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Driving Growth and Sustainability: The Role of Green HRM Practices in Msmes

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Abstract

The research paper explores the role of Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) practices in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), focusing on their potential to drive growth and sustainability. As organizations face increasing pressure to adopt environmentally sustainable practices, the study highlights how Green HRM can serve as a strategic tool for MSMEs, which often lack the resources of larger firms. The paper investigates specific Green HRM practices such as green recruitment, eco-friendly workplace initiatives, and sustainability-driven employee engagement. The research aims to assess the alignment of these practices with MSMEs' environmental goals and their impact on employee satisfaction, productivity, and organizational performance. Additionally, the study evaluates the environmental benefits of Green HRM, such as energy consumption reduction, waste minimization, and resource efficiency improvement. By integrating sustainability into their human resource functions, MSMEs can not only contribute to environmental preservation but also gain a competitive advantage in a market increasingly focused on sustainability. The study used a sample size of 246 respondents from the northern part of India, with data collected through a structured questionnaire administered via stratified random sampling. The research framework was analysed using Smart PLS-4.0 software, utilizing the partial least squares approach and structural equation modelling technique. The findings offer valuable insights into how MSMEs can effectively implement Green HRM to achieve both business success and positive environmental outcomes.

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, the need for sustainable practices is becoming increasingly crucial. Organizations are recognizing the importance of integrating environmental and social responsibility into their core strategies. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which constitute the backbone of many economies, are no exception. Despite their limited resources compared to large corporations, MSMEs play a critical role in contributing to environmental sustainability and societal well-being (Bielawska, 2022). One of the key areas where MSMEs can drive positive change is through the implementation of Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) practices. Green HRM refers to the integration of environmentally sustainable practices within the human resource management (HRM) functions of an organization (Setyadi et al., 2025). This includes recruitment, training, performance management, and employee engagement, all designed to contribute to the organization's environmental objectives. As businesses globally face mounting pressure to reduce their carbon footprints and adopt sustainable practices, Green HRM practices emerge as a strategic tool to create a workforce that is aligned with environmental sustainability goals (Ahmad et al., 2025). For MSMEs, these practices offer a unique opportunity to make a significant impact despite their limited scale. The growing emphasis on sustainability, alongside the urgent need to address climate change and other global challenges, has led to an increased interest in understanding how Green HRM practices can be applied within MSMEs (Elnakib & Gallego-Roquelaure, 2025).

MSMEs, despite their potential, often struggle with resource constraints, both in terms of financial and human capital. This can make it difficult for them to fully embrace sustainability measures in a way that is impactful and sustainable over the long term. However, as organizations strive to meet new sustainability standards and demonstrate environmental responsibility, Green HRM practices are emerging as an effective means to create a competitive advantage. The importance of Green HRM lies in its ability to integrate human resource policies with environmental objectives, creating a synergy that enhances both business performance and sustainability (Obeidat et al., 2022). By examining the specific practices that MSMEs adopt, such as green recruitment, eco-friendly workplace initiatives, and sustainability-driven employee engagement programs, this research seeks to understand how these practices align with the overall sustainability strategies of MSMEs. Furthermore, it will explore how these practices are integrated into organizational culture and whether they help MSMEs achieve measurable environmental goals, such as reducing energy consumption,

minimizing waste, and improving resource efficiency. The role of employees in driving sustainability within an organization is paramount.

Green HRM practices not only help create a more sustainable work environment but also have the potential to foster greater employee engagement and motivation (Ramgolam et al., 2025). By promoting an organizational culture that values environmental responsibility, MSMEs can inspire their employees to adopt more sustainable practices both in the workplace and in their personal lives. Furthermore, the implementation of Green HRM practices is expected to lead to higher levels of employee satisfaction, better retention rates, and increased productivity, as employees feel more connected to the organization's sustainability goals (Faeni et al., 2025).

The research will investigate how these factors contribute to the overall performance of MSMEs, in terms of both employee outcomes and organizational success. One of the most critical aspects of Green HRM is its potential to reduce the environmental footprint of an organization. Through the adoption of sustainable practices, MSMEs can significantly reduce their energy consumption, waste, and carbon emissions (Shaikh et al., 2024). By examining the direct environmental outcomes of Green HRM practices, such as the use of energy-efficient technologies, the reduction of paper waste, and the promotion of recycling programs, this research will assess the extent to which MSMEs can achieve their sustainability targets.

