Factors Affecting the Implementation of Green Human Resource Management Practices in the Public Service

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ABSTRACT

The adoption of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices in the public sector is critical for enhancing environmental sustainability. However, the factors influencing its implementation remain underexplored, particularly within the unique context of Zimbabwe's public sector. This study addresses this gap by comprehensively exploring these factors. Using a multi-method approach, the study integrates a literature review, comparative sector analysis, qualitative semi-structured interviews with ten key public sector stakeholders, and quantitative survey data from 230 public sector employees. Guided by Kitchenham and Charters (2007), the review analyzed peer-reviewed articles (2018-2025) to establish a theoretical foundation. The comparative analysis contextualized the findings by exploring GHRM practices in both public and private sectors. Qualitative data from thematic analysis of interview transcripts provided in-depth insights into contextual barriers and enablers. Quantitative data was collected via structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS version 20, to assess perceptions and identify significant predictors of GHRM readiness. Findings indicate that organizational culture, institutional structure, leadership support, resource availability, and training significantly affect GHRM implementation in the Zimbabwean public sector. Specifically, a supportive organizational culture and strong leadership commitment emerged as critical enablers, while limited resources and inadequate training posed significant barriers. The study concludes by proposing a holistic approach that focuses on cultivating a green-conscious culture, securing leadership buy-in, allocating sufficient resources, and providing targeted training for successful GHRM adoption in this setting. These findings have significant implications for policymakers and public sector organizations in Zimbabwe, highlighting the need for strategic interventions to prmote GHRM implementation and contribute to broader sustainability goals within the nation.

Keywords: economic; environment; green human resource management; implementation; social; sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainable development is being rapidly adopted throughout the world and organisations are also playing their role in trying to fulfil its requirements across the globe (Shahzad, 2020). The establishment of the 17 sustainable development goals by the United Nations Organization (UNO) sets a benchmark for all nations and large-scale organisations (United Nations, 2015 in Shahzad, 2020). As a source of competitive

advantage, organizations are aware of the need to adopt environmentally-friendly policies and practices. Since the publication of the Brundtland report on environmental sustainability in the late 1980s, organizations are becoming responsible for balancing economic, environmental, and social sustainability. In the report, sustainable development is defined as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations, 1987, in Shahzad, 2020). As such, nations around the world have comprehended the need for organizations to contribute for the broader issue of environmental sustainability through effective climate action programmes (Shahzad, 2020). There is a confirmation that organisations that implement green business practices in line with the spirit of sustainability are able to harvest better financial results (Alkhateeb, Alkahtani, & Mahmood, 2018 in Shahzad, 2020). Furthermore, the international environmental certifications for organisations like in ISO 14000 series, have become a source of inspiration for managers to engage in environmental sustainability. The application of green organisational functions such as green production, green human resource management, green marketing, green supply chain management and green accounting are becoming common as sources of competitive advantage and as social responsibility measures (Shahzad, 2020). Green Human Resource Management is defined as organisational policies and practices aimed at encouraging employees to adopt behaviours that reduce the effects of climate change while also promoting healthy balances between work and other aspects of employee lives. It is an initiative where organisations integrate environmental sustainability into their internal operations and decision-making processes through the application of human resource management policies and practices (Howard-Grenville et al., 2014 in Chuah et al., 2021).

The call for green management for sustainable development is becoming louder in the business environment. Broadly, green management involves raising awareness of environmental issues, utilizing energy sources and eco-friendly technologies, reusing waste, and recycling operations that span throughout the activities of institutions and organisations (Yang et al., 2023). The objectives of green management include ensuring that operations are conducted with consideration for the environment, preserving the environment in business goals, visions, and goals, as well as operation functions, enabling continuous development, and selecting technologies following sustainability principles (Murphy & Gouldson, 2020). As such, organisations are no longer concentrating only on financial performance for the lasting sustainability and development, but also actively consider all social and environmental aspects which are affected and controlled by them (Kézai & Kurucz, 2023). Therefore, organisations are under immense pressure from the public and regulatory frameworks to speedily embrace environmental policies which can help them to become 'green and competitive'. Large organisations now want to publicly show and demonstrate their commitment to sustainability and development in the field of sustainability so as to build their brand, increase their competitive advantage, and differentiate themselves from their competitors within the market (Jones et al., 2014 in Scholz et al., 2020). So, many organisations have taken initiatives towards green-oriented agendas by integrate green management practices in managing their operations.

