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Green Human Resource Management in Uzbekistan: A Qualitative Systematic Review of Practices, Contextual Pressures, and Implementation Pathways

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Abstract

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is becoming more and more known as a strategic way to make environmental goals part of human resource policies and everyday work habits. This article builds on a qualitative systematic review that looks at the relevance, potential, and possible ways to implement GHRM in Uzbekistan. The review is prompted by the increasing environmental and economic pressures in the country, which include high water stress (123.03% of available freshwater resources in 2022), a mean annual PM2.5 exposure of 31.96 μg/m^3, total greenhouse gas emissions of 227.49 MtCO2e in 2024, and a still modest renewable electricity output of 7.08% in the most recent World Bank dataset. In 2023, small businesses made up 51.2% of GDP, which means that sustainability practices at the workplace level are very important for both large and small businesses. In line with PRISMA 2020 reporting guidelines, the study examined academic and institutional sources published from 2015 to 2026, ultimately selecting seventeen sources for the final thematic synthesis. The review integrates foundational GHRM scholarship with evidence pertaining to the climate, energy, and business contexts specific to Uzbekistan. The results show that five GHRM bundles are especially important for Uzbekistan: green hiring and selection, green training and development, green performance management, green pay and rewards, and employee green involvement that is supported by leadership. Cross-study evidence is strongest for training, leadership, and building a culture, while compensation is still the least developed area. The article contends that the Uzbek situation is not limited by the lack of sustainability discourse, but rather by inadequate translation from national green policy to organizational HR systems. Consequently, the optimal approach is not symbolic greening but a phased implementation, commencing with digital recruitment, cost-effective environmental training, straightforward green KPIs, and employee suggestion mechanisms. The paper adds to the field by putting global GHRM evidence in the context of a transition economy with increasing environmental stress and suggesting a useful framework for management research in emerging economies.

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Introduction

Environmental sustainability has gone from being a small part of management discussions to being at the heart of business strategy. Companies are no longer judged only on how productive they are, how fast they grow in the market, or how well they manage their money. People are judging them more and more by how they use energy, deal with trash, shape how employees act, and meet social expectations for being environmentally responsible and climate resilient. In this change, Human Resource Management (HRM) is very important because employees turn formal environmental goals into everyday tasks, rules of behavior, and the culture of the organization.

GHRM means adding environmental goals to hiring, training, performance reviews, pay, employee involvement, and leadership development. Earlier work on the subject framed green HRM as a link between managing people and managing the environment. Later reviews showed that GHRM supports pro-environmental behavior, a green organizational culture, and long-term success when practices are used together instead of as separate initiatives (Jackson et al., 2011; Ren et al., 2018; Amrutha & Geetha, 2020). More recent research shows that green leadership, employee engagement, and environmental knowledge are important factors that affect how well people do their jobs (Ababneh, 2021; Farrukh et al., 2022; Ahmad et al., 2023).

In the case of Uzbekistan, the subject matter is particularly topical. The nation is under extreme environmental demands which directly apply on business management. According to world bank sustainability indicators, the water stress is at 123.03 percent of available freshwater resources, annual PM 2.5 exposure is at 31.96 μg/m3, and total greenhouse gas emissions are at 227.49 MtCO2e. The Country Climate and Development Report by the World Bank also cautions that the economy of Uzbekistan might have reduced by 10% by 2050 unless it adapts. Moreover, the PM2.5 load in Tashkent has been associated with over 3,000 deaths and loss of welfare (US$488.4 million) each year. These statistics prove that sustainability is no far-fetched international rhetoric, but a managerial and employee concern that has operational, health, and competitiveness implications.

Simultaneously, Uzbekistan is undertaking a grandiose green shift. The President Office states that they have a target of increasing the proportion of renewable energy in overall generation to 54% in 2030 and to cut greenhouse gas emission by 35% in 2030. These targets mean both infrastructure investment and mass shifts in skills, performance systems, and leadership behaviour and routines at the workplace. That is, energy policy by itself cannot make the green transition successful; it must have a people-management architecture.

Nevertheless, there is still one issue. The urgency of the environmental and policy focus is evident, but there is little Uzbekistan-specific academic literature on firm-level GHRM. The available evidence is indirect and incomprehensive, and more powerful empirical research is provided by other emerging economies, but not by Uzbekistan itself. This poses a research gap: managers and researchers require a contextualised synthesis that can help to transfer the larger GHRM evidence base to the conditions of the transition economy in Uzbekistan.