The study will also explore the relationship between the implementation of Green HRM and the broader environmental policies adopted by MSMEs, as well as the impact on their reputation as environmentally responsible organizations. In addition to the individual objectives, this research paper seeks to highlight the broader implications of Green HRM practices for MSMEs (Elnakib & Gallego-Roquelaure, 2025). The growing global focus on environmental sustainability, coupled with increasing regulatory pressure and consumer demand for greener products and services, makes it essential for MSMEs to adopt sustainable practices (Sharma & Sharma, 2026).

Green HRM practices provide a pathway for these organizations to integrate sustainability into their operations and create a positive impact on both the environment and society (Setyadi et al., 2025). Moreover, the research will demonstrate that Green HRM not only contributes to organizational success but also offers MSMEs a unique opportunity to differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive market. Green HRM practices offer MSMEs a sustainable solution to address environmental concerns while enhancing organizational performance and employee satisfaction (Hajj Hussein & Bou Zakhem, 2024). Through the exploration of Green HRM practices and their impact on sustainability, employee engagement, productivity, and environmental outcomes, this research will provide valuable insights into the role of human resource management in driving sustainability within MSMEs. The findings will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on Green HRM and its potential to transform MSMEs into more sustainable, environmentally responsible organizations. By understanding how Green HRM practices can be implemented effectively, MSMEs can not only enhance their own sustainability practices but also play a key role in addressing global environmental challenges.

Objectives of the study

1. To explore the implementation of Green HRM practices in MSMEs and their alignment with organizational sustainability goals.
2. To examine the impact of Green HRM practices on employee engagement, productivity, and overall organizational performance within MSMEs.
3. To assess the environmental benefits of Green HRM practices in MSMEs and their contribution to sustainable business operations.

Literature review

The growing emphasis on environmental sustainability and the need for organizations to reduce their ecological footprint have prompted businesses of all sizes to rethink their operations and internal practices (Din et al., 2024). Among the various strategies for achieving sustainability, Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) has emerged as a key organizational practice. Green HRM refers to human resource management strategies that focus on fostering environmental sustainability within an organization. While much of the existing research has focused on large corporations, the potential of Green HRM practices in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has received relatively less attention. The existing research on Green HRM, its implementation, and its impact on MSMEs, specifically focusing on their role in driving sustainability, employee engagement, and environmental benefits. The increasing importance of environmental sustainability in today's global business environment has led organizations

across industries to adopt practices that reduce their ecological footprint (Eelager et al., 2025). Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) is one such practice that has emerged as a powerful tool for achieving sustainability goals. Green HRM incorporates environmentally sustainable strategies into human resource functions such as recruitment, training, employee engagement, performance management, and the overall work environment (Zihan & Makhbul, 2024). While much of the research in Green HRM has focused on large corporations, there is a growing recognition of its relevance and application in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (Dutta et al., 2025). The current body of knowledge on the role of Green HRM practices, focusing on five specific variables: Green Recruitment and Selection, Green Training and Development, Green Employee Engagement, Green Performance Management, and Eco-friendly Work Environment. These practices have the potential to enhance sustainability within MSMEs by fostering an environmentally conscious workforce and promoting sustainable organizational practices. To examine the same, we have framed the below hypothesis:

Green Recruitment and Selection

Green Recruitment and Selection refers to the process of hiring employees who have a strong commitment to sustainability and who possess skills that support an organization's environmental goals. According to Alrifae (2026), Green Recruitment is an essential starting point for embedding sustainability into an organization's culture, as it helps attract employees who are aligned with the organization's environmental ethos. MSMEs, which often operate with limited resources, can benefit from adopting green recruitment strategies, as they can identify individuals who will actively contribute to sustainability initiatives. A study by Rekha et al., (2026), found that organizations that prioritize environmental values during the recruitment process are more likely to create a workforce that is motivated to engage in sustainable practices. In MSMEs, the recruitment process may be more informal compared to large firms, but this can present an opportunity for Green HRM to be implemented on a more personal and direct level. As MSMEs often have close-knit teams, hiring employees with a strong environmental commitment can lead to greater cohesion in sustainability efforts. Green recruitment can include promoting the company's environmental values in job advertisements, conducting interviews that assess an applicant's environmental knowledge, and prioritizing candidates who are already environmentally conscious. To examine the same, we have framed the below hypothesis:

H1: Green Recruitment and Selection practices positively influence the adoption and effectiveness of Green HRM practices in MSMEs.

