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JFSE Journal for Future Society and Education

JFSE | eISSN: 3078-6010 | Vol. 2 No. 3 (2025) | OPEN ACCESS

https://doi.org/10.3991/jfse.v2i3.54463

PAPER

# Gen Z Career Development: Using Green HRM as a Catalyst

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the ways in which green human resource management (GHRM) inspires Generation Z graduates to embark on sustainable careers. GHRM fosters environmental values in young professionals. Integrating GHRM in graduate programs equips students with sustainable leadership capabilities. The study employs a structural equation model (SEM) to compare graduate and current workers' views. This comparative approach offers deep insights into how GHRM impacts different groups. Findings reveal GHRM's effectiveness in promoting social responsibility within organizations. GHRM also enhances career development by aligning personal growth with sustainable goals. It supports a holistic approach to sustainability in both corporate and academic settings. The study identifies strategic pathways for implementing GHRM practices. It leverages existing gaps in GHRM literature to propose innovative solutions. GHRM is shown to prepare students to address complex environmental challenges. Firms are advantaged by potential employees who possess a sense of sustainability. SEM analysis identifies connections between GHRM, sustainability, and career growth. This study urges institutions to embrace GHRM practices. It helps in creating a workforce for the future that is sustainable.

**KEYWORDS**

green human resource management (GHRM), sustainability, generation Z, environmental stewardship, career development, structural equation model (SEM)

## 1 INTRODUCTION

There is a need to integrate sustainability into organizational practices today, especially in green human resource management (GHRM). Generation Z finds the trend appealing, as they are renowned for their technical skills as well as their passion for environmental conservation. This paper will analyze how GHRM can help Gen-Z professionals create sustainable career trajectories, most notably in graduate school. We will explore how businesses can use GHRM to create a workforce that sustains business success while maintaining high ethical standards of sustainability

Manoj, P., Sai, K. R., Sanjay, M., Jayakrishnan, B., Roshini, R. (2025). Gen Z Career Development: Using Green HRM as a Catalyst. *Journal for Future Society and Education (JFSE)*, 2(3), pp. 28–39. https://doi.org/10.3991/jfse.v2i3.54463

Article submitted 2025-01-16. Revision uploaded 2025-04-27. Final acceptance 2025-04-29.

and social well-being. This essay maintains that GHRM contributes enormously to determining workplace culture, worker motivation, and innovation. As the environment becomes more and more challenged and the demands of society, organizations are compelled to take up sustainable HR practices beyond the conventional profit motive, focusing on social and environmental costing. We seek to bring theory to practice by comparing graduate students and employees. Our study will ascertain the impact of GHRM on groups, demonstrating its part in generating sustainable employment. Our research seeks to improve discussion and management by examining the interconnection between GHRM, sustainability, and Generation Z careers. Our study integrates empirical data, concepts, and factual observations, presenting a basis for institutions to lead HRM practice in education and business, propelling towards a sustainable workforce.

## 2 RELATED WORK

Zuhair Abbas et al. research results show that "green training and development" (GTD) and "top management commitment towards greening workforce (TMCGW)" have a positive relationship with sustainability, while green recruitment and selection (GRS) was not supported by sustainability. The mediating effect of TMCGW plays a crucial role between GTD and sustainability. Also, this study contributes through the moderating interaction effect of gender between GTD and sustainability. Overall, the GHRM practices promote employee green behavior and sustainability [1]. As a sustainable instrument for business development, the Janhavi Parab research project on the subject of GHRM has emphasized the significance of incorporating sustainability into HR policies and practices. Through this approach, companies may advance sustainability, augment employee engagement and well-being, and bolster their competitive edge in the market. Creating guidelines that encourage the economical use of resources like electricity, water, and paper in order to cut expenses and enhance the organization's environmental performance [2]. The relationship between creating ecologically sustainable structures and GHRM is examined by Parida et al. (2023). The research highlights how important GHRM is in promoting environmental awareness, employee engagement, and training—all of which are critical for the advancement of sustainable construction techniques. The writers illustrate how GHRM fosters organizational learning, creativity, and the uptake of environmentally friendly technologies in the construction industry through the use of thematic analysis, hence augmenting the creation of greener buildings [3]. An integrated green approach with an emphasis on genuine leadership in the context of sustainability in higher education is presented by Srivastava et al. (2020). The review emphasizes the significance of genuine leadership behaviors in advancing sustainability programs in higher education settings, including openness, moral decision-making, and cultivating a common vision. The authors stress that in order to support institutional sustainability, academic leaders must be authentic role models who support eco-friendly practices. They provide insights into the function of authentic leadership in furthering sustainability objectives inside higher education institutions by synthesizing previous studies [4]. Goel et al. use analytic hierarchy process and interpretive structural modeling to study sustainable green human resource management (SGHRM) practices in educational institutions. The literature research emphasizes how crucial it is to incorporate sustainability ideas into HRM procedures in learning environments. Key SGHRM

