SUSTAINABLE GREEN PRACTICES AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

Many environmental problems have surfaced over the past few decades, prompting governments worldwide to mandate that businesses implement environmental management programs alongside their regular activities. As the world's natural resources are being exploited at an alarming rate, governments around the world have instituted Environmental Protection policies to ensure that businesses adhere to environmental standards. Managing human resources in an environmentally responsible way is a relatively new concept many businesses adopt today. In addition to more traditional forms of corporate social responsibility (CSR), many modern businesses have adopted "Green HR" policies as part of their HRM strategies in order to raise workers' awareness of their individual roles in environmental management. The university plays a unique part in both the community and the natural world. Green initiatives have been developed at many universities to aid environmentally conscious students and staff, but full green HRM policy implementation is unrealistic at this time. This study will aid in determining the extent to which Green HRM practices are being implemented at the academic institution and in identifying the conventional green practices implemented at such institutions. The university or college will benefit from this because of its commitment to environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainable, Green Practices, Higher Education, Employees, Saudi Arabia.

INTRODUCTION

Several significant growth trends have occurred in Middle East higher education over the past few decades (Jabbour et al., 2017). As the primary driver of job creation, innovation, and consumer spending, education is essential to any nation's long-term economic success (Dlamini, T., & Tsabedze, 2022). These tendencies include, for instance, the increasing commercialization and commodification of higher education, which in turn promotes the emergence of a new breed of world-class universities that actively pursue internationalization and a place at the top of various global league tables (Elmasry, 2010). Sustainability has become a significant concern worldwide, including in Saudi Arabia, where the government is taking steps to reduce carbon emissions and increase the use of renewable energy. However, sustainability is not limited to government actions; individuals and organizations also have a role to play. This is particularly true in the context of higher education, where employees can implement sustainable practices that contribute to a greener campus and a more sustainable future (Alqahtany & Aravindakshan, 2022). Sustainability practices at the level of HEIs are still in their infancy (Alkhayyal et al., 2019). The strength of a country's economy can be inferred in part from the caliber of its higher education institutions, making higher education important for the growth of any nation. In order to better integrate sustainability into universities' missions, strategies, curricula, and day-to-day operations, university administrators and sustainability practitioners are looking into a variety of options (Muftahu, 2022). The sustainability practices of HEIs range from centralized "*top-down*" national policies to decentralized "*bottom-up*" institutional voluntary practices. It is challenging

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to determine which model of sustainability practices is best for HEIs due to the diversity of political and educational settings (Maryam & Suhong, 2023).

That's why it's important for academics and professionals to pay attention to case studies of various sustainability strategies (Mader et al., 2013). When using international/regional assessment tools to evaluate their sustainability efforts, HEIs tend to place more vital on environmental goals than social and financial goals. An environmental sustainability evaluation tool in Saudi Arabia is heavily focused on environmental management. The goal of Saudi Vision 2030 is to make long-term improvements in the country's social, economic, and environmental conditions. In the context of Saudi Arabia's long-term development goals, one of Saudi Vision 2030's primary objectives is to define appropriate curricula in light of projected labor market demands. This also involves making investments in strategic alliances with public and private sector providers of apprenticeship programs (Stephens et al., 2008). This article provides a critical analysis of how employees at public universities in Saudi Arabia respond to the Sustainable Development Goals by assessing the policies and selected practices adopted to achieve and promote the sustainable development advocated by the Kingdom. This is done against the backdrop of the broader political economy context and in response to the demands of case investigation of sustainability practices in HEIs. Sustainability accounting and practices are discussed, but it is argued that more needs to be done to spread awareness of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. If colleges and universities are serious about implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), then institutional leadership should reflect that in substantive ways. These shifts are necessary to address the unintended consequences of massification, privatization, and internationalization of higher education and pave the way for achieving the SDGs, which go beyond the traditional definition of sustainability to encompass a broader concept of sustainable development. Increased sustainability in higher education administration (Neubauer et al., 2017) necessitates a greater emphasis on building resilience and managing risks.