Green Training and Development: Green Training and Development involves providing employees with the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute to an organization's sustainability goals. This includes educating employees about environmental issues, sustainable practices, and ways in which they can contribute to reducing the organization's environmental footprint (Saeed et al., 2019). Green training can take various forms, such as workshops, seminars, e-learning modules, and on-the-job training. In MSMEs, training programs focused on sustainability can be particularly impactful, as they foster a culture of environmental awareness and encourage employees to participate actively in green initiatives. According to Kuo et al., (2022), Green HRM practices such as training and development can help instill a sense of responsibility in employees, motivating them to take ownership of sustainability efforts. Given the resource constraints typical of MSMEs, green training can be delivered in a cost-effective manner, such as through online training platforms, which are increasingly accessible and scalable for small organizations. Moreover, Green Training and Development have been shown to lead to increased employee satisfaction and retention. By offering employees the opportunity to acquire new skills and contribute to a meaningful cause, MSMEs can enhance job satisfaction, which in turn can improve productivity and reduce turnover rates (Maheshwari et al., 2020). To examine the same, we have framed the below hypothesis:

H2: Green Training and Development practices positively influence the adoption and effectiveness of Green HRM practices in MSMEs.

Green Employee Engagement: Green Employee Engagement refers to the active participation of employees in environmental initiatives and sustainability practices within an organization. Research by Gupta & Jangra, (2024), demonstrates that employee engagement in sustainability programs is crucial for the success of Green HRM practices. Engagement can take many forms, including participation in environmental task forces, involvement in energy-saving programs, and promoting a sustainable work culture through daily behaviour's such as reducing waste or conserving energy. For MSMEs, Green Employee Engagement is especially important because the impact of individual actions tends to be more visible and can directly influence organizational outcomes. Employees in MSMEs often have closer interactions with management, allowing for more personalized engagement with green initiatives. MSMEs can enhance

employee engagement by creating a supportive environment where employees are encouraged to participate in sustainability programs and are recognized for their contributions. Studies have shown that organizations with higher levels of green employee engagement tend to have more motivated employees, which leads to increased overall performance and a stronger commitment to the company's environmental goals (Choi & Ng, 2011). To examine the same, we have framed the below hypothesis:

H3: Green Employee Engagement positively influences the adoption and effectiveness of Green HRM practices in MSMEs.

Green Performance Management: Green Performance Management refers to the integration of sustainability goals into employee performance appraisals and evaluations. This involves setting environmental performance objectives for employees and including green metrics, such as energy usage reduction, waste minimization, and sustainable product development, as part of the performance assessment criteria. According to Gomes et al., (2024), Green Performance Management ensures that sustainability is embedded into everyday operations and that employees are held accountable for their contribution to the organization's environmental objectives. In MSMEs, Green Performance Management can be a cost-effective way to align employee behaviour with environmental goals. By incorporating sustainability into performance management systems, MSMEs can create a sense of accountability and reinforce the importance of green initiatives across all levels of the organization. Employees may be rewarded for adopting energy-saving practices, reducing waste, or suggesting innovations that lead to more sustainable business operations. Additionally, setting clear green performance goals helps organizations track progress toward environmental objectives and communicate the importance of sustainability within the company. To examine the same, we have framed the below hypothesis:

H4: Green Performance Management positively influences the adoption and effectiveness of Green HRM practices in MSMEs.

