-efficiency and digitalization, particularly post-COVID-19. Hence, cost efficiency and work flexibility attributable to digitalization remained the major concerns for most businesses. To this end, true environmental sensitization and awareness are needed among the management and work force to keep them abreast of green HR practices at work as well as in their lives. Therefore, making them mindful regarding ecological responsibilities has the added benefit of cost efficiency.

Future Recommendations

Considering the limitations of this study, Prospect Scholars may study the challenges of implementing green HR practices in the same or any other industry; the same topic can be worked on from the employees` perspective. Likewise, the status of green HR practices in textile or other manufacturing industries also calls for scholarly attention. Further, green HR practices can be compared among national and multinational banks.



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