REVIEW LITERATURE

One study examined the sustainable practices among employees of a university in Saudi Arabia (Alomar et al., 2022). To address this issue, the university implemented a sustainability program that included training sessions and workshops for employees to raise awareness and build knowledge about sustainable practices. The program also included the establishment of a sustainability committee comprised of employees from different departments, which helped to encourage and implement sustainable practices throughout the university (Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030–Kaust Sustainability, n.d.). One example of a sustainable practice implemented by the university employees was reducing paper usage. Employees were encouraged to use digital documents instead of printing, and the university implemented a system to reduce unnecessary printing. Another example was the implementation of a recycling program, where employees were encouraged to separate their waste and recycle materials such as paper, plastic, and glass (Rajab, 2018). Another study conducted by Althunibat et al. (2020) examined the attitudes and behavior of employees towards sustainable practices in four different universities in Saudi Arabia. The study found that employees had a positive attitude towards sustainability, but there was a gap between attitudes and behavior. For example, although employees recognized the importance of recycling, they did not always engage in recycling behavior (Almulhim & Abubakar, 2021). The study recommended the implementation of sustainability programs that target specific behaviors and provide employees with the necessary tools and resources to engage

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in sustainable practices effectively. The study also recommended the use of incentives to encourage employees to engage in sustainable practices, such as recognition programs and rewards. Hence, these studies demonstrate the importance of implementing sustainability programs in higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia to promote sustainable practices among employees. These programs can include training and workshops to build knowledge and awareness, the establishment of sustainability committees, and the implementation of sustainable practices such as reducing paper usage and recycling (Khan et al., 2020).

Several studies found that employees had a positive attitude towards sustainability and were willing to engage in sustainable practices (Fanea-Ivanovici & Baber, 2022). However, the study also found that there was a lack of knowledge and awareness about sustainable practices among the employees, which hindered their ability to engage in sustainable practices effectively (Aronsson et al., 2022). Pollution levels have risen dramatically over the past two decades due to rapid technological and industrial growth, IoT (Suhluli & Ali Khan, 2022), advancement in tourism industry (Medabesh & Khan, 2019) are expected to continue, making future disasters like tsunamis, landslides, industrial smog, etc. more likely(Vidal, 2016). The bright side, is that scientists, ecologists, activists, and others of like mind have made great strides in the 21st century. All levels of society are aware of these potentially catastrophic events long before they render our planet uninhabitable. Because they satisfy our insatiable desires, researchers have no choice but to keep the industries and businesses running (Blumenfeld, 2022). Therefore, alternative measures must be taken to safeguard Earth for future generations. Educating the public on the importance of environmental responsibility is crucial if researcher want them to practice eco-friendliness in the ways that are most beneficial to the planet (Aziz et al., 2020; Muster, 2011). Organizations do not exist in isolation from society (Gumbo, 2014). It's not just about making money; as a social institution, it has a duty to consider the researcher fare of others and the environment. For the sake of long-term viability, governments worldwide-especially in developed and developing countries-have enacted a variety of Environmental Protection policies and laws mandating their adoption by all businesses and organizations (A Sustainable Saudi Vision-Vision, 2030). Organizations and businesses are adapting by shifting their focus from financial gain to broader social, environmental, and economic sustainability. Each company saw the need to make changes to its standard operating procedures and company culture in order to better safeguard its employees and the surrounding environment (Aramco, 2022). There should be no harm done to the natural world or the community as a result of such business practices. With the hope of mitigating the damage that can come from exploiting the environment, they've set environmental management goals to go along with their business objectives (News Arab, 2022). The HRM team is instrumental in the company's efforts to achieve its environmental management objectives. In addition to more traditional forms of corporate social responsibility (CSR), many modern businesses have included "*Green HR*" policies in their efforts to raise staff members' environmental consciousness (Al-Ghazali & Afsar, 2020).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Sustainable Human Resource Practices