Human resource management is one of the organisational processes which is being affected by the implementation of green initiatives by organisations. The integration of green management in human resource management practices is known as Green human resource management (GHRM) (Hanane & Soumoia, 2024). GHRM is an emerging trend in human resources practices offering a framework for supporting human resource policies with green objectives (Kumari, Dash, and Chatterjee, 2025). However, Hameed et al (2020) observed that regardless of the concept gaining prominence over the past years, its adoption in the public sector context is still underdeveloped. Besides, according to Hamilton (2009) in Scholz et al (2020), this corporate commitment to sustainability and development is perceived as an inconsiderate manoeuvre, or so-called greenwashing. The author asserts that this is a process where the company publicly and falsely declares that it is environmentally friendly, while internally participating in environmentally unfavourable practices. This is exacerbated by a notable gap that remains in understanding the factors and their influence in the implementation of GHRM especially in the context of public sector organisations. While existing research highlights the benefits of GHRM, there is limited empirical evidence on the practical factors necessary for its implementation and practices in diverse organizational settings. This is besides having the green concept been successfully adopted in marketing, accounting and management. Therefore, it is against this background that the study sought to explore factors that affect the implementation of green human resource management practices in the public sector.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A multi-method approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) was employed to comprehensively investigate the factors influencing Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) implementation within Zimbabwe's public sector. This design integrated a systematic literature review, a comparative analysis of public and private sector GHRM practices, qualitative semi-structured interviews, and quantitative survey data to facilitate triangulation and enhance the validity and depth of the findings (Saunders & Darabi, 2024).

The systematic literature review followed Kitchenham and Charters' (2007) guidelines. Peer-reviewed articles published between 2018 and 2025 were searched across major academic databases, including ScienceDirect and Google Scholar, using keywords such as "Green Human Resource Management," "public sector sustainability," and "organizational culture." This review aimed to establish a robust theoretical foundation and identify existing research gaps. The literature review process involved three key phases illustrated in Figure 1:

Planning Stage
- Define objectives
- Formulate Research Questions
- Identify Key Variables

Execution Stage
- Condct literature search
- Use Google Scholar
- Search phrase "factors affecting the implementation of GHRMin the public sector"
- Timeframe:2018-2025
- Inial Results: 71 records
- Screening Process
- Review Titles & Abstracts
- Select relevant (40)articles

Results Stage
- Data extraction and Categorising
- Synthesise findings
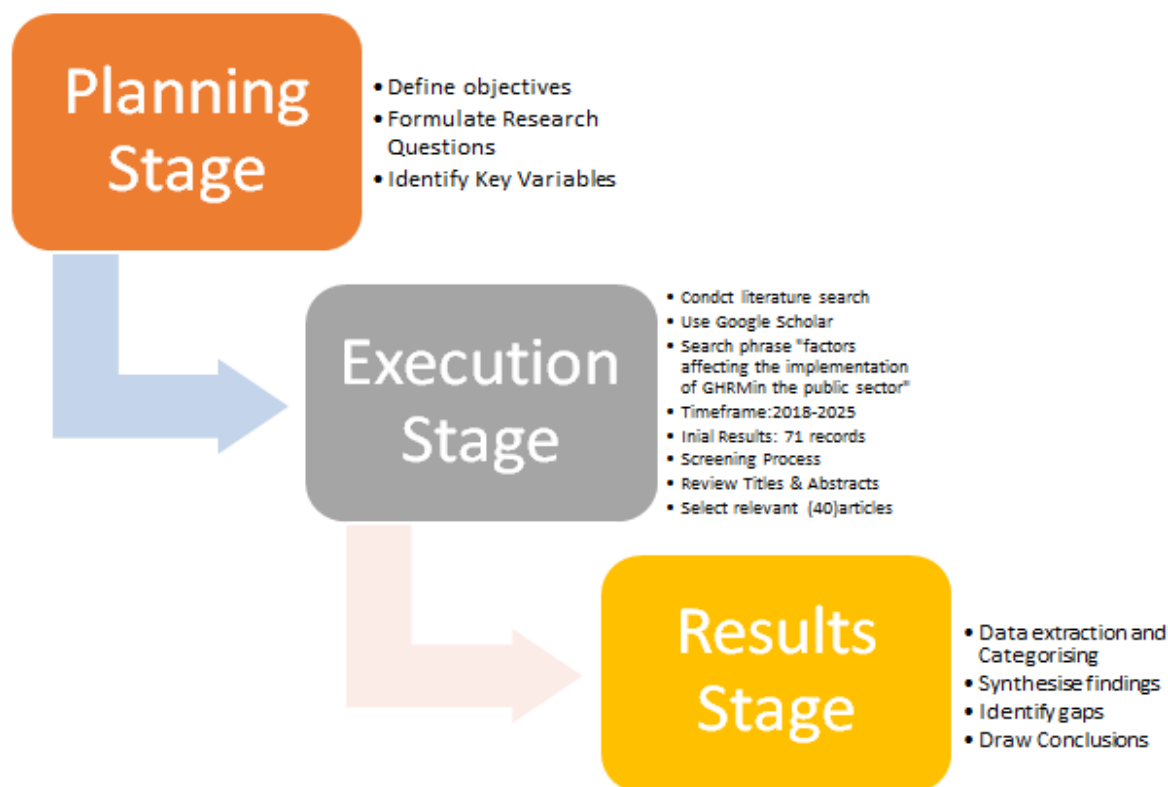- Identify gaps
- Draw Conclusions

Figure 1. Steps illustrating the literature review process.