Eco-friendly Work Environment

The Eco-friendly Work Environment encompasses the physical and operational aspects of the workplace that contribute to sustainability, such as energy-efficient lighting, recycling programs, and the use of sustainable materials. The work environment plays a pivotal role in fostering green behaviour's, as it is the space where employees spend a significant portion of their time. Studies by Tirno et al., (2023), suggest that when employees work in eco-friendly environments, they are more likely to adopt sustainable practices in their daily work, creating a positive feedback loop of sustainability initiatives. In MSMEs, creating an eco-friendly work environment can involve relatively simple and low-cost changes, such as reducing paper use, optimizing waste management, and adopting energy-efficient office equipment. Research by Ciuciuc et al., (2025) indicates that MSMEs with eco-friendly workplaces experience greater employee satisfaction and are viewed more favourably by customers and the wider community. Furthermore, creating a sustainable work environment can lead to operational cost savings through energy and resource efficiency, making it a win-win for both the environment and the bottom line. To examine the same, we have framed the below hypothesis:

H5: Eco-friendly Work Environment practices positively influences the adoption and effectiveness of Green HRM practices in MSMEs.

Methodology

Data Collection and Procedure

A survey was administered to investigate the proposed study model. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire using stratified random sampling from 246 respondents in the northern part of India. The study's proposed research framework was analysed using Smart PLS-4.0 software (Henseler et al., 2015), utilizing the partial least squares approach and structural equation modelling technique. Hair et al. (2019) employed Smart PLS-4.0 software to assess the reliability and validity of assessment items, as well as hypothesized relationship between exogenous and endogenous variable. Each item in the construct was rated on a five-point Likert scale (1: "Strongly disagree"; 2: "Disagree"; 3: "Neither disagree nor agree"; 4: "Agree"; 5: "Strongly agree").

