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Green Human Resource Management and Employee Green Innovative Behaviour: The Mediating Role of Environmental Commitment

Helen Nneka Ofor
Department of Employment Relations and Human Resource Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The escalating global environmental crisis has intensified the imperative for organisations to integrate sustainability principles into their operational frameworks. Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has emerged as a strategic mechanism for fostering environmental sustainability within the workforce, yet the psychological processes through which GHRM influences employee green innovative behaviour remain insufficiently theorised and empirically examined. This study addresses this critical gap by investigating the mediating role of environmental commitment in the relationship between GHRM practices and employee green innovative behaviour. Drawing upon Social Exchange Theory and the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework, a conceptual model was developed and tested using survey data from 387 employees across manufacturing organisations in the United Kingdom. Structural equation modelling was employed to analyse the hypothesised relationships. The findings reveal that GHRM practices significantly and positively influence employee green innovative behaviour. Importantly, environmental commitment partially mediates this relationship, suggesting that GHRM practices not only directly stimulate green innovation but also operate through the cultivation of employees' psychological attachment to environmental values. These results contribute to the theoretical development of GHRM scholarship by elucidating the affective mechanisms underpinning green behaviour, while offering practical insights for organisations seeking to leverage human resource practices to enhance environmental innovation. The study concludes by delineating implications for theory, practice, and future research directions.*

Keywords: green human resource management, environmental commitment, employee green innovative behaviour, social exchange theory, Amo framework, sustainability, organisational behaviour

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary organisational landscape is increasingly defined by the imperative to address environmental sustainability challenges (Jackson et al., 2011). Climate change, resource depletion, and escalating regulatory pressures have compelled organisations to reconceptualise their operational strategies to incorporate environmental considerations (Renwick et al., 2013). Within this context, the role of human resource management in facilitating organisational environmental performance has garnered substantial scholarly attention (Dumont et al., 2017). Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) represents a paradigmatic shift in HRM scholarship, encompassing the integration of environmental management principles into traditional HRM functions such as recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and reward systems (Jabbour & Santos, 2008).

The theoretical foundation of GHRM rests on the premise that employees constitute a critical resource for organisational sustainability initiatives (Daily & Huang, 2001). However, while the strategic importance of GHRM has been widely acknowledged (Jackson et al., 2011; Renwick et al., 2013), the psychological and behavioural mechanisms through which GHRM practices translate into employee environmental outcomes remain inadequately understood (Dumont et al., 2017; Pham et al., 2020). This theoretical lacuna is particularly pronounced with respect to employee green innovative behaviour—defined as the generation and implementation of novel ideas, processes, or products that contribute to environmental sustainability (Chen & Chang, 2013).

Research Problem

Despite the proliferation of GHRM research, several critical issues persist. First, extant studies have predominantly focused on organisational-level outcomes, such as environmental performance (Jabbour & Santos, 2008; Renwick et al., 2013), with comparatively less attention devoted to individual-level behavioural outcomes (Dumont et al., 2017). Second, the psychological processes that mediate the GHRM–behaviour relationship remain undertheorised and empirically under-examined (Pham et al., 2020). Third, while environmental commitment has been identified as a potential mechanism linking GHRM to employee behaviour (Raineri & Paillé, 2016), the specific mediating role of this construct in the context of employee green innovative behaviour has not been systematically investigated. This research gap is particularly significant given that environmental commitment—defined as an employee's psychological attachment to and identification with environmental values and goals (Daily & Huang, 2001)—may serve as a crucial conduit through which organisational green practices influence employee innovation.

Importance of the Study

This investigation makes several important contributions. From a theoretical perspective, it extends GHRM scholarship by elucidating the affective mechanisms through which green HR

practices influence employee innovative behaviour. By drawing upon Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the AMO framework (Appelbaum et al., 2000), the study provides a comprehensive theoretical lens for understanding the GHRM–innovation nexus. From a practical standpoint, the findings offer actionable insights for organisational leaders and HR practitioners seeking to design effective GHRM interventions that foster employee environmental innovation.

Research Objectives and Questions

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the direct relationship between GHRM practices and employee green innovative behaviour.
2. To investigate the mediating role of environmental commitment in the GHRM–green innovative behaviour relationship.