Sustainable development and corporate sustainability debates gave rise to the academic concept of green human resource management (Green HRM or GHRM) Mirriam (2022); Matthews et al. (2018) concept that "*if a firm is to adopt an eco- friendly attitude to its practices, the employees are the determining factor in its success or failure*" is often cited as the starting

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point (Welford, 1997). The Human Resource Management facets of Environmental Management is one of the most frequently cited definitions of GHRM(Renwick et al., 2013) According to a more inclusive definition, GHRM is "*observable behaviors framework for understanding relationship between the organizational activities that impact the physical surroundings and the design, evolution, implementation, and influence of HRM systems*" (Ren et al., 2018). Some of GHRM's aims are to raise awareness among workers about environmental problems on a global scale through the implementation of proposal schemes, to educate workers on how to adopt greener practices, and to inspire workers to find and participate in sustainable initiatives (Shah et al., 2021).

H_1: *Sustainable Human Resource Practices has significant influence on employee towards green practices.*

Sustainable practices in Hiring and Selection

That means trees cut down in the process of hiring (Jepsen & Grob, 2015). A study conducted in UK illustrates that HR department plans the hiring procedure to minimize the time, money, and effort spent on finding and interviewing potential employees (Aragão & Jabbour, 2017). According many recent college grads evaluate the quality of an employer's position based on the company's environmental performance and reputation (Abidi & Faisal AU Khan, 2018). It has been hypothesized that a company's ability to promote itself as an environmentally responsible employer contributes to its public profile and helps it attract and retain top talent. In a competitive job market, where it's already difficult to stand out from the crowd, green recruiting presents an opportunity to do just that. Green recruiting not only increases chances of attracting and selling candidates, but it also gives a chance to do part in helping the planet by demonstrating to upper management the monetary impact this strategy has on candidate attraction, employee retention, and product sales (Sullivan, 2007).

H_2: *Sustainable practices in Hiring and Selection has significant influence on employee towards green practices.*

Education and Development for a Sustainable Future

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) created the field of "*education for sustainable development*" (ESD) in response to the urgent and dramatic problems our planet is facing. As a result of human activity, the planet's ecosystems have changed in ways that are increasingly difficult to reverse, putting our very survival in jeopardy. In order to prevent global warming from reaching catastrophic proportions, it is necessary to take a comprehensive approach to solving the problem. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for 2030 is an education program created by UNESCO with the goal of bringing about the necessary individual and societal transformation to alter current trends (UNESCO, 2022). An immediate need exists for the development of high-caliber educational programs that emphasize environmental stewardship and the solution of problems related to sustainable development. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and KSA's Vision 2030 both recognize the connection betweenn education and achieving sustainable development goals, which researcher have observed to be very significant. Before diving into our analysis of ESD in the context of Saudi Arabia, researcher provides a brief history of the concept and its development below (Essa & Harvey, 2022).

H_3: *Education and Development for a Sustainable Future has significant influence on employee towards green practices.*

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Sustainability Performance Management

Assessment and disclosure of organizational performance data, as researcher responsibility to internal and external stakeholders working toward sustainable development, are all topics covered by sustainability performance management. This phrase describes economic growth that strikes a balance between meeting human needs and safeguarding the environment in order to ensure that these needs can be addressed in the present as the future (4.0, 2022). In order to determine if the company is capable of creating value through the efficient management of its intangible assets, the evaluation was undertaken with an emphasis on the intangibles of human capital and corporate education. In the final stages of review and testing, it gives a diagnosis suggestion for frameworks in corporate education that was developed by the researcher and tested in a pilot study (Medabesh & Khan, 2020; Park & Krause, 2021).