Source: Authors' construction

The three-phase process involved planning (defining objectives and scope), execution (systematic search and screening of 71 records, with 40 deemed relevant), and data extraction and synthesis. A standardized form was used to extract key information, which was subsequently analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns related to GHRM implementation in public sector contexts. To provide context, a comparative analysis of GHRM practices in the public and private sectors was also conducted based on the synthesized literature to highlight sector-specific dynamics. To enhance the quality of the research primary data was obtained through quantitative and qualitative methods.

Quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered to 230 employees across various public sector organizations in Zimbabwe, using stratified random sampling to ensure representativeness. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale to assess perceptions of organizational culture, leadership support, resource availability, decentralization, training adequacy, and the perceived impact of GHRM practices. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 20. Descriptive statistics (frequencies) summarized respondent perceptions, while inferential statistics (correlation and

regression analyses) examined relationships between constructs and identified significant predictors of GHRM readiness.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten purposefully selected key stakeholders from the Zimbabwean public sector, including HR managers, department heads, and sustainability coordinators. The interviews explored pre-determined themes such as organizational culture, structure, leadership, resource availability, competence, training, and implementation impact. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurrent patterns and barriers, with illustrative quotes captured. Ethical clearance was obtained, and informed consent was provided by all participants, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and data security. The exploration was guided by the theoretical underpinnings and conceptual framework presented in the next section.

Theoretical Underpinnings and Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored in the theory of corporate environmentalism, which posits that organizations integrate environmental concerns into their operations, strategies, and decision-making to achieve sustainability (Forbes & Jermier, 2012, as cited in Ofosuhene, 2024). A core tenet of this theory is the necessity for organizations to adopt eco-friendly practices in their interactions with both internal and external stakeholders. By proactively addressing environmental constraints and aligning organizational activities with ecologically sustainable practices, companies can not only ensure regulatory compliance and enhance environmental performance but also gain long-term economic and competitive advantages through sustainable and innovative practices (Rotner, 2016, as cited in Ofosuhene, 2024). Corporate environmentalism emphasizes how and why businesses adopt environmentally sound methods, such as exceeding regulatory requirements to minimize their ecological footprint (Banerjee, 2002, as cited in Ofosuhene, 2024). Integrating environmental considerations into strategic planning across all organizational levels is crucial for mitigating the environmental impact of business activities (Ofosuhene, 2024).

Building upon the principles of corporate environmentalism, this research examines the role of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) in achieving organizational sustainability within the public sector. The emergence of GHRM reflects a broader organizational response to global sustainability imperatives, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015, as cited in Shahzad, 2020). GHRM involves the adoption of environmentally conscious human resource policies and practices that contribute to business objectives while minimizing adverse environmental effects (Amjad et al., 2021; Shafaei et al., 2020). The evolution of HRM, driven by globalization, technological advancements, and competitive pressures, has further spurred the adoption of GHRM practices to enhance organizational performance in increasingly turbulent environments (Kalei et al., 2022; Ray & Ray, 2011, as cited in Kalei et al., 2022). Fundamentally, GHRM represents the integration of sustainability principles into human resource functions to address environmental challenges.

The scope of GHRM encompasses a range of initiatives aimed at improving environmental performance, including resource conservation, waste reduction, promotion of recycling, and the adoption of sustainable business practices (Csehné Papp et al., 2021). These practices extend to encouraging sustainable commuting options, such as car-sharing and public transport, often facilitated through organizational incentives and infrastructure like bicycle facilities and staff buses (Biernat et al., 2020; Csehné Papp et al., 2021). Furthermore, advancements in technology have enabled flexible work arrangements like telecommuting and virtual meetings, significantly reducing employee carbon footprints (Biernat et al., 2020). Properly implemented GHRM can enhance an organization's reputation as a socially and environmentally responsible entity, attracting environmentally conscious stakeholders (Jones et al., 2014, as cited in Scholz et al., 2020). It can also lead to reduced operational costs through efficient resource management, increased employee engagement and morale, and a competitive advantage by attracting environmentally aware customers and investors, while ensuring compliance with environmental regulations (Scholz et al., 2020).

This study investigates the influence of several key factors on the implementation of GHRM practices within Zimbabwe's public sector: organizational culture, organizational structure, leadership, resource availability, and employee competence.

Organizational Culture: A supportive organizational culture, characterized by shared environmental values and beliefs, is crucial for the successful implementation of sustainability practices, including GHRM (Hastuti & Muafi, 2022; Shafaei et al., 2020). Such a culture fosters adaptability and alignment with environmental concerns, potentially becoming a strategic asset (Shafaei et al., 2020). Conversely, a resistant culture can impede the adoption of green initiatives (Wijethilake & Lama, 2019). While a pragmatic and innovative culture can facilitate change, the unique bureaucratic nature of the public sector in developing countries, often marked by hierarchical systems and accountability complexities, can pose significant challenges to fostering a sustainability-oriented culture (Abane et al., 2022; Mikusova et al., 2023; Sebidi, 2022).