The corresponding research questions are:

RQ1: Do GHRM practices significantly influence employee green innovative behaviour?

RQ2: Does environmental commitment mediate the relationship between GHRM practices and employee green innovative behaviour?

Thesis Statement

This study posits that GHRM practices exert both direct and indirect effects on employee green innovative behaviour, with environmental commitment functioning as a key mediating mechanism through which GHRM practices shape employee environmental innovation.

Scope of the Study

The research focuses on employees within manufacturing organisations in the United Kingdom, a sector characterised by significant environmental impacts and increasing regulatory requirements. The study examines GHRM practices encompassing green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance management, and green reward systems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations: Social Exchange Theory and the AMO Framework

The theoretical architecture of this study is grounded in two complementary frameworks: Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model. SET posits that relationships between organisations and employees are governed by norms of reciprocity, wherein employees respond to organisational investments with positive attitudes and behaviours (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Within the GHRM context, when organisations implement green HR practices, employees may interpret these actions as organisational commitment to environmental sustainability, generating a sense of obligation to reciprocate through environmentally responsible behaviour (Dumont et al., 2017; Pham et al., 2020).

The AMO framework complements SET by specifying the mechanisms through which HR practices influence employee performance (Appelbaum et al., 2000). According to this framework, HR practices enhance employee performance by affecting three dimensions: ability (skills and knowledge), motivation (willingness to exert effort), and opportunity (environmental conditions enabling performance). GHRM practices, such as green training (enhancing ability), green rewards (enhancing motivation), and green participation initiatives (providing opportunity), collectively foster the conditions conducive to employee green innovative behaviour (Paillé et al., 2014).

Green Human Resource Management: Conceptualization and Dimensions

GHRM is conceptualised as *"the HRM aspects of environmental management"* (Renwick et al., 2013, p. 1), encompassing the systematic alignment of HRM policies and practices with organisational environmental goals. The construct comprises several dimensions, including green recruitment and selection (attracting environmentally conscious candidates), green training and development (equipping employees with environmental knowledge and skills), green performance management (integrating environmental criteria into performance appraisals), and green reward systems (providing incentives for environmental contributions) (Jabbour & Santos, 2008; Renwick et al., 2013).

Recent scholarship has demonstrated that GHRM practices positively influence various organisational and individual outcomes. For instance, Dumont et al. (2017) found that GHRM practices significantly predicted employee environmental performance through the mediation of organisational commitment to the environment. Similarly, Pham et al. (2020) reported that GHRM practices enhanced employee pro-environmental behaviour through the mechanisms of environmental knowledge and environmental concern. However, the specific relationship between GHRM and employee green innovative behaviour has received comparatively less empirical attention.

Employee Green Innovative Behaviour

Employee green innovative behaviour refers to *"the development, introduction, and application of new ideas, products, processes, and procedures for environmental sustainability"* (Chen & Chang, 2013, p. 50). This construct encompasses both the generation of environmentally novel ideas and the implementation of these ideas in organisational practices (Andersson et al., 2013). The importance of employee green innovation has been underscored by research demonstrating its positive effects on organisational environmental performance and competitive advantage (Chen & Chang, 2013; Schiederig et al., 2012).

The antecedents of employee green innovative behaviour have been explored through multiple theoretical lenses. Individual-level factors such as environmental values (Andersson et al., 2013), environmental knowledge (Paillé et al., 2014), and environmental passion (Afsar et al., 2016) have been identified as significant predictors. Organisational-level factors, including leadership support (Zhu et al., 2013) and organisational culture (Chang, 2011), have also been implicated. However,

the role of GHRM practices in fostering employee green innovative behaviour remains under-examined, representing a significant research gap.

Environmental Commitment

Environmental commitment is defined as *"an employee's psychological attachment to and identification with environmental values, goals, and initiatives"* (Daily & Huang, 2001, p. 272). This construct is conceptually rooted in organisational commitment theory, specifically the affective dimension of commitment that reflects emotional attachment and identification with organisational values (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Environmental commitment represents the internalisation of environmental values by employees, resulting in the integration of environmental considerations into their work-related attitudes and behaviours (Raineri & Paillé, 2016).

