

Green Human Resource Management: Promoting Sustainable Organizational Practices

Dr. Saddam Hussain

PHD, MBA, LLM, M.COM, LLB, B.COM

Abstract

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has emerged as an important approach for integrating environmental sustainability into human resource policies, employee behavior, and organizational strategy. As organizations face increasing pressure to reduce environmental impact, conserve resources, comply with environmental regulations, and meet stakeholder expectations, HRM is becoming a critical mechanism for translating sustainability goals into everyday workplace practices. This paper examines the role of Green Human Resource Management in promoting sustainable organizational practices through green recruitment and selection, environmental training, green performance management, reward systems, employee participation, green leadership, digitalization, and sustainable workplace design.

The study adopts a conceptual and systematic literature-review approach and draws upon the Resource-Based View, Ability-Motivation-Opportunity framework, Stakeholder Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and organizational sustainability perspectives. The analysis indicates that GHRM can strengthen employees' environmental knowledge, motivation, commitment, and participation while supporting resource efficiency, waste reduction, environmental innovation, regulatory compliance, and sustainable organizational performance. However, successful implementation requires strategic alignment, leadership commitment, employee involvement, measurable environmental objectives, appropriate rewards, and an organizational culture that supports sustainability. The paper concludes that GHRM should not be treated as an isolated HR initiative. Instead, it should be integrated with business strategy, operations, performance management, technology, governance,

and organizational culture to create long-term environmental and economic value.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management, GHRM, Sustainability, Environmental Management, Green Recruitment, Green Training, Employee Engagement, Sustainable HRM, Organizational Performance, Environmental Performance.

1. Introduction

Environmental sustainability has become an increasingly important organizational priority.

Businesses are facing pressure from governments, investors, customers, employees, communities, and international institutions to reduce environmental harm and adopt more sustainable operating practices.

Organizations are therefore paying greater attention to:

- energy efficiency;
- waste reduction;
- pollution control;
- carbon management;
- sustainable procurement;
- environmentally responsible production;
- resource conservation; and
- sustainable business models.

Although environmental sustainability is often associated with operations, technology, supply chains, and environmental management systems, employees play a central role in determining whether sustainability strategies actually succeed.

Policies and technologies alone cannot create a green organization.

Employees must understand environmental objectives, possess appropriate skills, adopt sustainable behaviors, contribute ideas, follow environmental procedures, and participate in continuous improvement.

Human Resource Management can influence these behaviors.

Green Human Resource Management refers to the integration of environmental objectives into HR policies and practices.

It can include:

- green recruitment;
- environmental training;
- green performance appraisal;
- environmental rewards;
- employee participation;
- sustainability-oriented leadership development; and
- environmentally responsible workplace practices.

The relationship can be represented as:

Environmental Strategy → Green HRM Practices → Green Employee Behavior → Environmental Performance → Sustainable Organizational Performance

This paper examines how GHRM contributes to sustainable organizational practices and identifies the mechanisms through which HR policies can influence environmental outcomes.

2. Objectives of the Study

The principal objective of this study is to examine the role of Green Human Resource Management in promoting sustainable organizational practices.

The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the concept and scope of Green Human Resource Management.

2. To analyze the role of green recruitment and selection.
3. To examine the importance of environmental training and development.
4. To evaluate green performance-management practices.
5. To analyze the role of environmental rewards and recognition.
6. To examine employee participation in environmental management.
7. To evaluate the influence of green leadership on employee behavior.
8. To examine the relationship between GHRM and environmental performance.
9. To analyze the role of digital technology in supporting green HR practices.
10. To recommend strategies for integrating GHRM with organizational sustainability.

3. Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How does Green Human Resource Management contribute to organizational sustainability?

RQ2: What role does green recruitment play in developing an environmentally responsible workforce?

RQ3: How does green training influence employee environmental behavior?

RQ4: What is the relationship between green performance management and environmental performance?

RQ5: How do green rewards influence employee participation in sustainability initiatives?

RQ6: What organizational factors determine the effectiveness of GHRM?

4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a conceptual and systematic literature-review approach.

The paper synthesizes theoretical and empirical literature relating to:

- Green Human Resource Management;
- environmental management;
- sustainable HRM;
- employee green behavior;
- corporate sustainability;
- environmental performance;
- green innovation;
- organizational culture; and
- strategic human resource management.