H_4: *Sustainability Performance Management has significant influence on employee towards green practices.*

Compensation and Benefits that are Consistent with Environmental Values

Green compensation and reward have been defined as a firm should applaud and respect the efforts of employees in achieving sustainable advantage and provide them with incentives and rewards; in this way, the organization will attain sustainable advantage and personnel will also be motivated (Abidi & Khan, 2022; Kuo et al., 2022). In the framework of Green HRM, incentives and remuneration are regarded to be possible instruments for encouraging environmental initiatives within organizations. Modern firms are implementing incentive programs to encourage staff to undertake eco-friendly actions. This is backed by a survey performed by CIPD/KPMG in the United Kingdom, which found that 8% of UK businesses promote green behavior with various sorts of prizes or financial incentives (Phillips, 2007), and these practices can be beneficial in inspiring staff to produce Eco initiatives (Ramus, 2002). According to a related research by Forman and Jorgensen (2001) on the significance of employee participation in environmental programs, employee commitment to environment management programs increased when they researcher compensated for assuming environmental responsibility-related responsibilities (Mandago, 2018).

H_5: *Compensation and Benefits that are Consistent with Environmental Values has significant influence on employee towards green practices.*

Sustainable Employee Relations

Employees are essential partners in building an organization's human and social capital, and they provide invaluable insight and support for HR professionals as they work to create and implement sustainable HRM practices. The widespread prevalence of layoffs and job cuts in today's business landscape has given rise to substantial human resource challenges. The rules governing employer-employee interactions are always changing in various jurisdictions. Employees and employers alike are worried about workplace discrimination, safety, privacy rights, etc. There is growing pressure for businesses to act ethically and responsibly toward their communities. Some of this pressure comes from society in its capacity as an organization stakeholder. A company's employees constitute a major interest group, and the company itself is a stakeholder in human resource management. The demands of society are reflected in a variety of spheres, including the legal framework within which organizations function, the social mores under which those organizations function, and the limits imposed by the natural environment. In other words, sustainable human resource management refers to interactions among working-class

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communities and society at large that are facilitated by institutional frameworks designed to boost business results while also catering to workers' broader needs for safety, security.

H_6: *Sustainable Employee Relations has significant influence on employee towards green practices.*

Research Methodology

A cross-sectional survey was conducted in 2022 at five different Saudi universities, and those results are being used here. Multi-stage systematic sampling was used to select the working women with advanced degrees for the study. Five Saudi Arabian universities, both public and private, researcher chosen in the first phase. There are five universities in the country, including Jazan University, King Abdulaziz University, King Saud University (Public University), Effat University, and the Arab Open University (Private University). In the end, 100 students volunteered (100x5=500). Each university's respondent's researcher selected at random to ensure that no one was favored over another. The questionnaire consisted of seven modules, the first of which gathered demographic data and individual characteristics (such as marital status and number of children), and the remaining six of which probed deeper into the factors at play; Sustainable Human Resource Practices, Sustainability in Hiring and Selection, Education and Development for a Sustainable Future, Sustainability Performance Management, Compensation and Benefits that are Consistent with Environmental Values and Sustainable Employee Relations, are the six areas for which statistics on women's empowerment are compiled. Questionnaires used to gauge the opinions and perspectives of respondents typically include a rating scale designed for use with Likert-type questions. Validity (convergent and discriminant) and trustworthiness can be calculated using SmartPLS. Beautiful visual results can be obtained with PLS. The results can be adjusted to suit various purposes. With the help of SmartPLS, the researcher can easily analyze the data provided by the participants in the study and produce reliable, consistent findings. When differences in responses are determined more by the instruments used to collect the data, rather than the respondents' true dispositions, Common Method Bias (CMB) occurs. When differences in responses are determined more by the instruments used to collect the data, rather than the respondents' true dispositions, Common Method Bias (CMB) occurs. When evaluating the cohesiveness of a set of items, or their "*internal consistency*," researchers often turn to Cronbach's alpha. Composite reliability is a measure of the consistency among individual scale items. The definition of a variance (AVE) is the median of the squared differences from the mean.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Due to its suitability for analyzing small sample sizes, SmartPLS 4 was used to perform data analysis in the present study, allowing the researchers to achieve their aims (Chin et al. 2003). Measurement and structure evaluation follows a two-stage process. "*Common method bias (CMB) is the bias that is ascribable to the measurement technique rather than the constructs the measures represents*" (Podsakoff et al., 2003). All items from all constructs researcher collapsed into a single factor, and the total common variance explained was 47.73%, which is less than 50%. Therefore, the data set was not significantly affected by the prevalent method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

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Models of measurement assessment

Internal consistency, convergent validity, and indiscriminant validity of the measurement model researcher analyzed. Evidence of convergent validity demonstrates "*the extent to which various measures refer to the same conceptual construct*" (Dinev & Hart, 2004).