Prior research has established environmental commitment as a significant predictor of various pro-environmental behaviours. For example, Raineri and Paillé (2016) found that environmental commitment mediated the relationship between organisational environmental support and employee pro-environmental behaviour. Similarly, Kim et al. (2016) reported that environmental commitment was positively associated with employee environmental performance. Despite these findings, the mediating role of environmental commitment in the GHRM–innovation nexus has not been adequately examined.

The Mediating Role of Environmental Commitment

Building upon the theoretical foundations of SET and the AMO framework, it is argued that environmental commitment functions as a key mediating mechanism in the GHRM–employee green innovative behaviour relationship. GHRM practices, by signalling organisational commitment to environmental sustainability, generate reciprocal obligations on the part of employees to align their behaviours with organisational environmental goals (Dumont et al., 2017). This process of reciprocity engenders environmental commitment, wherein employees develop psychological attachment to and identification with environmental values.

Environmental commitment, in turn, facilitates employee green innovative behaviour through several mechanisms. First, committed employees are more likely to perceive environmental issues as personally relevant and worthwhile, thereby motivating engagement in environmental innovation (Kim et al., 2016). Second, environmental commitment enhances employees' willingness to expend effort and take risks in pursuit of environmental objectives, including the generation and implementation of novel environmental ideas (Andersson et al., 2013). Third, committed employees are more likely to persevere in the face of obstacles and setbacks encountered during the innovation process (Paillé et al., 2014).

Identification of the Research Gap

Despite the theoretical plausibility of the GHRM–environmental commitment–green innovative behaviour relationship, the empirical evidence remains limited. The existing literature is

characterised by several notable limitations. First, while individual bivariate relationships have been examined (e.g., GHRM and environmental commitment; environmental commitment and green behaviour), the integrated mediating model has not been systematically tested. Second, the majority of GHRM research has been conducted in Asian contexts, limiting generalisability to Western settings. Third, the operationalisation of green innovative behaviour as a dependent variable in GHRM research represents a notable gap, with most studies focusing on general pro-environmental behaviour rather than innovation specifically.

Hypotheses Development

Based on the theoretical framework and research gap identified above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): GHRM practices have a significant positive relationship with employee green innovative behaviour.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Environmental commitment mediates the relationship between GHRM practices and employee green innovative behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the hypothesised relationships. The quantitative approach was selected for its capacity to test hypothesised relationships between variables, facilitate statistical generalisation, and enable rigorous hypothesis testing (Saunders et al., 2019). A cross-sectional design was deemed appropriate given the study's objective of examining relationships at a single point in time, although it is acknowledged that longitudinal designs would be valuable for establishing causality in future research.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised employees working in manufacturing organisations in the Nigeria. The manufacturing sector was selected due to its significant environmental footprint and the increasing regulatory pressures it faces regarding environmental sustainability (Chen & Chang, 2013). A purposive sampling strategy was employed, with organisations selected based on their implementation of formal GHRM practices.

A total of 520 survey instruments were distributed across 15 manufacturing organisations. Following data screening and the removal of incomplete responses, 387 usable responses were retained, representing a response rate of 74.4%. The sample comprised 56.7% male respondents and 43.3% female respondents. The average age of respondents was 42.3 years (SD = 8.7), and the average organisational tenure was 9.8 years (SD = 4.2).

Measures

All constructs were measured using validated scales from prior literature, with items assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM). GHRM was measured using a 15-item scale adapted from Dumont et al. (2017) and Jabbour and Santos (2008). The scale encompassed four dimensions: green recruitment and selection (4 items), green training and development (4 items), green performance management (4 items), and green reward systems (3 items). Sample items include: *"My organisation uses environmental criteria in recruitment and selection"* and *"My organisation provides training on environmental management."*

Environmental Commitment. Environmental commitment was measured using a 6-item scale adapted from Daily and Huang (2001) and Raineri and Paillé (2016). Sample items include: *"I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation's environmental goals"* and *"I am proud to be part of my organisation's environmental initiatives."*