This article fills that gap by doing a qualitative systematic review with a focus on Uzbekistan. It does not assert the provision of a substantial empirical examination. Instead, it wants to write a review article that is ready for publication and is more analytically sound by combining three types of evidence: core GHRM scholarship, newer empirical studies from settings in emerging economies, and authoritative institutional evidence about Uzbekistan's business and environmental landscape. The goals are

fourfold: (1) to find the GHRM practices that are most useful for Uzbekistan; (2) to explain how these practices might affect environmental and organizational outcomes; (3) to find the structural barriers that make it hard to put these practices into action; and (4) to suggest a series of managerial and policy recommendations that fit with the structure of a qualitative review article.

Table 1. Selected sustainability and business indicators relevant to GHRM in Uzbekistan

Indicator	Latest value	Year	Why it matters for Green HRM
Level of water stress	123.03% of available freshwater resources	2022	Creates pressure for employee awareness, resource discipline, and water-efficient workplace behaviour.
PM2.5 mean annual exposure	31.96 μg/m^3	2020	Highlights health and operational relevance of cleaner processes, commuting policies, and indoor environmental practices.
Total GHG emissions	227.49 MtCO2e	2024	Supports the business case for green KPIs, reporting, and low-carbon workforce practices.
Renewable electricity output	7.08% of total electricity output	2021	Shows that the green transition is advancing but still incomplete, requiring organizational adaptation.
Share of small business in GDP	51.2%	2023	Indicates that GHRM guidance must be feasible for SMEs, not only large corporations.

Source: Compiled from World Bank ESG Data Portal, World Bank climate and air-quality publications, and the Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan.

Green Human Resource Management

The literature has defined Green HRM in different ways, but they all agree on one thing: environmental sustainability becomes a part of how people are managed. Jackson et al. (2011) characterized GHRM as an evolving discipline that integrates environmental management with human resource management. Ren et al. (2018) subsequently demonstrated that the literature evolved from conceptual discourse to more integrative frameworks linking HR practices, employee behaviors, and performance outcomes. Pham et al. (2019) and Amrutha and Geetha (2020) made it even clearer that GHRM is not just one policy, but a group of practices that depend on each other.

This review uses three theoretical perspectives. First, the Resource-Based View (RBV) describes why green knowledge, environmental routines, and values-appropriate employees can be turned into strategic assets. When a company creates a workforce that can save resources, adhere to discipline, and be green in innovation, then these resources can hardly be emulated and it can lead to sustainability in competition. Second, the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model is useful in clarifying the logic of implementation: Employees require green ability in training, green motivation in rewards and recognition, and green opportunity in participation systems and facilitating leadership. Third, institutional theory has been applied to understand why firms implement GHRM because of pressures exerted by regulators, foreign partners, export markets, investors, and social justice issues.

The theories are very applicable to Uzbekistan. RBV emphasizes the importance of considering green skills as a competitive resource by firms in a reforming economy. AMO elucidates the ways national environmental goals may be converted into HR systems. Institutional theory elucidates the reason why sectors vulnerable to foreign investment, export standards, or international reporting requirements might implement GHRM sooner than the locally oriented SMEs.

Empirical experience of the emerging economies.

Though there is a dearth of direct firm-level research in Uzbekistan, transferable lessons can be learnt through empirical evidence of emergent economies. Ansari et al. (2021) discovered that GHRM reinforces pro-environmental behaviour of employees via green commitment. Ababneh (2021) demonstrated that employee engagement and personality qualities determine the extent to which green HRM is converted into green behaviour. The study by Ahmad et al. (2021) also has connections between ethical leadership, GHRM, and environmental knowledge, indicating that leaders are not merely decision-makers but also behavioural role models. Farrukh et al. (2022) verified that the behavioural impact of GHRM is supported by green transformational leadership and environmental knowledge. Ahmad et al. (2023) also revealed that green performance management, compensation, training and recruitment have an effect on organizational culture and pro-environmental behaviour in workplace. Combined, these studies suggest that formal HR mechanisms are most effective with the help of leadership and culture.

Method

The research is a qualitative systematic review. It is not statistical in nature but evidence synthesis. The review is based on PRISMA 2020 reasoning logic of transparent reporting and it is aimed at enhancing the methodological strength of the revised article. Searching was done on peer-reviewed journal articles, review articles, and institutional sources, which collectively may provide an explanation of both the theory of GHRM and the specific situation in Uzbekistan.

The search strategy involved combinations of the terms like green human resource management, green HRM practices, pro-environmental behaviour, sustainable performance, emerging economy, and Uzbekistan sustainability and targeting of searches in the climate, the air quality, renewable energy, and the SME indicator of Uzbekistan. Published sources in the period between 2015 and 2026 were given priority whereas seminal foundational pre-2015 sources were used where appropriate to describe the evolution of the field.