Results & Discussion

Measurement Model

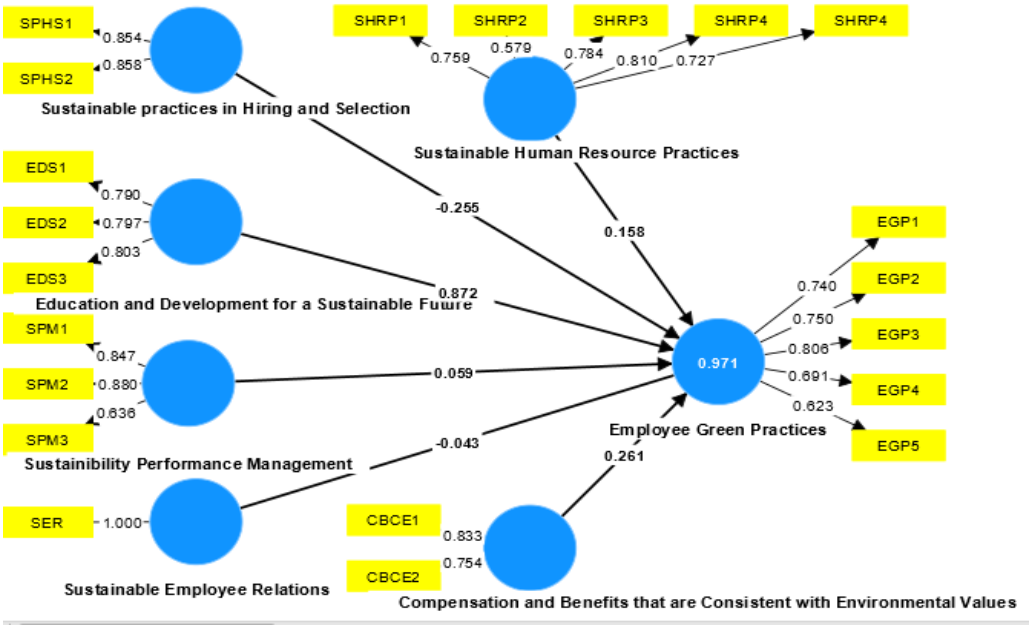

FIGURE 1
SEM MODEL

The measurement model in structural equation modelling (SEM) is used to evaluate the quality and dependability of our measurement instruments, such as questionnaires, surveys, and other evaluation tools Figure 1. The measurement model assesses the accuracy of the observed variables (indicators) used to measure the latent constructs (factors) of our model.

By evaluating the measurement model, researcher can determine the dependability and validity of our measurements, which impacts the quality and precision of our structural model. A effective measurement model is required for accurate predictions and hypothesis testing in SEM.

Values extracted from a measurement model in SMART PLS include factor loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and cross-loadings. These values are employed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the measures and to identify any potential issues, such as item redundancy, measurement error, or construct validity issues.

As researcher have used moderator as a variable to understand attitude towards sustainability and intention to practice sustainability in order to understand the relationship among a variable and a dependent variable, researcher can now determine the relationship between the variable and the dependent variable. Consequently, it can either enhance or researcher taken the bond. By investigating the interaction effect with the independent variable, the moderator, and the dependent variable, the effect of a moderator can be determined.