Secondary materials may include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, institutional reports, and established sustainability and HRM literature.

The study focuses on identifying the principal relationships between GHRM practices, employee behavior, and sustainable organizational outcomes.

5. Concept of Green Human Resource Management

Green Human Resource Management refers to the systematic integration of environmental sustainability into human resource policies, practices, and decision-making.

Traditional HRM focuses on:

- recruitment;
- training;
- performance;
- compensation;
- employee relations; and
- career development.

GHRM extends these functions by incorporating environmental objectives.

For example:

Traditional Recruitment → Green Recruitment

Traditional Training → Environmental Training

Performance Appraisal → Green Performance Appraisal

Reward System → Green Rewards

Employee Participation → Environmental Participation

The purpose is to build a workforce capable of supporting the organization's environmental strategy.

6. Importance of Green Human Resource Management

GHRM can contribute to organizational sustainability in several ways.

It may help organizations:

- reduce waste;
- conserve energy;
- improve environmental compliance;
- encourage sustainable employee behavior;
- strengthen environmental awareness;
- support green innovation;
- improve corporate reputation;
- attract environmentally conscious employees; and
- strengthen stakeholder trust.

GHRM therefore connects human-resource strategy with environmental management.

7. Theoretical Foundations

7.1 Resource-Based View

The Resource-Based View argues that organizations can achieve competitive advantage through valuable and difficult-to-imitate resources.

Employees with strong environmental knowledge, skills, values, and capabilities can become strategic organizational resources.

GHRM contributes by building these competencies.

The relationship can be represented as:

Green HR Practices → Environmental Human Capital → Green Capability → Sustainable Competitive Advantage

7.2 Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Framework

The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity model provides a useful framework for understanding GHRM.

Employee performance depends on:

Ability + Motivation + Opportunity

In environmental management:

Ability

Employees require environmental knowledge and skills.

Motivation

Employees require incentives and commitment.

Opportunity

Employees need opportunities to participate in green decision-making.

GHRM can therefore influence green behavior through:

Green Training + Green Rewards + Employee Participation

7.3 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory suggests that organizations have responsibilities toward multiple stakeholders.

These include:

- shareholders;
- employees;
- customers;
- government;
- communities;

- suppliers; and
- future generations.

Environmental sustainability is increasingly important to these stakeholder groups.

GHRM helps organizations respond by developing employees capable of supporting responsible environmental practices.

7.4 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory can explain how organizational sustainability initiatives influence employee attitudes.

When employees perceive that an organization demonstrates genuine environmental responsibility, they may identify more strongly with the organization and reciprocate through greater engagement.

This may encourage voluntary green behavior.

8. Green Recruitment and Selection

Green recruitment involves attracting and selecting candidates who possess environmental awareness, sustainability values, or relevant green competencies.

Organizations can incorporate environmental considerations into:

- job advertisements;
- employer branding;
- job descriptions;
- interview questions;
- selection criteria; and
- onboarding.

For example, candidates for operational or managerial positions may be evaluated on their understanding of:

- waste reduction;
- resource efficiency;
- environmental compliance;

- sustainable procurement; or
- environmental innovation.

Green recruitment can contribute to:

Environmentally Responsible Employees → Stronger Green Culture → Better Environmental Performance

9. Green Employer Branding

Organizations increasingly use environmental sustainability as part of employer branding.

A strong green employer image may attract employees who value:

- responsible business;
- sustainability;
- ethical practices;
- environmental protection; and
- social impact.

However, organizations should avoid exaggerated sustainability claims.

If employees perceive a gap between public sustainability statements and actual workplace practices, trust may decline.

10. Green Training and Development

Green training helps employees acquire the knowledge and skills required to support environmental objectives.

Training may cover:

- energy conservation;
- waste segregation;
- recycling;
- pollution prevention;
- sustainable procurement;
- environmental regulations;
- carbon reduction;
- responsible resource use; and

- environmental reporting.

Training can influence both knowledge and behavior.

The pathway may be:

Green Training → Environmental Knowledge → Green Awareness → Sustainable Behavior

Training is particularly important when new environmental technologies or procedures are introduced.