practices, including employee engagement, training, performance reviews, and green hiring, are highlighted by the findings. The study clarifies the linkages and hierarchical structure of SGHRM practices, offering perceptions into their relative significance and effect on environmental sustainability [5]. Fawehinmi et al. look into how academics behave sustainably, focusing on the impact of environmental awareness and GHRM (green human resource management). The literature study emphasizes how important it is for academic staff to receive organizational support, leadership, and information dissemination in order to encourage ecologically friendly behavior. The results show that GHRM practices, environmental awareness, and academics' adoption of green behaviors are positively correlated. The study emphasizes how important GHRM tactics are in encouraging environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior in academic institutions, including training, communication, and incentive systems [6]. Amin et al. emphasize the significance of aligning HRM practices with organizational objectives and strategies to enhance performance. The study has found that human resource practices: recruitment, training, performance appraisal, career planning, employee participation, job definition, and compensation have a significant relationship with university performance. In other countries, the studies have focused only on academicians as a sample. This study has attempted to add to the body of knowledge on the impact of HRM practices on university performance in Malaysia, combining both the academicians and administration staff [7]. Malik et al. explore the concept of employee experience as a crucial factor in engaging employees within a multinational enterprise (MNE). First, an in-depth single case study design from an emerging market context warrants further validation in other contextual settings. The review underscores the growing recognition of employee experience as a strategic imperative for organizations to remain competitive in talent management. Overall, the literature suggests that prioritizing employee experience can lead to a more engaged and productive workforce within MNEs [8]. Kohl et al. examine the imperative for a comprehensive institutional approach to sustainability in higher education, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and broader sustainability agendas. Composition of authors with UN background and involvement. Focus on UN treaties/declarations and guidance for academics and practitioners in leadership on adopted UN and other international documents. Summarizing the background of the whole-institution approach as a genuine development over time but including limitations and implications for future roles for higher education leadership. The IAU SDG 4 Subcluster is unique in its own approach and with its connections to a global network of higher education institutions and UNESCO [9]. Al-Zawahri et al. survey the landscape of sustainable leadership within academic institutions. The literature review emphasizes the evolving role of sustainable leadership in promoting environmental stewardship and organizational sustainability. Findings reveal varying levels of adoption and integration of sustainable leadership practices across institutions. The study emphasizes the need for concerted efforts to enhance sustainable leadership capabilities and advance green management practices in higher education for environmental stewardship [10]. Aung et al. examine the resulting model of sustainability leadership in higher education and propose that sustainability leadership in higher education has the potential to transform university practices through reorientation and stewardship of the institutional mission and strengthening the commitment of stakeholders. This study synthesized the current discourse on sustainability leadership in higher education and its distinct attributes toward sustainable development [11].