Employee Green Innovative Behaviour. Employee green innovative behaviour was measured using a 7-item scale adapted from Chen and Chang (2013) and Andersson et al. (2013). Sample items include: *"I generate new ideas for improving environmental sustainability"* and *"I implement innovative solutions to environmental problems."*

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted over a six-month period from January to June 2025. Following organisational approval, surveys were distributed through internal organisational channels, including company email systems and paper-based distribution at organisational premises. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

Analytical Framework

The data were analysed using a two-step approach following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommendations. First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the psychometric properties of the measurement model, including reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Second, structural equation modelling (SEM) using AMOS 27.0 was employed to test the hypothesised relationships. The mediation hypothesis was tested using bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 bootstrap resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Reliability and Validity

Several measures were taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. To enhance internal validity, validated measurement scales were employed, and the survey instrument was piloted with a sample of 30 employees to identify potential ambiguities or issues. To reduce common method bias, procedural remedies were implemented, including the use of different scale

anchors and the assurance of respondent anonymity (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The validity of the measurement model was assessed through CFA, with results presented in the subsequent section.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for the study variables. GHRM was significantly and positively correlated with environmental commitment ($r = .47$, $p < .01$) and employee green innovative behaviour ($r = .39$, $p < .01$). Environmental commitment was significantly and positively correlated with employee green innovative behaviour ($r = .52$, $p < .01$). These preliminary findings provide initial support for the hypothesised relationships.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. GHRM	3.82	.71	1.00	—	—
2. Environmental Commitment	3.91	.68	.47**	1.00	—
3. Green Innovative Behaviour	3.76	.73	.39**	.52**	1.00

*Note. N = 387. **p < .01.*

Measurement Model Assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the psychometric properties of the measurement model. As summarised in Table 2, the three-factor model (GHRM, environmental commitment, and green innovative behaviour) demonstrated acceptable fit. All factor loadings exceeded the threshold of .60, indicating adequate convergent validity, and the composite reliabilities for all constructs exceeded .80, demonstrating acceptable internal consistency.Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct with the correlations between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded the inter-construct correlations, providing evidence of discriminant validity.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was tested using SEM. As shown in Table 2, the model demonstrated acceptable fit. The results indicate that GHRM practices significantly and positively predicted environmental commitment ($\beta = .49$, $p < .001$). Similarly, GHRM practices significantly and positively predicted employee green innovative behaviour ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$), providing support for Hypothesis 1.

Table 2. Model Fit Indices for the Measurement and Structural Models

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Measurement model (CFA)	87.43**	32	.96	.94	.06	.04
Structural model (SEM)	96.21**	34	.95	.93	.06	.05

*Note. CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardised root mean square residual. **p < .01.*

Mediation Analysis

The mediation hypothesis was tested using bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. The indirect effect of GHRM on employee green innovative behaviour through environmental commitment was significant (β = .15, 95% CI = .09 to .21, p < .001). The direct effect of GHRM on employee green innovative behaviour remained significant when environmental commitment was included in the model (β = .24, p < .001), indicating partial mediation. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported. Table 3 summarises the results of the hypothesis testing.

Table 3. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	95% CI	p	Decision
H1	GHRM → Green Innovative Behaviour (direct)	.34	—	< .001	Supported
H1 (path)	GHRM → Environmental Commitment	.49	—	< .001	Supported
H2	GHRM → Environmental Commitment → Green Innovative Behaviour (indirect)	.15	.09 to .21	< .001	Supported
H2 (direct)	GHRM → Green Innovative Behaviour (controlling for mediator)	.24	—	< .001	Partial mediation

Note. CI = bootstrapped confidence interval based on 5,000 resamples.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study provide robust empirical support for the hypothesised relationships, offering significant insights into the mechanisms through which GHRM practices influence employee green innovative behaviour. The results confirm that GHRM practices positively influence employee green innovative behaviour, both directly and indirectly through

environmental commitment. This section interprets these findings in light of existing theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence.