Organizational Structure: An organization's structure can either enable or constrain its capacity to adapt, innovate, and implement new practices like GHRM (Marija & Marija, 2023; Martínez-León & Martínez-García, 2011, as cited in Marija & Marija, 2023). Organic or adaptive structures, characterized by flexibility and open communication, are generally more conducive to innovation compared to bureaucratic or mechanistic structures with rigid hierarchies and centralized decision-making (Chioma et al., 2023; Madukoma et al., 2021).

Public sector organizations, often characterized by hierarchical control and formalized processes, may find it challenging to adopt the flexible structures needed for innovative initiatives like GHRM (Chioma et al., 2023; Parker & Bradley, 2000, as cited in Chioma et al., 2023). Empirical evidence suggests that increased formalization and centralization can negatively impact innovation (Mishra & Maharana, 2019), highlighting the need for public sector organizations to consider structural adjustments to facilitate GHRM implementation (Fayyaz et al., 2025).

Leadership: Effective leadership is a critical catalyst for environmental management and the adoption of green practices within organizations (Goni et al., 2023; Guest & Teplitzky, 2010; Zhou et al., 2018, as cited in Goni et al., 2023). Transformational leadership, which inspires and motivates employees towards a shared vision, is often considered most effective in fostering innovation and supporting GHRM policies (Goni et al., 2023; Mittal & Dhar, 2016; Ng, 2017, as cited in Goni et al., 2023). However, the hierarchical and rule-bound nature of the public sector may favor transactional leadership, which relies on rewards and punishments for compliance (Northouse, 2021).

While transactional leadership can ensure short-term goal attainment, it may not foster the innovative change required for GHRM implementation. Empirical studies indicate a positive correlation between transformational leadership and public sector performance (Darka, 2024; Smith, 2018, as cited in Darka, 2024), suggesting its importance in driving organizational change.

Resource Availability: The implementation of GHRM practices often involves associated costs, which can be a significant barrier, particularly in resource-constrained environments (Islam et al., 2019; Jafri, 2012, as cited in Islam et al., 2019; Ren et al., 2018). Financial limitations, coupled with doubts about the immediate financial returns of green initiatives, can hinder their adoption (Bohdanowicz, 2006, as cited in Islam et al., 2019).

Public sector organizations, often operating on non-profit principles and facing budgetary constraints, may struggle to allocate the necessary resources for GHRM implementation (Ren et al., 2018). Inadequate infrastructure can further compound these challenges (Daljit & Heena, 2021). The South African public sector, for example, faces significant resource constraints, including limited budgets and insufficient human resources, which impede the execution of strategic initiatives like GHRM (Ndlovu & Dlamini, 2021).

Employee Competence: Developing employee competence through green training and development programs is essential for successful GHRM implementation (Barakat et al., 2023; Hastuti & Muafi, 2022). Such programs aim to raise environmental awareness, impart skills for resource conservation and waste reduction, and foster a proactive approach to environmental challenges (Barakat et al., 2023). Recruiting and retaining employees with relevant green expertise is also crucial (Chuah et al., 2021; Sudin, 2011, as cited in

Chuah et al., 2021). Organizations with environmentally aware and competent employees are better positioned to implement and sustain green practices (Barakat et al., 2023).

However, many public sector organizations face challenges related to skills development (Islam et al., 2019). Investing in environmental knowledge and skills through targeted training programs is vital for building the necessary competence for GHRM implementation (Barakat et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2023). The next section compares factors influencing GHRM adoption and implementation in both the public and private sectors.

Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Sector GHRM

Table 1 compares the factors influencing GHRM adoption and implementation in the public and private sectors, drawing from existing literature (Chioma et al., 2023; Johnson, 2019; Murphy & Gouldson, 2020; Ndlovu & Dlamini, 2021; Sebidi, 2022; UN, 2021; Usman et al., 2025; Wijethilake & Lama, 2019). This analysis highlights the distinct contexts shaping GHRM practices in each sector.

Table 1: Comparison of Factors Influencing GHRM in Public and Private Sectors

Factor	Public Sector	Private Sector
Primary Drivers	Policy mandates, public image, long-term cost savings (UN, 2021; Usman et al., 2025)	Profitability, competitive advantage, stakeholder pressure (Murphy & Gouldson, 2020; Wijethilake & Lama, 2019)
Key Challenges	Bureaucracy, resistance to change, resource constraints, political influence (Chioma et al., 2023; Ndlovu & Dlamini, 2021)	Upfront costs, balancing economic/environmental goals, measuring ROI
Leadership Influence	Top management/political will, transformational leadership crucial (Darka, 2024; Goni et al., 2023)	Executive commitment, ethical leadership key (Ren et al., 2020; Wijethilake & Lama, 2019)
Organizational Culture	Bureaucratic, compliance-focused, potential for public service ethos (Madukoma et al., 2021; Hastuti & Muafi, 2022)	Varied, potentially more flexible, market-driven, innovation-focused (Marija & Marija, 2023; Fayyaz et al., 2025)
Employee Engagement	Driven by public service values, potential for lower initiative (Hastuti & Muafi, 2022; Graham et al., 2023)	Linked to job satisfaction/retention, driving innovation (Hastuti & Muafi, 2022; Chuah et al., 2021)
Resource Allocation	Budget-constrained, influenced by political priorities (Ndlovu & Dlamini, 2021)	ROI-driven, potential for greater investment
Focus of Implementation	National environmental policies, resource efficiency in operations (Usman et al., 2025)	Varied by industry, market-driven initiatives

Source: Literature review.