Inclusion criteria were: (1) peer-reviewed GHRM articles or systematic reviews that have definite conceptual or empirical relevance; (2) institutional articles that offer authoritative and current data on the environmental, climate, energy, or business conditions in Uzbekistan; (3) English language materials that are sufficiently detailed in their methods or facts; and (4) publications that can be directly used to synthesize the thematic literature. Inclusion criterion: only descriptive opinion articles were included, as well as sources that do not have accessible metadata, articles that are not related to HRM, and those that were duplicated in the review.

Following the screening of the available sources, the final qualitative synthesis included seventeen items: thirteen peer-reviewed articles or reviews and four institutional or policy-based sources. Data were summarized into a thematic matrix of four analysis columns: the type of source, core idea/discovery, applicability to Uzbekistan, and applicability to HR practice. Coding was done based on six themes; recruitment,

training, performance management, compensation, employee involvement/leadership and contextual policy pressure.

Figure 1. PRISMA-style screening process used in this review

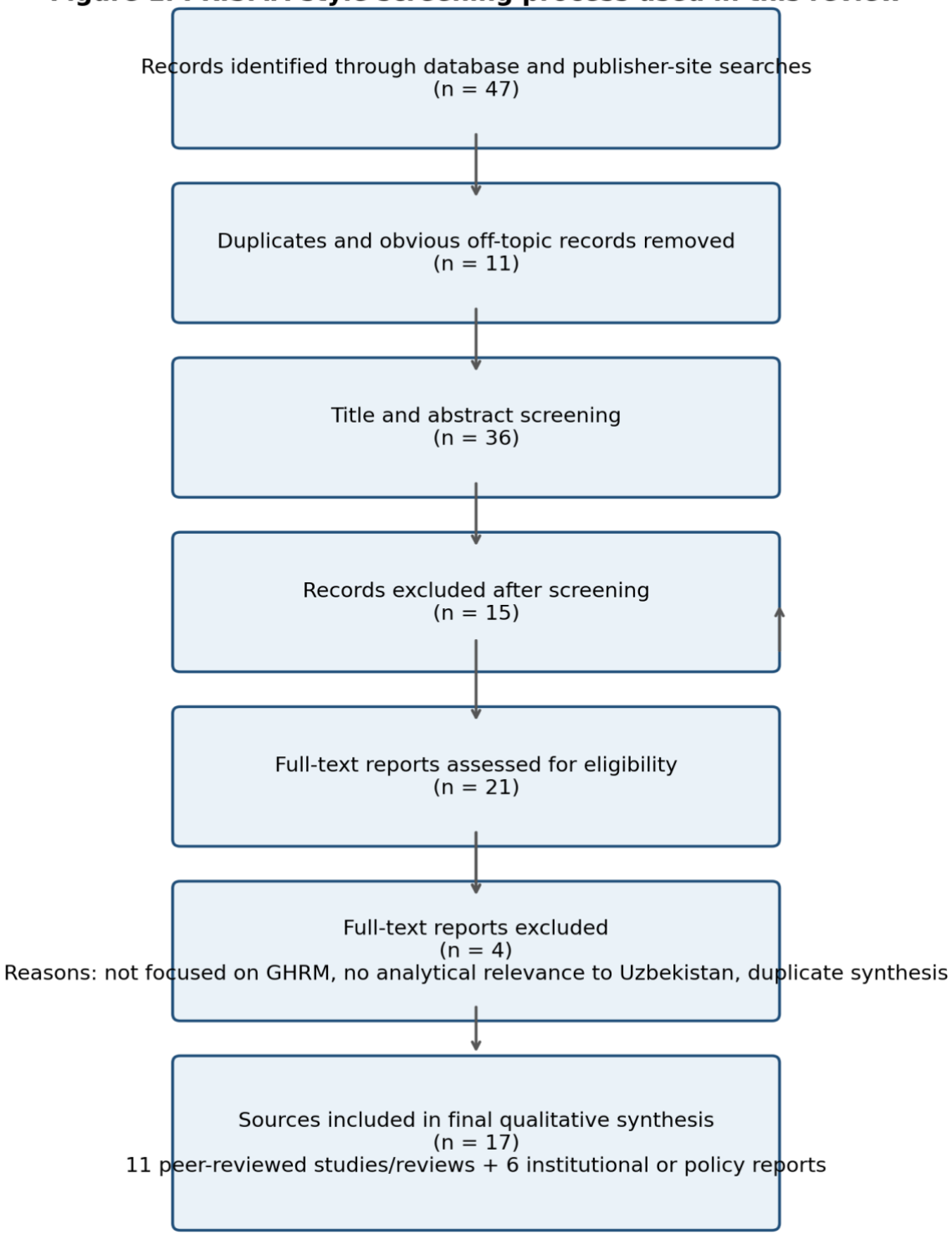

Figure 1. PRISMA-style screening process used in this review
Source: Author's screening of peer-reviewed and institutional sources.