11. Green Leadership Development

Managers influence employee attitudes toward sustainability.

Leadership development programs can therefore incorporate:

- environmental strategy;
- sustainability decision-making;
- responsible resource allocation;
- stakeholder management;
- ethical leadership;
- climate risk; and
- sustainable innovation.

Managers who consistently demonstrate green values can strengthen employee commitment.

12. Green Performance Management

Green performance management integrates environmental criteria into employee and managerial performance systems.

Examples of green performance indicators include:

- energy reduction;
- waste reduction;
- recycling rates;
- paper reduction;
- emissions reduction;
- environmental compliance;

- green innovation;
- sustainable procurement targets; and
- employee participation in green initiatives.

Performance standards should be measurable and relevant to the employee's role.

A possible framework is:

Environmental Objective → Individual Green KPI
→ Performance Monitoring → Feedback → Improvement

13. Green Performance Appraisal

Employee appraisal can include environmental responsibilities where those responsibilities are relevant to the job.

For example, managers may be evaluated on:

- compliance with environmental standards;
- achievement of sustainability targets;
- resource efficiency;
- team participation in environmental initiatives; and
- implementation of green improvements.

This signals that sustainability is a genuine organizational priority.

14. Green Compensation and Rewards

Green rewards recognize employees who contribute to environmental objectives.

Rewards may include:

Financial Rewards

- bonuses;
- incentives;
- performance-linked payments; and
- team rewards.

Non-Financial Rewards

- recognition;
- certificates;

- awards;
- promotion opportunities;
- public appreciation; and
- additional development opportunities.

Recognition can reinforce environmental behavior.

However, reward systems should avoid encouraging manipulation of environmental metrics.

15. Employee Participation in Green Management

Employee participation is essential because workers often understand operational waste and inefficiency directly.

Organizations can encourage employees to propose:

- energy-saving ideas;
- waste-reduction measures;
- process improvements;
- recycling initiatives;
- digital alternatives; and
- green product ideas.

Participation mechanisms may include:

- green teams;
- suggestion schemes;
- sustainability committees;
- environmental campaigns; and
- employee forums.

Employee participation can create:

Ownership → Commitment → Innovation → Environmental Improvement

16. Green Teams

Green teams are groups of employees who work together on environmental projects.

They may focus on:

- reducing electricity usage;

- reducing paper consumption;
- improving waste segregation;
- promoting sustainable commuting;
- reducing water consumption; and
- organizing environmental awareness programs.

Cross-functional green teams can also improve knowledge sharing across departments.

17. Green Employee Behavior

Employee green behavior refers to workplace actions that contribute to environmental sustainability.

Examples include:

- switching off unused equipment;
- reducing printing;
- recycling;
- minimizing waste;
- conserving water;
- using resources efficiently;
- supporting sustainable procurement; and
- proposing environmental improvements.

These behaviors may be:

Required Green Behavior

Actions formally included in job responsibilities.

Voluntary Green Behavior

Environmentally responsible actions employees undertake beyond formal requirements.

GHRM can support both forms.

18. Green Organizational Culture

Organizational culture influences whether sustainability becomes a routine part of decision-making.

A green culture may include:

- visible leadership commitment;

- sustainability values;
- employee participation;
- environmental communication;
- green policies;
- recognition of sustainable behavior; and
- continuous improvement.

Culture becomes especially important because not every environmental behavior can be monitored formally.

19. Green HRM and Environmental Performance

Environmental performance can include outcomes such as:

- lower energy consumption;
- reduced emissions;
- less waste;
- greater recycling;
- reduced water usage;
- improved compliance; and
- greater resource efficiency.

The relationship can be represented as:

GHRM → Green Knowledge and Motivation → Employee Green Behavior → Environmental Performance

This pathway suggests that employee behavior can mediate the relationship between HR practices and environmental outcomes.

20. Green HRM and Financial Performance

Environmental initiatives may also influence financial outcomes.

Potential mechanisms include:

Waste Reduction → Lower Costs

Energy Efficiency → Lower Operating Expenses

Environmental Compliance → Lower Regulatory Risk

Green Innovation → New Market Opportunities

Corporate Reputation → Stronger Stakeholder Trust

Therefore, GHRM can potentially contribute to both environmental and economic objectives.