Primary drivers for GHRM differ significantly. Public sector adoption is mainly driven by policy mandates, public image, and long-term cost savings (UN, 2021; Usman et al., 2025), whereas the private sector is motivated by profitability, competitive advantage, and stakeholder pressure (Murphy & Gouldson, 2020; Wijethilake & Lama, 2019). Key challenges also vary, with the public sector facing bureaucracy and resource constraints (Chioma et al., 2023; Ndlovu & Dlamini, 2021), while the private sector grapples with upfront costs and balancing economic with environmental goals. Leadership influence in the public sector hinges on top management and political will (Darka, 2024; Goni et al., 2023), contrasting with the private sector's emphasis on executive commitment and ethical leadership (Ren et al., 2020; Wijethilake & Lama, 2019).

Organizational culture in the public sector tends to be bureaucratic and compliance-focused (Madukoma et al., 2021; Hastuti & Muafi, 2022), unlike the more varied and potentially flexible cultures in the private sector (Marija & Marija, 2023; Fayyaz et al., 2025). Employee engagement in the public sector is often tied to public service values (Hastuti & Muafi, 2022; Graham et al., 2023), while in the private sector, it is linked to job satisfaction and innovation (Hastuti & Muafi, 2022; Chuah et al., 2021). Resource allocation in the public sector is budget-constrained (Ndlovu & Dlamini, 2021), compared to the private sector's ROI-driven approach.

Finally, the focus of implementation differs, with the public sector emphasizing national environmental policies (Usman et al., 2025) and the private sector adopting varied, market-driven initiatives. This necessitates tailored strategies for promoting sustainability in each sector, acknowledging their unique characteristics. The results and key findings of this study are presented in the next section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

This study explored the multifaceted factors influencing the adoption and implementation of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) within public sector organizations in Zimbabwe. The findings, derived from a combination of a review of related literature, quantitative survey data and qualitative interview insights, show a complex landscape characterized by both opportunities and significant challenges. Comparative analysis with existing literature on public and private sector GHRM provides crucial context for understanding these results.

Organizational Culture: A Barrier to Green Initiatives

The survey data summarized in Table 2, shows a prevailing sentiment of a neutral to slightly negative organizational culture concerning the prioritization of environmental sustainability. Specifically, a substantial 65% of respondents either disagreed (35%) or strongly disagreed (30%) with the statement that their institution inspires context-specific innovative and sustainable practices. This suggests that over half of the surveyed public sector employees perceive a greater emphasis on traditional service delivery rather than environmental concerns.

Table 2. Quantitative survey results on public sector employees' perceptions.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1. My institution inspires context-specific innovative and sustainable practices.	30	35	20	10	5
2. There is decentralization of decision-making related to environmental initiatives in my organization.	42	28	14	12	4
3. Leaders in my organization encourage commitment to environmental sustainability.	25	30	25	15	5
4. We have enough financial and infrastructural resources to sustain green initiatives.	40	40	10	7	3
5. Green HRM practices have enhanced my inspiration and job satisfaction.	32	43	15	6	4

Source: Survey data, 2025.

This quantitative finding is strongly supported by qualitative data, with interviewees consistently describing a cultural resistance to GHRM, often perceived as secondary to core organizational objectives. The illustrative quote, "*Sustainability isn't our core business*," encapsulates this sentiment.

This finding aligns with prior literature, such as Sebidi's (2022) work highlighting bureaucratic public sector cultures that can impede innovation and the integration of sustainability principles. In contrast, Murphy and Gouldson (2020) suggest that the profit-driven and stakeholder-conscious cultures prevalent in the private sector often serve as stronger catalysts for environmental stewardship. The observed cultural inertia within the Zimbabwean public sector underscores the imperative for a significant and deliberate cultural shift to effectively embed environmental values within organizational norms and practices.

Organizational Structure: The Constraint of Centralized Decision-Making

A significant majority of respondents expressed a strong perception of centralized decision-making concerning environmental initiatives. An overwhelming 70% of participants either disagreed (28%) or strongly disagreed (42%) with the statement regarding the decentralization of environmental decision-making within their

organizations. This lack of autonomy, particularly for lower-level employees, was consistently echoed in the interview data. Participants frequently cited the need for top management approval as a major impediment to the timely implementation of green initiatives, exemplified by the statement, "*It's always a taxing and teasing mainly because of the need to get approval from top management before anything else can be done. Worse still the process is thwart progress*."