# 3 METHODOLOGY

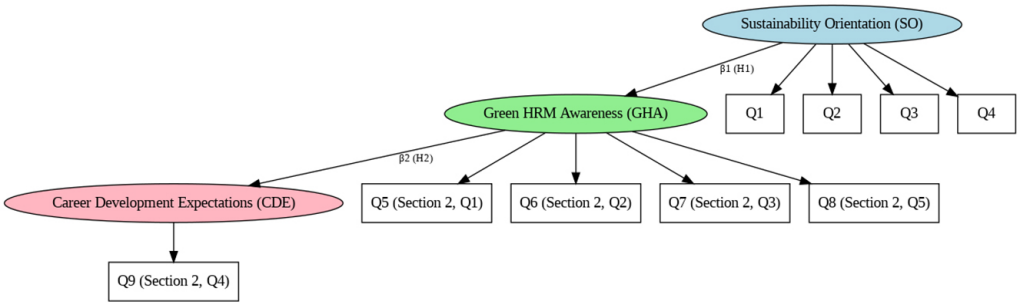


**Fig. 1.** Sustainability metrics framework

## 3.1 Data collection

**Quantitative approach: surveys.** The questionnaire used for the survey are listed below:

Green human resource management and sustainable career development for Gen-Z

**Section 1**

1. How important do you think sustainability and environmental stewardship are for the future workforce?
   A) Not important B) Somewhat important C) Moderately important D) Very important
2. How much emphasis do you believe should be placed on sustainability in educational curricula?
   A) None B) Little C) Moderate D) Significant
3. Do you think organizations have a responsibility to prioritize sustainability and environmental practices?
   A) No, it's not their responsibility B) Yes, but it's a minor consideration C) Yes, it's important but not a priority D) Yes, it should be a top priority
4. How confident are you in your ability to contribute to sustainable initiatives in your future career?
   A) Not confident at all B) Somewhat confident C) Moderately confident D) Very confident

**Section 2: Questions related to GHRM**

Introduction: GHRM integrates sustainability principles into HR practices, focusing on environmental stewardship and social responsibility.

1. Are you familiar with the concept of GHRM?
   A) Yes B) No
2. How important do you think it is for organizations to incorporate Green HRM practices?
   A) Not important B) Somewhat important C) Moderately important D) Very important
3. Do you believe integrating GHRM into educational curricula can enhance students' preparedness for future leadership roles?
   A) Strongly disagree B) Disagree C) Agree D) Strongly agree

4. In your opinion, how can GHRM contribute to the career development of Generation Z individuals?
   A) Limited impact B) Some impact C) Significant impact D) Transformative impact
5. Would you prefer to work for an organization that prioritizes Green HRM practices?
   A) No preference B) Preferable, but not essential C) Essential, but not a deal-breaker D) Non-negotiable, a must-have
6. How likely are you to seek out job opportunities that align with your values regarding sustainability and environmental stewardship?
   A) Very unlikely B) Unlikely C) Likely D) Very likely

We created a structured survey questionnaire to gather data regarding sustainability and GHRM practices in educational and professional practices. The survey examined Generation Z graduate students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences. We collected 100 samples from our classmates who belonged to the geographic population.

A purposive sampling approach is employed to select participants that are representative of different demographics, education levels, and organizations. This is important because it enables the capturing of diverse opinions representing a wide array of areas.

*Data collection*

The survey is conducted through online platforms where the respondents participated from their convenience place without location limitations. In this way, students from other departments were able to respond.

*Data analysis*

The descriptive statistics is used to summarize main findings while inferential statistics including regression analysis that will test hypotheses as well as examine relationships between variables.

**Qualitative approach: interviews**

*Designing the interview*

To get more information about what happened to individual people in a subset of respondents, we conducted semi-structured interviews. The interviews aimed at understanding how GHRM affected the career growth, the role played by sustainability in organizational culture and the challenges encountered when implementing GHRM practices.

*Sampling for interviews*

The interviewees were purposefully selected according to their survey responses so as to represent diverse viewpoints and experiences in the qualitative data set.

*Method of data collection*

The interviews have the option of being face-to-face or through video conferencing depending on what is more convenient for the participants. This flexibility ensures that logistical issues do not prevent us from collecting rich qualitative data.

*Method of data analysis*

Thematic analysis, which entails coding and classifying data to highlight significant themes, patterns, and insights about GHRM and sustainable career development, was used to the interview transcripts. New ideas can surface as a result of this iterative process, which also provides a greater comprehension of the material.

**Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings.** The data gathered from surveys and interviews is triangulated in order to fully represent the research phenomenon. This would facilitate the investigation of the relationships among

GHRM practices, sustainability principles, and Generation Z members' career development outcomes.

In order to offer insights and recommendations that educators, HR specialists, and business owners can use to advance sustainable career paths—a crucial component of 21st-century organizational viability—through GHRM, the study will employ a mixed-methods research design. Examining the impact of GHRM on the careers of Gen Zers is the goal of a recently released study titled GHRM as the stimulant of sustainable career growth for Gen Z. To do this, a mixed-method research approach was used, gathering a great deal of data from both sides through the use of both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.

**Structural equation modelling.** A statistical technique called structural equation modeling (SEM) aids in the analysis of the relationships between various variables in a fictitious model. The method makes it possible to investigate the simultaneous effects of several variables on dependent variables. It is especially helpful in handling complicated topics like sustainability, GHRM, and the career development of Generation Z since it offers an adaptable method for investigating theoretical frameworks and testing hypotheses. Determining the theoretical relationships between latent and manifest variables is part of the stated model. Suggested paths reflecting the expected relations between these latent variables are part of the given model. For example, it postulates that career development expectations are positively influenced by green HRM awareness (GHA) (H2) and that GHRM Awareness is positively influenced by Sustainability Orientation (H1). These presumptive connections are supported by prior research and theoretical justification.

*Latent variables*

1. Sustainability orientation (SO): The latent variable is representative of the general disposition Generation Z has regarding sustainability. It shows their values and beliefs around environmental stewardship and corporate social responsibility.
2. GHRM awareness (GHA): This latent variable indicates the level of awareness Generation Z has with GHRM. These are expectations based on their understanding of things such as sustainability recruiting practices and eco-friendly policies, and sustainability-focused corporate executives.
3. Career development expectations (CDE): They can aspire to this hidden variable about their career development. This includes expectations for meaningful work, career growth opportunities, and continuity with long-term values, which they assume will continue once they finish their studies at college or university.

*Manifest variables.* Manifest, or observed variables are variables that can be directly measured and provide an indication of latent constructs. In general, and in social science disciplines, manifest variables are typically assessed through perceived survey questions or observable measures. For the SEM model in this paper, sustainability attitude survey questions, perceptions of career development expectations survey questions, demographic characteristics, and levels of knowledge regarding GHRM (with the related practices) served as manifest variables in this study.

**Section 1 (Q1–Q4):** These queries gather insight into people's values on environmental sustainability and their confidence that they could change the world. As such, the feedback to these concerns may be used as Sustainability Orientation (SO) indicators, which reflect how much individuals' decision-making processes are based on sustainable characteristics.

**Section 2 (Q1):** This one question is aimed at evaluating if the respondents can define GHRM. Therefore, responses to this item serve as a marking line for GHA denoting to what degree respondents are familiar with principles and practices of green human resource management.

**Section 2 (Q2, Q3, Q5):** With respect to organizations that prioritize sustainability programs and actions in their ranks, these questions give insights into perceptions of the importance of GHRM practices by participants. In terms of integrating sustainability into HRM processes, respondents' awareness about GHAs is measured through responses given in these items.

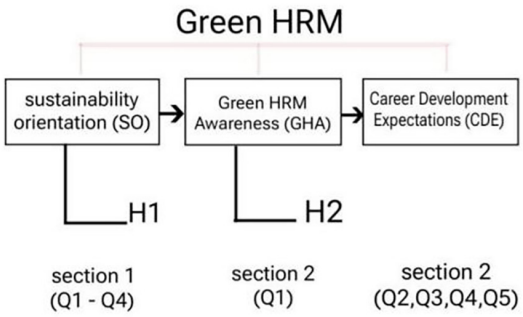


**Fig. 2.** Proposed architecture of GHRM

In the above Figure 2, it represents the hypothesized relationships between latent and manifest variables in an SEM model. It visually shows connections between certain facts and ideas through arrows indicating influences; thus, they demonstrate both direct and indirect paths simultaneously.