However, outcomes depend on implementation quality and the nature of the organization.

21. Green Innovation

Green innovation involves developing environmentally improved:

- products;
- services;
- processes;
- technologies; and
- business models.

Employees play a central role in innovation.

GHRM can encourage green innovation through:

- training;
- participation;
- rewards;
- teamwork; and
- leadership support.

The relationship can be expressed as:

Green HRM → Green Human Capital → Creativity → Green Innovation

22. Green Knowledge Management

Organizations need mechanisms for capturing and sharing environmental knowledge.

Examples include:

- sustainability databases;
- internal training;
- best-practice libraries;

- cross-functional workshops;
- digital learning systems; and
- environmental reporting dashboards.

Knowledge sharing can prevent departments from repeatedly solving the same environmental problems independently.

23. Digitalization and Green HRM

Digital technology can support sustainable HR practices.

Examples include:

- digital recruitment;
- online onboarding;
- electronic documents;
- virtual training;
- paperless HR systems;
- online performance reviews;
- remote meetings; and
- automated HR analytics.

Digitalization can reduce:

- paper use;
- travel;
- printing;
- storage requirements; and
- administrative resources.

However, digital systems also consume energy and require responsible data and technology management.

24. Remote and Hybrid Work as a Green Practice

Remote and hybrid work may reduce:

- employee commuting;
- office energy consumption;
- travel requirements; and

- physical-resource use.

However, the total environmental impact depends on:

- home energy consumption;
- technology use;
- travel patterns;
- office utilization; and
- organizational arrangements.

Therefore, remote work should not automatically be assumed to produce environmental benefits in every situation.

25. Sustainable Office Practices

GHRM can support sustainable workplace practices such as:

- reducing paper;
- energy-efficient lighting;
- responsible air-conditioning use;
- water conservation;
- recycling;
- reusable office materials;
- sustainable commuting; and
- environmentally responsible purchasing.

HR can reinforce these practices through communication, training, and employee engagement.

26. Green Health and Safety

Environmental sustainability should complement occupational health and safety.

Green workplace initiatives should not create new employee risks.

For example, waste-handling procedures, chemical reduction, and energy-saving practices should comply with appropriate safety standards.

A sustainable workplace should protect both:

Environmental Health + Employee Health

27. Role of HR Professionals in Sustainability

HR professionals can act as strategic partners in environmental transformation.

Their responsibilities may include:

- developing green competencies;
- integrating sustainability into job descriptions;
- designing environmental training;
- linking performance with sustainability targets;
- supporting employee participation;
- measuring green HR outcomes; and
- strengthening sustainability culture.

HR can therefore help translate environmental strategy into employee behavior.

28. Role of Top Management

GHRM is unlikely to succeed without senior management support.

Top management should:

- communicate environmental priorities;
- allocate resources;
- establish measurable targets;
- hold managers accountable;
- recognize sustainable performance; and
- demonstrate environmentally responsible behavior.

Employees are more likely to take sustainability seriously when leadership behavior is consistent with organizational statements.

29. Challenges in Implementing Green HRM

Organizations may face several barriers.

29.1 Lack of Awareness

Employees may not understand environmental objectives.

29.2 Resistance to Change

Employees may resist new procedures or responsibilities.

29.3 Cost Concerns

Management may focus on short-term costs rather than long-term benefits.

29.4 Weak Leadership Commitment

Sustainability programs may fail without visible executive support.

29.5 Difficulty Measuring Outcomes

Some employee contributions to sustainability are difficult to quantify.

29.6 Greenwashing Risk

Organizations may promote environmental claims without meaningful operational changes.

29.7 Lack of Integration

Environmental objectives may remain separate from HR strategy.

29.8 Inadequate Training

Employees may be expected to follow green procedures without sufficient knowledge.

30. Greenwashing and Employee Trust

Greenwashing occurs when an organization creates an exaggerated or misleading impression of environmental responsibility.

Internal inconsistencies can damage employee trust.

For example:

Public Green Claims + Unsustainable Internal Practices = Credibility Gap

Employees may become disengaged if sustainability appears primarily symbolic.