This hierarchical structure stands in stark contrast to the more agile and decentralized management models often found in the private sector, which Murphy and Gouldson (2020) suggest facilitate a more rapid adoption of innovative practices. The bureaucratic nature of the public sector, as highlighted by Madukoma et al. (2021), appears to stifle the flexibility and responsiveness critical for successful GHRM implementation. This centralized approach may limit employee engagement and ownership of green initiatives at lower levels.

Leadership: Passive Agreement Over Active Championing

While regression analysis ($\beta = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$) identified leadership as a statistically significant positive predictor of GHRM readiness, the general perception of active leadership support varied based on the survey responses in Table 2. A combined 55% of respondents disagreed (30%) or strongly disagreed (25%) with the notion that leaders in their organization encourage commitment to environmental sustainability. This indicates that a slight majority perceive a lack of proactive leadership in driving environmental agendas. Qualitative data corroborated this, revealing a tendency towards passive agreement rather than active championing of green initiatives, as illustrated by the respondent's comment, "*Support tends to be passive rather than active.*"

This contrasts with the entrepreneurial and often more environmentally proactive leadership styles frequently observed in the private sector (Wijethilake & Lama, 2019). The transactional leadership styles potentially more prevalent in the public sector (Johnson, 2019) may prioritize adherence to regulations over the transformational vision required to truly embed sustainability within the organizational ethos. Cultivating more active, committed, and visionary environmental leadership is crucial for driving meaningful GHRM implementation.

Resource Availability: A Critical Impediment

Both the quantitative and qualitative data paint a consistent picture of a significant lack of financial and infrastructural resources to support green initiatives within the surveyed public sector organizations. A substantial 80% of respondents either disagreed (40%) or strongly disagreed (40%) with the statement that they have enough financial and infrastructural resources to sustain green initiatives. This overwhelming perception of resource scarcity was consistently highlighted in the interview data, with frequent mentions of "*Budget restrictions are a main issue*" and "*a lack of the technical expertise hinder progress across departments…*"

This resource constraint aligns with the well-documented challenges faced by public organizations, as noted by Ndlovu and Dlamini (2021). The often-greater financial flexibility and access to technology in the private sector create a significant disparity. The inherent costs associated with adopting green technologies and implementing sustainable practices represent a major hurdle for public sector organizations in Zimbabwe.

Competence and Training: A Significant Deficiency

The survey results overwhelmingly indicate a significant gap in GHRM-related training. A combined 75% of respondents either disagreed (43%) or strongly disagreed (32%) with the statement that green HRM practices have enhanced their inspiration and job satisfaction, which can be indirectly linked to a lack of understanding and competence in these practices. Furthermore, the narrative explicitly states that 75-80% of respondents reported insufficient training related to GHRM. This lack of capacity building was consistently echoed in the interviews, with participants emphasizing the absence of "*clear and specific, formalized training among employees…*"

This deficiency in targeted GHRM training contrasts sharply with the private sector, which often invests more readily in employee development as a source of competitive advantage. The lack of adequate G.HRM training

in the public sector, as emphasized by Barakat et al. (2023), represents a fundamental obstacle to the effective implementation and employee buy-in of green initiatives.

Implementation and Impact: The Absence of Systematic Measurement

The survey data suggests a limited perceived effect of current GHRM practices on employee enthusiasm and organizational performance. The fact that a combined **75%** of respondents either disagreed (43%) or strongly disagreed (32%) that GHRM practices have enhanced their inspiration and job satisfaction implies a lack of tangible positive impact. This is further reinforced by interview data indicating a corresponding absence of systematic measurement and metrics, as highlighted by the quote, *" I haven't systematically measured the effect…"*

This lack of impact assessment hampers the potential of public sector organizations to prove the value and justify the continuation and development of GHRM initiatives. This contrasts with the private sector, where the measurement of key performance indicators (KPIs) is more commonly used for strategic decision-making. Establishing clear KPIs and robust monitoring frameworks is indispensable for building a strong case for GHRM within the public sector.

Cross-sector Learning: An Opportunity for Advancement

Qualitative insights showed a dominant perception among public sector participants that the private sector possesses more advanced GHRM practices, driven by stronger incentives and more adaptable organizational structures, as commented by one of the HR Manager, *"Private sector appear to have more reputable strategies."* This recognition presents a valuable opportunity for the Zimbabwean public sector to learn and adapt best practices from the private sector, particularly in areas such as aligning sustainability with core organizational goals and effectively incentivizing employee engagement. However, it is crucial to recognize and adjust these learning practices to the unique operational contexts and mandates of public sector organizations, as highlighted by Usman et al. (2025).