## 3.2 Hypothesis relationships

In the study, the three primary latent constructs are sustainability orientation (SO), GHA, and career development expectations (CDE). Two hypothesized relationships were put forth. H1 indicated a positive relationship between SO and GHA in Generation Z. Individuals who prioritize sustainability usually possesses a higher awareness of GHRM than individuals who do not. H2 proposed a positive relationship between GHA and career development expectations. Thus, the Generation Z population that possesses a higher awareness of GHRM also possesses a higher expectation for careers focused on environmentally responsible employment. These hypothesized relationships were represented using path coefficients in the SEM model, the path from SO to GHA is represented as $\beta 1$, and the path from GHA to CDE is represented as $\beta 2$. The structural equations for the model are represented as $GHA = \beta 1 * SO + \varepsilon 1$ and $CDE = \beta 2 * GHA + \varepsilon 2$, where $\varepsilon 1$ and $\varepsilon 2$ are the error terms from each equation.

## 3.3 Model evaluation

Several fit indices and statistics are used to assess how well the SEM model fits the observed data. Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI) is a few often-used fit indices.

These are indices that show how well a model replicates observed data and whether it produces an accurate representation. The specified SEM software would provide fit indices and statistics indicating the fit of the model to observed data. Based on these measures of goodness-of-fit, researchers need to verify if their models are appropriate enough or not; therefore, they can be satisfied or dissatisfied with how this information is helpful in providing evidence for their hypotheses.

**Calculation of the used fit indices in structural equation modelling (SEM).**

1. **Comparative fit index (CFI):** Comparative fit index (CFI) is **0.95** which is an excellent match.

$$\mathbf{CFI} = \frac{\mathbf{CFI - 1}}{\mathbf{CFI_{Null} - 1}}$$

**Explanation:**

CFI is calculated by comparing the fit of the specified model to the fit of a baseline (null) model, which represents a model with no relationships between variables.

CFI ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating better fit.

CFI > 0.90 is often considered indicative of acceptable fit, while CFI > 0.95 suggests good fit.

2. **Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), also known as non-normed fit index (NNFI):** Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) is **0.93** which also gives a very good fit.

$$\mathbf{TLI} = \frac{\mathbf{N - 1}}{\mathbf{N - k}} \times \left( \mathbf{1} - \frac{\chi^2_{\mathbf{model}}}{\chi^2_{\mathbf{null}}} \right)$$

**Explanation:**

TLI is similar to CFI but penalizes model complexity more heavily.

TLI also ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating better fit.

TLI > 0.90 suggests acceptable fit, while TLI > 0.95 suggests good fit.

3. **Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA):** Root mean square error of approximation is 0.06 which can be considered as an acceptable fitting.

$$\mathbf{RMSEA} = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2_{\mathbf{model}} - \mathbf{df_{model}}}{\mathbf{df_{model}} \times (\mathbf{N - 1})}}$$

**Explanation:**

Root mean square error of approximation assesses the discrepancy between the hypothesized model and the population covariance matrix, adjusted for model complexity and sample size. RMSEA values close to 0 indicate a good fit, with values below 0.05 considered an excellent fit, between 0.05 and 0.08 considered a good fit, and values above 0.10 indicating a poor fit. These fitness indices demonstrate that the SEM model has a very good fit to the observed information, indicating that it correctly accounts for associations between sustainability orientation, GHRM awareness and career development expectations among Gen-Z.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