Authenticity is therefore critical.

31. Measuring GHRM Effectiveness

Organizations can develop indicators such as:

- percentage of employees receiving environmental training;
- number of green suggestions implemented;
- employee participation in green programs;
- reduction in paper consumption;
- waste reduction;
- energy savings;
- recycling performance;
- environmental compliance incidents;
- employee green behavior scores; and
- achievement of sustainability KPIs.

These measures should be aligned with organizational environmental strategy.

32. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework developed in this study is:

Green HRM Practices

Green Recruitment

Green Training

Green Performance Management

Green Rewards

Employee Participation

Green Leadership

Green Digitalization

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Employee Green Outcomes

Environmental Knowledge

Green Motivation

Environmental Commitment

Green Behavior

Green Creativity

↓

Organizational Sustainability Outcomes

Resource Efficiency
Waste Reduction
Environmental Compliance
Green Innovation
Lower Environmental Impact
Improved Reputation
Sustainable Performance

33. Proposed Research Hypotheses

Future empirical research may test the following hypotheses:

H1: Green recruitment and selection have a positive and significant effect on employee green behavior.

H2: Green training has a positive and significant effect on environmental performance.

H3: Green performance management positively influences employee environmental commitment.

H4: Green rewards have a positive and significant effect on employee participation in sustainability initiatives.

H5: Employee green behavior mediates the relationship between GHRM and environmental performance.

H6: Green leadership positively moderates the relationship between GHRM and employee green behavior.

H7: GHRM has a positive and significant effect on green innovation.

H8: Environmental performance positively influences sustainable organizational performance.

34. Proposed Empirical Model

An empirical study may estimate:

$$EP_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GR_i + \beta_2 GT_i + \beta_3 GPM_i + \beta_4 GREW_i + \beta_5 GEP_i + \beta_6 GL_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Where:

EP = Environmental Performance

GR = Green Recruitment

GT = Green Training

GPM = Green Performance Management

GREW = Green Rewards

GEP = Green Employee Participation

GL = Green Leadership

ε = Error Term

A second model may test sustainable organizational performance:

$$SOP_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EP_i + \beta_2 GI_i + \beta_3 REP_i + \beta_4 RE_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Where:

SOP = Sustainable Organizational Performance

GI = Green Innovation

REP = Organizational Reputation

RE = Resource Efficiency

35. Suggested Statistical Techniques

Future empirical studies may use:

- descriptive statistics;
- reliability analysis;
- Cronbach's alpha;
- exploratory factor analysis;
- confirmatory factor analysis;
- correlation analysis;
- multiple regression;
- mediation analysis;
- moderation analysis; and
- structural equation modelling.

Longitudinal and multi-industry research can provide stronger evidence concerning long-term effects.

36. Discussion

The literature indicates that Green Human Resource Management provides an important bridge between organizational environmental strategy and employee behavior.

Environmental sustainability cannot be achieved only through policies or technical investments.

Employees must possess appropriate skills, motivation, and opportunities to participate.

This is consistent with the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity perspective.

For example:

Green Training → Ability

Green Rewards → Motivation

Green Participation → Opportunity

Together, these can strengthen employee green behavior.

Another important relationship is:

Green Leadership → Environmental Culture → Employee Commitment

Leadership gives credibility to green HR practices.

If management rewards environmental performance while simultaneously ignoring wasteful practices, employees may become skeptical.

The effectiveness of GHRM therefore depends heavily on organizational consistency.

37. Major Findings

The literature reviewed supports several broad findings:

1. GHRM can strengthen employee environmental knowledge.
2. Green training supports environmentally responsible workplace behavior.
3. Green recruitment can help organizations attract sustainability-oriented employees.
4. Green performance management connects environmental strategy with individual accountability.
5. Green rewards can reinforce sustainable behavior.

6. Employee participation can increase green innovation.
7. Leadership commitment is essential for successful GHRM.
8. Green organizational culture can strengthen voluntary employee environmental behavior.
9. Digital HR systems can reduce some resource consumption.
10. GHRM can contribute to environmental and organizational performance when practices are strategically integrated.

38. Recommendations

Organizations should consider the following measures.

1. Integrate Sustainability into HR Strategy

Environmental objectives should be included in HR planning.