Overall, the discussion the discussion of these results and key findings consistently reveal that Zimbabwe's public sector faces significant interconnected challenges in implementing GHRM. These include a culture not strongly oriented towards sustainability, bureaucratic structures hindering agility, inconsistent leadership engagement, substantial resource limitations, a lack of necessary employee competencies, and an absence of systematic impact measurement. While the private sector offers potential learning opportunities, successful GHRM adoption in the public sector necessitates targeted interventions focusing on cultural transformation, structural reform, leadership development, resource mobilization, capacity building, and the establishment of robust evaluation mechanisms.

The Proposed Conceptual Framework:

In view of the literature reviewed, a conceptual framework was developed. Organisational culture, organisational structure, leadership, resources and competence were used as variables for reviewing. This framework is constructed upon the reviewed literature, which consistently suggests a positive and significant relationship between each of these factors and the successful adoption of GHRM. From the discussion, it emerged that all the variables identified have a positive and significant influence in the implementation of green human resource management practices in the public sector. The relationship is visually represented in Figure 2. The framework posits that the implementation of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) within public sector organizations is significantly influenced by five key interrelated variables: organizational culture, organizational structure, leadership, resource availability, and employee competence. practices.

Relevance of the proposed Conceptual Framework

The applicability of this conceptual framework to the present study on Zimbabwean public sector organizations is paramount. Each identified variable provides a critical lens through which to analyze the findings from the quantitative survey data presented in Table 2 and the qualitative interview insights.
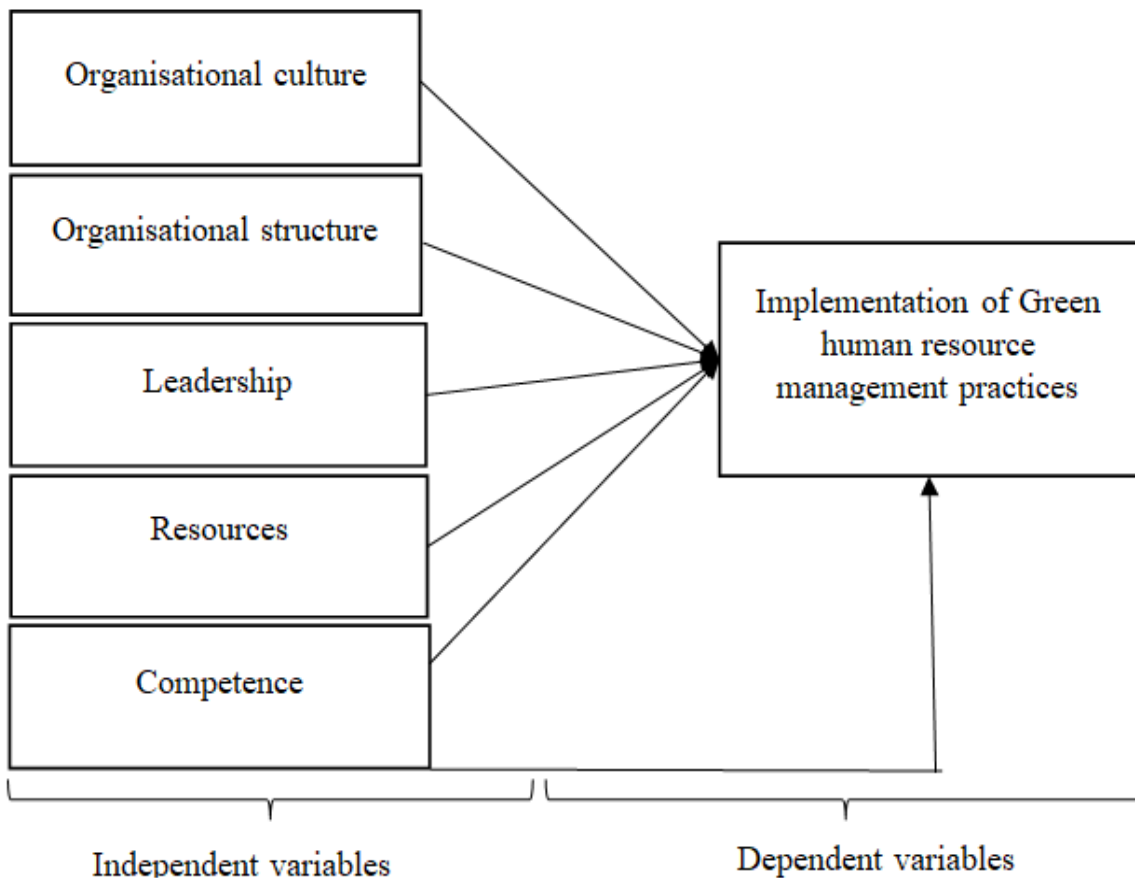
Figure 2: Factors affecting green human resource management implementation

Source (Authors' construction)

- **Organizational Culture:** The framework suggests that an organization's prevailing beliefs, norms, and values regarding environmental sustainability will significantly impact the adoption of green practices. In this study, the survey results indicating a neutral to slightly negative perception of the organizational culture's support for sustainability (Table 2, item 1) directly align with this framework. The interview data further illuminates the cultural resistance to GHRM, viewing it as extraneous, thus substantiating the framework's proposition that a non-supportive culture acts as a barrier.