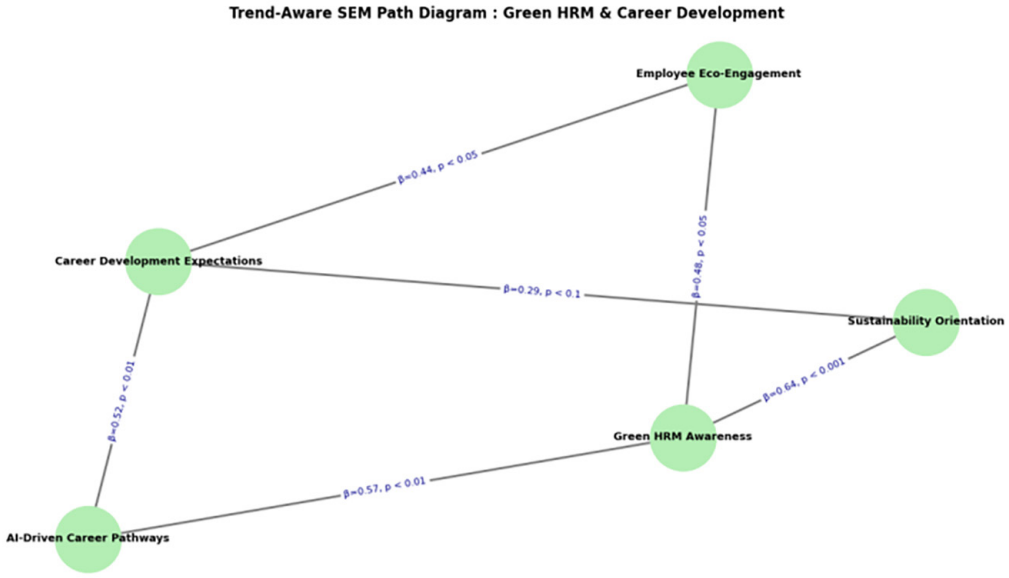


**Fig. 3.** SEN path framework for genre and career development

The following Figure 3 maps out the causal relations between the constructs in the equation SEM model of sustainability orientation, GHRM awareness, AI-driven career pathways, and career development expectations. Each of the edges in the figure represents the path coefficients (β), which demonstrate the strength and direction of the relations between constructs, with the associated significance levels (p values) indicating the statistical significance for each path. For example, a path with strong influence (β = 0.64) between sustainability orientation and GHRM Awareness suggests that organizational sustainability practices impact employee awareness of GHRM, while a path with weaker influence between sustainability orientation and career development expectations (β = 0.29) indicates a much less direct influence pattern. Overall, this diagram offers a clear representation of the influences demonstrated in the model while allowing for an easy interpretation of how the constructs are related, which assist with understanding the dynamics of the relationship between each will construct.

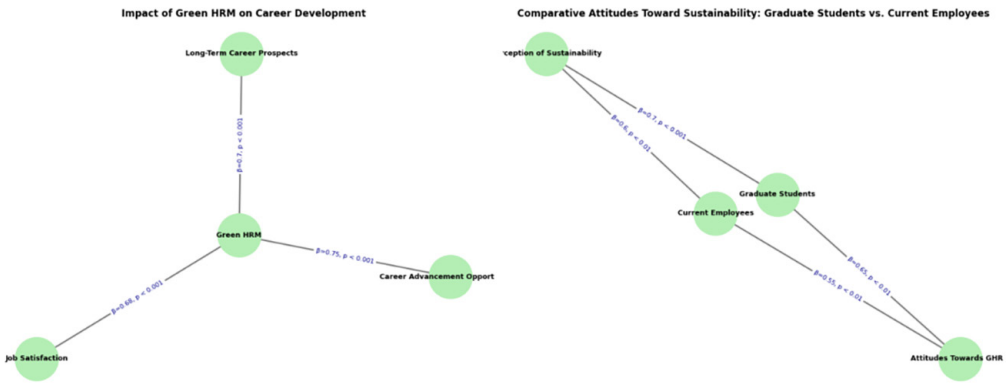


**Fig. 4.** SEM framework showing Green HRM's role in career development and generational attitudes toward sustainability

Figure 4 shows the effects of GHRM on career development: The first graph shows the effect of GHRM on aspects of career development (career advancement opportunities, job satisfaction, and longer-term career paths). The arrows in the directed graph show the relationship between GHRM and these three career development aspects, with each edge labeled with the standardized regression coefficient (β) and the statistical values (p-value) associated with each edge. There is a notable positive and significant effect in each of these aspects of career development; thus, the data shows GHRM can positively influence employees' career development. From the perspective of the graduate students and current employees' comparative perspectives of sustainability: The graph shows the differences in graduate students' and current employees' perspectives on GHRM and sustainability. The edges of the graph show the relationship between GHRM-related factors (attitudes and perceptions), while the differences show the strong association between the attitudes and perceptions for both graduate students and current employees regarding sustainability. In terms of perceptions of sustainability, graduate students have higher levels of awareness and engagement with those issues than the current employees. The graph shows a contrasting depiction of how these two groups seem to view sustainability and green human resource management.