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Measurement Model

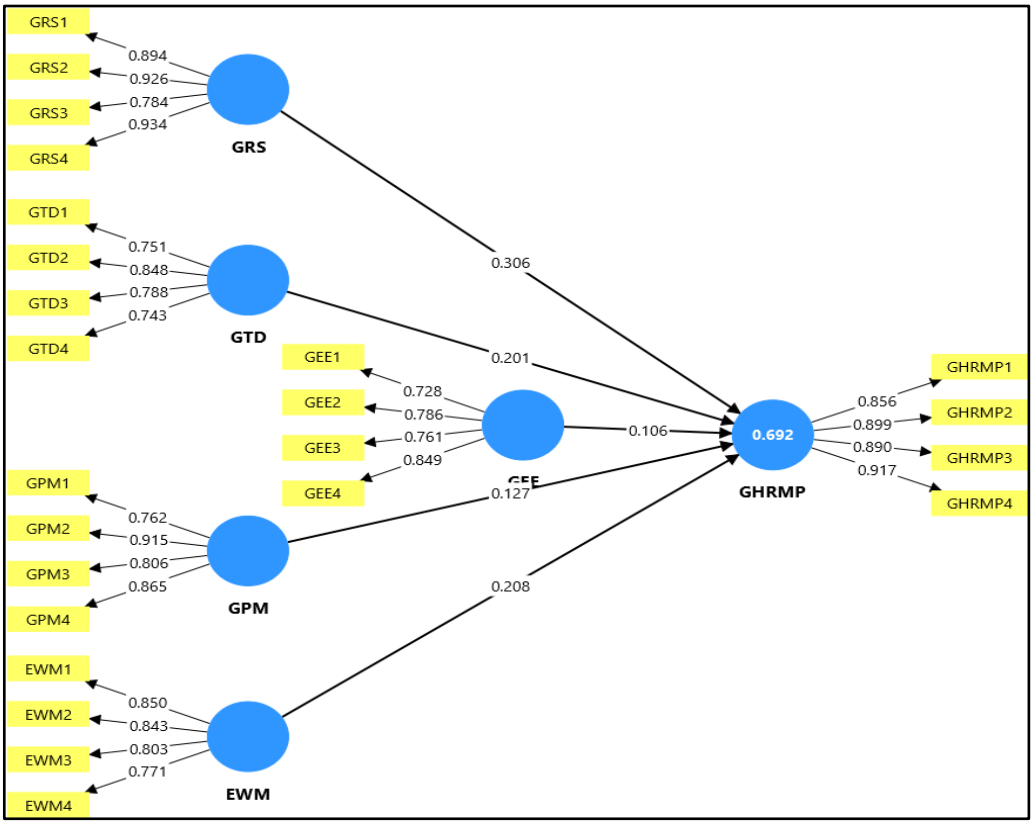

Figure 1: Measurement model assessment

Table 1: Cross-loading

	EWM	GEE	GHRMP	GPM	GRS	GTD
EWM1	0.850					
EWM2	0.843					
EWM3	0.803					
EWM4	0.771					
GEE1		0.728				
GEE2		0.786				
GEE3		0.761				
GEE4		0.849				
GHRMP1			0.856			
GHRMP2			0.899			
GHRMP3			0.890			
GHRMP4			0.917			
GPM1				0.762		
GPM2				0.915		
GPM3				0.806		
GPM4				0.865		
GRS1					0.894	
GRS2					0.926	
GRS3					0.784	
GRS4					0.934	
GTD1						0.751
GTD2						0.848

GTD3						0.788
GTD4						0.743

The table 1, represents a set of values across multiple categories labelled as EWM, GEE, GHRMP, GPM, GRS, and GTD, with each category having specific entries (EWM1, EWM2, GEE1, GEE2, etc.) and their corresponding values. The values range from 0.728 to 0.934, suggesting varying degrees of performance or measurement in these categories. Notably, the highest values are found in GRS (0.926 and 0.934 for GRS2 and GRS4) and GHRMP (0.917 for GHRMP4), indicating strong performances or outcomes in these groups. In contrast, the lowest values are found in GEE1 (0.728) and GTD4 (0.743), which may indicate weaker results or a need for improvement in these specific areas. Overall, the data demonstrates some variability across the different categories, with certain entries showing high effectiveness and others indicating areas for potential growth.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EWM	0.834	0.839	0.889	0.668
GEE	0.788	0.798	0.863	0.612
GHRMP	0.913	0.917	0.939	0.794
GPM	0.858	0.867	0.905	0.704
GRS	0.907	0.912	0.936	0.786
GTD	0.790	0.801	0.864	0.614

The table 2, presents reliability and validity metrics for different constructs, including Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (rho_a and rho_c), and average variance extracted (AVE). Cronbach's alpha values are all above 0.7, indicating good internal consistency across the constructs, with the GHRMP construct showing the highest alpha value of 0.913. The composite reliability values are also consistently above the acceptable threshold of 0.7, demonstrating the reliability of the constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2020). Specifically, the GHRMP construct again exhibits the highest values for both rho_a (0.917) and rho_c (0.939). The average variance extracted (AVE), which assesses convergent validity, is above the threshold of 0.5 for all constructs, signifying that the constructs explain a substantial amount of variance in their indicators. The GHRMP construct has the highest AVE of 0.794, suggesting it has the strongest convergent validity (Voorhees et al., 2016). Overall, the constructs display satisfactory reliability and validity, with GHRMP being the most robust in terms of both reliability and convergent validity.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

	EWM	GEE	GHRMP	GPM	GRS	GTD
EWM						
GEE	0.804					
GHRMP	0.831	0.774				
GPM	0.743	0.870	0.833			
GRS	0.806	0.831	0.843	0.858		
GTD	0.780	0.709	0.820	0.787	0.859	

The table 3, presented above shows the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values for assessing discriminant validity among five constructs: EWM, GEE, GHRMP, GPM, GRS, and GTD. Generally, HTMT values below 0.85 indicate good discriminant validity, meaning the constructs are distinct from one another. Looking at the values, we can see that the highest HTMT value is 0.870 between GEE and GPM, followed closely by 0.859 between GRS and GTD. These values are still below the threshold of 0.85, suggesting that while these constructs have some overlap, they remain sufficiently distinct (Roemer et al., 2021). Additionally, the values for other pairs, such as between EWM and GHRMP (0.831), EWM and GRS (0.806), and GEE and GHRMP (0.774), all maintain good discriminant validity. The lowest value, 0.709 between GEE and GTD, is also within the acceptable range.