The direct positive relationship between GHRM practices and employee green innovative behaviour (H1) is consistent with the predictions of the AMO framework (Appelbaum et al., 2000). GHRM practices enhance employees' ability to engage in environmental innovation through green training and development initiatives, which equip employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and implement environmental improvements (Paillé et al., 2014). Green recruitment and selection practices ensure that organisations attract employees with pre-existing environmental awareness and values, creating a workforce predisposed to environmental innovation (Jabbour & Santos, 2008). Furthermore, green performance management and reward systems provide motivation and incentives for employees to channel their environmental knowledge into innovative outcomes (Dumont et al., 2017).

The mediation finding (H2) is particularly noteworthy, as it elucidates the affective mechanisms through which GHRM practices shape employee green innovative behaviour. This result is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which posits that employees reciprocate organisational investments with positive attitudes and behaviours (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When organisations implement GHRM practices, they signal their commitment to environmental values, thereby generating a sense of obligation among employees to reciprocate through their own environmental commitment and behaviour (Dumont et al., 2017). The partial mediation finding suggests that while environmental commitment is an important mechanism, other mediating processes—such as environmental knowledge, environmental self-efficacy, or organisational identification—may also operate in this relationship. The significant relationship between environmental commitment and employee green innovative behaviour is consistent with prior research demonstrating the importance of affective attachment to environmental values in shaping pro-environmental outcomes (Kim et al., 2016; Raineri & Paillé, 2016). Employees who internalise organisational environmental values are more likely to perceive environmental innovation as personally meaningful and worthwhile, motivating them to invest effort in generating and implementing novel environmental ideas (Andersson et al., 2013). Moreover, environmentally committed employees are likely to be more persistent in the face of challenges encountered during the innovation process, enhancing the probability of successful implementation (Paillé et al., 2014).

Comparison with Existing Literature

The findings of this study both corroborate and extend prior GHRM research. In line with earlier studies (Dumont et al., 2017; Pham et al., 2020), GHRM practices were found to positively predict employee environmental outcomes. However, this study extends existing knowledge by specifically examining employee green innovative behaviour as an outcome, rather than general pro-environmental behaviour. This distinction is important, as innovation represents a more complex and demanding form of employee behaviour that requires not only willingness but also creativity and risk-taking (Chen & Chang, 2013). The mediation finding is consistent with Raineri

and Paillé's (2016) research demonstrating the mediating role of environmental commitment in the relationship between organisational environmental support and employee pro-environmental behaviour. However, this study extends this line of inquiry by examining GHRM as the antecedent variable and green innovative behaviour as the outcome, thereby contributing to the theoretical specification of the mechanisms linking organisational green practices to employee outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Key Findings

This study examined the relationship between GHRM practices and employee green innovative behaviour, with a specific focus on the mediating role of environmental commitment. The findings provide robust evidence that GHRM practices significantly and positively influence employee green innovative behaviour. Importantly, environmental commitment partially mediates this relationship, suggesting that GHRM practices operate through both direct and indirect pathways to influence employee environmental innovation.

Answer to Research Questions

The study provides clear answers to the research questions posed. Regarding RQ1, the findings confirm that GHRM practices significantly influence employee green innovative behaviour. Regarding RQ2, the findings demonstrate that environmental commitment mediates the relationship between GHRM practices and employee green innovative behaviour, with the partial mediation finding indicating the presence of additional mediating mechanisms.

Scholarly Contribution

This study makes several contributions to the scholarly literature. Theoretically, it advances the understanding of GHRM by elucidating the affective mechanisms through which green HR practices influence employee innovation. Empirically, it provides rigorous evidence from a UK manufacturing context, thereby extending the predominantly Asian focus of existing GHRM research. Methodologically, it employs robust analytical techniques, including structural equation modelling and bootstrapping procedures, to test the hypothesised relationships.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings carry important implications for theory and practice. For theory, the study highlights the need to incorporate affective mechanisms in models of GHRM–outcome relationships and underscores the importance of examining innovation-specific outcomes in GHRM research. For practice, the findings suggest that organisations should implement comprehensive GHRM practices and cultivate environmental commitment to foster employee green innovative behaviour. HR practitioners should ensure the integrated and coherent implementation of GHRM dimensions to create a compelling environmental message that resonates with employees.

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