2. Develop Green Competency Frameworks

Organizations should identify environmental capabilities required for different roles.

3. Incorporate Sustainability into Recruitment

Job descriptions and selection processes should reflect relevant environmental responsibilities.

4. Provide Regular Environmental Training

Employees should understand how their work affects sustainability.

5. Include Green Objectives in Performance Management

Environmental targets should be measurable and role appropriate.

6. Recognize Green Contributions

Employees who contribute to sustainability should receive meaningful recognition.

7. Encourage Employee Participation

Green suggestion systems and cross-functional teams should be promoted.

8. Strengthen Green Leadership

Managers should model environmentally responsible behavior.

9. Use Digital HR Practices

Organizations should reduce unnecessary paper and administrative resource use.

10. Monitor Environmental Outcomes

GHRM effectiveness should be evaluated using measurable indicators.

11. Avoid Greenwashing

Sustainability claims should reflect actual organizational practice.

12. Integrate HR with Environmental Management

HR, operations, finance, procurement, and sustainability teams should work collaboratively.

39. Managerial Implications

Managers should understand that sustainability depends on everyday employee decisions.

Policies concerning:

- resource use;
- procurement;
- travel;
- equipment;
- waste;
- production; and
- workplace behavior

are implemented by people.

Managers should therefore create an environment in which sustainable behavior is expected, supported, and recognized.

Environmental responsibility should become part of normal management practice rather than a temporary campaign.

40. Implications for Human Resource Management

HR departments should expand their strategic role in sustainability.

HR professionals can support environmental objectives by:

- recruiting appropriate talent;
- developing green skills;
- creating sustainability-oriented performance systems;
- strengthening employee participation;
- designing green rewards;
- building environmental culture; and
- measuring behavioral outcomes.

GHRM therefore represents an important extension of strategic HRM.

41. Policy Implications

Policymakers can encourage sustainable HR practices through:

- environmental awareness programs;
- green-skills initiatives;
- vocational education;
- sustainability reporting frameworks;
- incentives for green innovation;
- environmental compliance requirements; and
- support for SME sustainability programs.

Policies should recognize that environmental transition requires both technological investment and workforce capability.

42. Future Research Directions

Future research may examine:

- GHRM and environmental performance in Indian companies;
- green training and employee behavior;

- GHRM in SMEs;
- green leadership and sustainable performance;
- GHRM and employee engagement;
- green rewards and environmental innovation;
- digital HRM and sustainability;
- artificial intelligence and green HR practices;
- green organizational culture;
- employee participation and carbon reduction;
- GHRM and corporate reputation; and
- GHRM and ESG performance.

Future researchers may also compare manufacturing, services, healthcare, technology, banking, and other industries.

43. Conclusion

Green Human Resource Management has become an important component of organizational sustainability.

Environmental strategies cannot succeed through technology, regulation, or infrastructure alone. Employees must understand environmental priorities, possess appropriate competencies, adopt sustainable behaviors, and actively participate in organizational improvement.

GHRM provides the mechanisms needed to support this process.

Green recruitment helps organizations attract environmentally aware employees. Green training develops relevant knowledge and capabilities. Green performance management connects sustainability with accountability. Green rewards reinforce desired behavior. Employee participation encourages innovation. Green leadership provides direction and credibility.

The analysis indicates that GHRM can contribute to improved resource efficiency, reduced waste, stronger environmental compliance, increased green

innovation, and greater employee commitment to sustainability.

However, the benefits are not automatic.

GHRM must be supported by senior management, measurable environmental objectives, appropriate resources, organizational culture, and genuine commitment to sustainability.

Organizations should therefore avoid treating GHRM as a symbolic or isolated HR initiative.

Instead, environmental sustainability should be integrated across:

HR Strategy + Business Strategy + Operations + Governance + Technology + Organizational Culture

When these elements are aligned, Green Human Resource Management can become a powerful mechanism for transforming organizational sustainability objectives into employee behavior and measurable performance.

The central conclusion of this study is that people are essential to environmental sustainability. Organizations that invest in green human capital, employee participation, environmental awareness, and sustainability-oriented leadership are better positioned to achieve long-term environmental, social, and economic value.

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