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Table 4: Discriminant Validity (Fornell and larcker)

	EWM	GEE	GHRMP	GPM	GRS	GTD
EWM	0.817					
GEE	0.660	0.782				
GHRMP	0.730	0.663	0.891			
GPM	0.754	0.715	0.744	0.839		
GRS	0.703	0.703	0.769	0.758	0.887	
GTD	0.642	0.571	0.702	0.661	0.730	0.784

The table 4, above presents the Discriminant Validity values based on the Fornell and Larcker criterion for six variables: EWM, GEE, GHRMP, GPM, GRS, and GTD. Discriminant validity assesses whether a construct is truly distinct from other constructs. According to the Fornell and Larcker criterion, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct (shown along the diagonal) should be greater than its correlation with other constructs. In this case, the diagonal values (EWM = 0.817, GEE = 0.782, GHRMP = 0.891, GPM = 0.839, GRS = 0.887, and GTD = 0.784) indicate good discriminant validity, as each value exceeds the correlations with other constructs in the table (Voorhees et al., 2016). The correlation between EWM and GEE (0.660) is lower than the square root of the AVE of EWM (0.817), confirming the distinctness of the constructs. Similarly, all other correlations are below the square roots of their respective AVE values, indicating that the constructs are sufficiently distinct from one another, thus supporting the discriminant validity of the model.