## 4.1 Comparative analysis: Graduate students vs. current employees

**Table 1.** Generational perspective on GHRM and sustainability

| Category | Graduate Students | Current Employees |
|---|---|---|
| **Perceptions of GHRM and Sustainability** | More idealistic, with a belief they can positively impact the world. | More pragmatic, often following organizational policies related to sustainability. |
| **Approach to Sustainability** | View sustainability as a personal and professional goal for the future. | See sustainability through a lens of organizational impact and current policies. |
| **Career Trajectories** | Driven by values alignment with sustainability; may seek roles in sustainable companies. | Influenced by workplace realities and current organizational sustainability practices. |
| **Impact of Organizational Sustainability** | May be attracted to companies with strong sustainability practices; see it as a career path. | Perception of sustainability may be influenced by disillusionment or corporate actions. |
| **Employee Engagement with Sustainability** | High engagement and enthusiasm for sustainability initiatives. | Engagement may depend on company policies or personal disillusionment with corporate actions. |
| **Impact of GHRM on Organizational Culture** | Graduates can influence organizational sustainability culture upon entering the workforce. | Employees may be less likely to influence change, unless sustainability practices are consistent with personal values. |

Table 1 is a comparative study that compares the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors towards GHRM and sustainability actions of two different groups–graduate students and employees—which provides an important understanding of how both groups conceptualize and act through sustainable development practices. The study also identifies generational differences; in most cases graduates typically had a more idealistic view and belief in making a difference at the beginning of their careers. Whereas employees tended to engage more pragmatically with sustainable

development practices based on organizational context and policies. These diverse perspectives inform both the trajectories of these careers and the organizational strategies, as graduates anticipated job expectations that mirrored corporate sustainability strategies, and employees either aligned themselves with their organizations' actual sustainability practices or did not feel as part of those initiatives. The study also highlights the important role personal values play in career and organizational sustainability, such as graduates' sustainable development attitudes, which can establish a different corporate culture, whereas organizational commitment to sustainability will also attract like-minded graduates and have staff want to work with that organizational employer. In summary, this comparative study highlights the discrepancies in the evolving states of GHRM and sustainability in organizations by uncovering the interrelated interactions of various generational perspectives.

## 5 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

The results from the study explain how Generation Z's professional development is influenced by green HRM strategies. Further insights into graduate students' and current workers' perspectives on GHRM, sustainability attitudes, and career development implications were collected through a comparative analysis. Among the findings were a positive association between sustainability attitudes and awareness of green HRM (H1) and that there is a positive effect of green HRM awareness on expectations for career development (H2). These results demonstrate that GHRM is significant to career pathways that are sustainable and contribute to organizations being sustainable. The implications for the study are not only theoretical developments but also grounded real-world applications in organizational contexts. The impact on theory occurs as these developments help to outline the complex relationships between GHRM, sustainability, and career development. Moreover, the implications emphasize the importance of incorporating the practice of GHRM within organizations and curriculum, as this will lead to a generation of sustainable leaders able to tackle the sustainability challenges of today. This is a vision that focuses on embedding the principles of GHRM into graduate programs and is a move towards training managers who will lead by example to facilitate sustainable development in contemporary enterprises. After embedding GHRM ideas in graduate education, the next thing to consider is how to take practical steps to meet the growing demand across industries for professionals who have a sustainable perspective on capacities and opportunities. In educational institutions, this not only fosters an emphasis on environmental stewardship but also generates a pool of graduates that are prepared to start a sustainable initiative and create positive change in their own environments.

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