- **Organizational Structure:** The framework posits that the structure of an organization, particularly its degree of centralization and formalization, will influence the speed and effectiveness of GHRM implementation. The survey finding of a strong perception of centralized decision-making regarding environmental initiatives (Table 2, item 2) directly relates to this variable. Interviewees' experiences of bureaucratic bottlenecks due to the need for top management approval further exemplify how a hierarchical structure, as suggested by the framework, impedes the agile implementation of green concepts.

- **Leadership:** This framework also shows leadership as a crucial driver of GHRM implementation. The mixed perceptions of leadership support in the survey (Table 2, item 3), contrasted with regression analysis ($\beta = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$), suggest its positive influence on GHRM readiness, thereby underscoring the complexity of this variable within the study's context. The qualitative data indicating passive rather than active leadership engagement aligns with the framework's implication that the style and commitment of leaders significantly affect the prioritization and championing of green initiatives.

- **Resource Availability:** The necessity of adequate financial and infrastructural resources for GHRM implementation is strongly emphasized. For instance, the consistent highlighting of resource scarcity in both the survey (Table 2, item 4) and interview data directly supports this tenet of the framework. The challenges cited by interviewees, such as budget constraints and a lack of technical expertise, illustrate how resource limitations, as predicted by the framework, act as significant obstacles to adopting green practices.

- **Employee Competence:** Additionally, the framework recognizes the skills and knowledge of employees as essential for implementing GHRM. The overwhelming reporting of insufficient GHRM-related training in the narrative (77-85% of respondents) and the confirmation of a lack of formalized training programs in the interviews directly validate this component of the framework. The interviewees' acknowledgment of a lack of necessary skills underscores how a deficit in competence, as per the framework, hinders the effective execution of green initiatives.

In essence, the conceptual framework provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the factors at play in the implementation of GHRM within the Zimbabwean public sector. The findings of this study, derived from both quantitative and qualitative data, consistently align with the relationships proposed in the framework, thereby demonstrating its applicability and relevance to this specific context. The framework serves as a valuable tool for interpreting the study's results and for formulating targeted recommendations to enhance GHRM adoption in the public sector.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to explore factors influencing the implementation of green human resource management (GHRM) practices in public sector organisations through reviewing related literature. The findings are symptomatic that the need for all organisations in promoting environmental sustainability cannot be overlooked. It emerged that GHRM practices are rarely considered a strategic tool in public sector organisations. The study provided valuable insights into the factors that constrain the implementation of GHRM in the public service. The findings revealed an influence of organisational culture in the practice of green human resource management. In this case, the state of beliefs, norms or values determine the adoption and implementation of the green concept in an organisation. In simple terms, rigid culture as in the majority of public sector organisations retard green innovations as compared to flexible ones.

It also emerged that the state of organisational structure has a bearing in the implementation of green human resource management practices in the public service. For instance, tall organisational structures which are bureaucratic, formalised, centralised with rigid rules tend to delay implementation of green concepts decisions as compared to flat structures that are more flexible. This is because flat organisational structures respond to environmental changes faster than tall structures. Additionally, leadership emerged to be one of the factors which influences the implementation of green human resource management practices. In this case, while there are various styles of leadership, transformational leadership emerged to be much more suitable for the implementation of green concepts in organisations. However, due to rigid bureaucratic nature of organisational structures and regulations governing operations of public sector organisations, green human resource management practices remain difficult to implement.

The review also revealed the influence of both financial and physical resources in implementing green human resource management practices in the public sector. It emerged that the implementation of green concepts in organisations is costly in terms of financial injection to cover infrastructure development and maintenance in addition to pay for skills involved. Therefore, since most public sector organisations are not-for-profit making, investing in green human resource management practices becomes expensive. Competence in the form of skills and knowledge for implementing green human resource management practices also emerged as one of the critical ingredients. However, it emerged that in the public service, skills for such green concepts are still lacking due to many reasons which include remuneration and innovativeness culture. As a result, the implementation of the concept remains far from execution.

The study is relevant as it contributes to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 12 and 13 which emphasise the importance of sanitation, clean energy, responsible production and consumption, and urgent action to combat climate change (UN, 2021). This is important because the implementation of GHRM practices may generate a positive multiplier effect on society when employees, as members of society, are aware of green policies and pursue environmental sustainability by demonstrating pro-environmental behaviours within and outside their organisations. Such practices can create synergies within society in achieving environmental sustainability by protecting the planet, people and profits. Additionally, the review has theoretical implications for the practice of GHRM. With reference to theoretical implications, a conceptual

framework was developed from the findings of the review which can be used as a guide by organisations as they adopt and implement green human resource practices. However, further research is recommended with a different methodology proffering strategies for implementing green human resources management practices in the public service given the challenges at play.

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