Structural Model Assessment

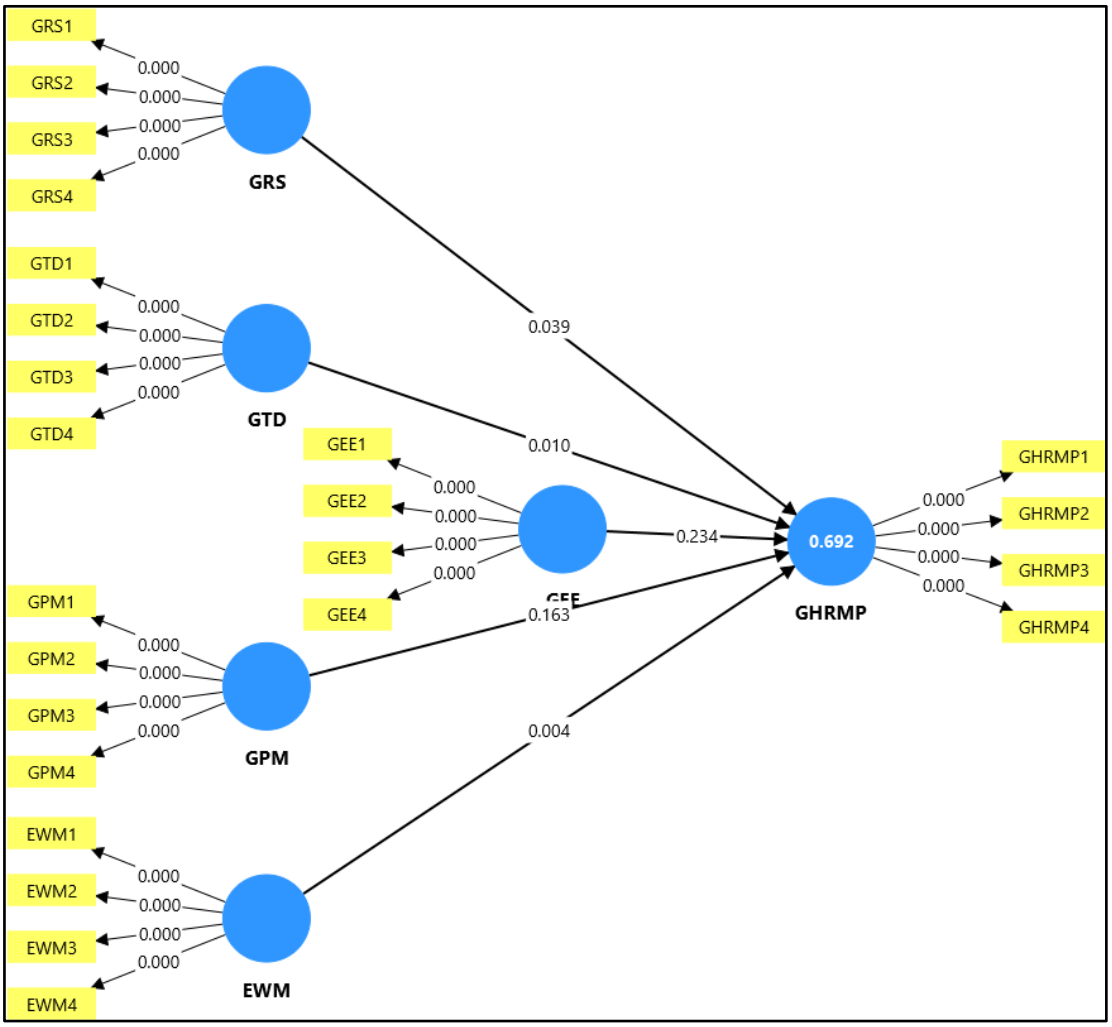

Figure 2: Structural model assessment

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
EWM -> GHRMP	0.208	0.191	0.071	2.909	0.004
GEE -> GHRMP	0.106	0.124	0.089	1.191	0.234
GPM -> GHRMP	0.127	0.123	0.091	1.395	0.163
GRS -> GHRMP	0.306	0.311	0.148	2.067	0.039
GTD -> GHRMP	0.201	0.192	0.078	2.581	0.010

The table 5 & figure 2, show a hypothesis testing results provide insights into the relationships between various independent variables and the dependent variable, GHRMP. For the relationship between EWM and GHRMP, the t-statistic of 2.909 and a p-value of 0.004 indicate a significant effect, as the p-value is less than the standard significance level of 0.05. Similarly, GRS and GHRMP show a statistically significant relationship with a t-statistic of 2.067 and a p-value of 0.039. GTD also shows a significant relationship with GHRMP, with a t-statistic of 2.581 and a p-value of 0.010. In contrast, GEE and GHRMP have a p-value of 0.234 and GPM and GHRMP have a p-value of 0.163, both of which are greater than 0.05, suggesting that these relationships are not statistically significant. Overall, EWM, GRS, and GTD demonstrate significant influences on GHRMP, while GEE and GPM do not.

Discussion on result

The results reveal that in varying levels of statistical significance in the relationships between different Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) practices and Green HRM outcomes (GHRMP). Eco-friendly Work Environment (EWM) shows a strong and statistically significant influence on GHRMP, with a t-statistic of 2.909 and a p-value of 0.004, which is below the threshold of 0.05, indicating a robust positive relationship. This suggests that creating an eco-friendly workplace can play a key role in advancing sustainability practices within MSMEs (Ramgolam et al., 2025). Similarly, Green Recruitment and Selection (GRS) also has a significant effect, with a t-statistic of 2.067 and a p-value of 0.039, implying that recruitment practices aligned with sustainability values can positively contribute to GHRMP (Tessema, 2025). Furthermore, Green Training and Development (GTD) presents a significant relationship with GHRMP, supported by a t-statistic of 2.581 and a p-value of 0.010, highlighting the importance of educating employees about sustainability to enhance organizational performance in this area (Hendri, 2025). In contrast, the relationships between Green Employee Engagement (GEE) and Green Performance Management (GPM) with GHRMP are not statistically significant. With p-values of 0.234 and 0.163, respectively, these results suggest that although these practices are valuable, they may not have as direct an influence on GHRMP within the context of this study (Stirpe et al., 2022). While EWM, GRS, and GTD are proven to significantly affect the adoption and effectiveness of Green HRM practices, GEE and GPM do not show statistically significant contributions in this instance. These findings underline the need for MSMEs to focus on creating a supportive environment, implementing effective recruitment, and investing in training to strengthen their sustainability efforts.

Conclusion

The research underscores the pivotal role of Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) in driving sustainability within Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Through the adoption of practices such as eco-friendly work environments, green recruitment, and training programs, MSMEs can align their human resource strategies with environmental objectives, resulting in improved organizational performance and heightened employee engagement. The

study highlights that while certain Green HRM practices, like Green Employee Engagement and Green Performance Management, did not show statistically significant results, eco-friendly practices, sustainable recruitment strategies, and employee training had a notable impact. These findings emphasize the importance of creating an environmentally conscious workplace, fostering a sustainability-driven culture, and equipping employees with the necessary skills to advance environmental goals. By integrating Green HRM practices, MSMEs can not only contribute to environmental sustainability but also enhance their competitiveness in an increasingly eco-conscious market. The study provides valuable insights into how these organizations can effectively implement green practices to achieve both business success and environmental responsibility.

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