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Construct Reliability

Table 1
CONSTRUCT RELIABILITY

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
CBCE	0.920	0.93	0.943	0.806
EDSF	0.778	0.779	0.900	0.818
EGP	0.953	0.961	0.959	0.664
SER	0.896	0.909	0.928	0.765
SHRP	0.855	0.880	0.901	0.696
SPHS	0.905	0.925	0.931	0.731
SPM	0.920	0.961	0.959	0.806

Construct reliability is the degree to which a measurement instrument (e.g., a questionnaire) consistently measures the same underlying construct (e.g., customer satisfaction) Table 1. It evaluates the extent to which observed scores on a set of items (indicators) accurately and dependably represent the latent construct being measured. For measuring the fundamental construct, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were utilized. Observed alpha values greater than 0.920 and composite reliability greater than 0.961 indicate greater reliability. On the other hand, values larger than 0.5 are deemed acceptable, so the AVE value notices are greater than 0.818, indicating greater reliability.

Discriminant Validity

Table 2
DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY OF THE CONSTRUCTS

Discriminant validity - Fornell-Larcker criterion	CBCE	EDSF	EGP	SER	SHRP	SPHS	SPM
CBCE	0.895						
EDSF	0.811	0.986					
EGP	0.862	0.962	0.725				
SER	0.532	0.686	0.686	1.000			
SHRP	0.505	0.648	0.720	0.642	0.736		
SPHS	0.798	0.926	0.870	0.582	0.579	0.856	
SPM	0.681	0.706	0.749	0.657	0.682	0.719	0.795

The statistical concept of discriminant validity is used to determine whether or not two or more constructs are distinct from one another Table 2. It assures that two distinct measures do not measure the same underlying concept. The purpose of discriminant validity is to demonstrate that the measures used to evaluate distinct constructs measure distinct entities. Using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct is compared to the correlation between constructs. Establishing discriminant validity if the AVE of each construct is greater than the correlation between the constructs. Therefore, the Fornell-Larcker criterion values qualify for discriminant validity.

Hypothesis Testing

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Table 3
HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Total effects - Mean, STDEV, T values, p values	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV))	P values
CBCE-> EGP	0.261	0.262	0.083	3.133	0.002
ED SF ->EGP	0.872	0.860	0.107	8.183	0.000
SER ->EGP	-0.043	-0.043	0.044	0.983	0.325
SHRP ->EGP	0.158	0.151	0.039	4.082	0.000
SPHS->EGP	-0.255	-0.244	0.088	2.894	0.249

In Smart PLS, assessing hypotheses involves evaluating the significance of the relationships between the structural model's constructs Table 3. This is possible through a bootstrapping analysis, which estimates the standard errors and confidence intervals of the path coefficients. To create a hypothesis test in Smart PLS, the following stages may be followed: Provide the null and alternative hypotheses for every path coefficient in the structural model. We estimate the standard errors and confidence intervals of the path coefficients through a bootstrapping analysis. Hence, significance is determined by evaluating the t-values and p-values of the path coefficients. If the p-value is less than the specified significance level (for example, 0.05), then the alternative hypothesis can be accepted and the null hypothesis rejected. Hence, H1, H2, H4 and H5 are accepted whereas H3 and H6 are rejected.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of sustainable green practices in higher education institutions is becoming increasingly important in today's world. Green human resource management (GHRM) plays a critical role in promoting sustainability practices among employees. The five main areas of sustainable green practices in higher education employees, including sustainable human resource practices, sustainable practices in hiring and selection, education and development for a sustainable future, sustainability performance management, and compensation and benefits consistent with environmental values, are critical for promoting sustainable practices among employees.

Sustainable human resource practices, such as sustainable recruitment and selection practices, can help attract and retain top talent while also promoting environmental responsibility. Education and development programs for a sustainable future, such as education for sustainable development, are critical for promoting environmental awareness among employees. Sustainability performance management can help organizations assess and disclose their sustainability performance data, which is critical for achieving sustainable development goals. Compensation and benefits consistent with environmental values can be an effective tool for promoting eco-initiatives among employees.

Sustainable employee relations are essential to building a sustainable and green workplace culture. Higher education institutions need to recognize the importance of implementing sustainable green practices among their employees to promote environmental sustainability. By implementing GHRM practices, higher education institutions can play a leading role in promoting sustainable green practices not only among their employees but also among the communities they serve.

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