Table 2. Review Protocol Used in The Revised Article

Protocol component	Description
Review type	Qualitative systematic review with contextual synthesis.
Reporting logic	PRISMA 2020 used to strengthen transparency and article structure.
Time horizon	Primarily 2015–2026, plus selected foundational GHRM works.
Source types	Peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic reviews, World Bank, IEA, national statistics, and official policy statements.
Inclusion focus	GHRM mechanisms, emerging-economy evidence, Uzbekistan environmental/business indicators.
Analytical method	Thematic coding and interpretive synthesis using RBV, AMO, and institutional theory.
Final synthesis corpus	17 sources (11 academic + 6 institutional/policy sources).

Result and Discussion

Analisis Green HRM in Uzbekistan: Why it is important.

The review indicates that the significance of GHRM in Uzbekistan is a result of the interplay between ecological stress, economic reform, and organizational modernization. The nation is not beginning at nothing: sustainability has already become a part of national policy, climate planning, and the energy transition agenda. However, there is still a big disparity between the macro-level ambition of policy and the micro-level organizational practice. It is at this disparity that GHRM comes in.

There are three contextual observations which are prominent. First, the environmental pressures in Uzbekistan are high enough to warrant some intervention at the workplace level. The amount of water stress exceeding 100 percent implies resource use structural pressure. Air pollution in Tashkent is a labour and health problem as well as an environmental problem, particularly due to the fact that the World Bank estimates that it causes over 3,000 premature deaths per year and hefty welfare losses. Second, the green transition in the country is gaining momentum, and as the government has official goals of 54 percent of the renewable generation in 2030 and 35 percent of emissions reduction. Third, small business is still economically centralized with 51.2% GDP in 2023. Consequently, GHRM in Uzbekistan should not be structured to suit solely the multinational firms, but it should also be flexible to suit the SMEs with small budgets and low technical capacity.

These circumstances suggest that the GHRM in Uzbekistan cannot be viewed as a simple ethical add-on. It must be packaged as a tool of operational effectiveness, regulatory readiness, employee health consciousness, market confidence, and sustained competitiveness. This framing is particularly significant in transition economies, where companies tend to use environmental language as a symbol, unless they appear to have a direct management payoff.

Green Recruitment and Selection

The initial thematic result is that recruitment is important as it determines the initial fit in values between the company and the workers. It is demonstrated in the literature that the best practice with green recruitment is where the job advertisement, interview criteria, and employer branding clearly state environmental responsibility. In practice,

this does not involve costly systems. Uzbek companies can start by adding basic sustainability tasks to job descriptions, focusing on digital recruitment to minimise the usage of paper, and evaluating the readiness of the candidates to adhere to environmental processes.

In the case of export-based firms and multinational subsidiaries of Uzbekistan, the first point of entry to GHRM is likely to be through recruitment since companies receive higher external reporting and compliance demands. Nevertheless, the review also suggests that recruitment does not have many results unless it is supported by green socialization and training. Thus, recruitment must be viewed as the initial step as opposed to the complete solution.

Green Training and Development.

The most powerful theme in the evidence base reviewed was training and development. This is in line with the overall GHRM literature, which over and over again cites environmental training as the most apparent and most practicable of all. In the case of Uzbekistan, training is particularly relevant, since not all organizations might have a well-developed system of environmental management yet. Training thus has a technical and also a cultural role to play.

Staged approach is suggested. The initial tier needs to be basic environmental literacy: energy conservation, waste management, water conservation, and material handling. The second level must be job-specific as it correlates environmental behaviour with the job performance- i.e., procurement staff, facility managers, production teams, logistics employees, or office administrators. Managerial capability, particularly the use of environmental indicators and monitoring at the team level, should be tackled at the third level. This stratified system is appropriate in Uzbekistan due to its ability to allow inexpensive entry and institutionalization.

It is also demonstrated in the literature that training is more effective when it is not promoted as punishment or pressured compliance alone. When green training is associated with problem-solving, workplace pride, health benefits, or efficiency, employees react more. This is why the training programmes of the Uzbek organizations must not use abstract sustainability rhetoric, but provide practical local cases (winter heating, electricity wastage, dust in the workplace, and water-saving habits).

Green Performance Management

The third theme is about performance management. As Marrucci et al. (2024) showed, when the firms establish quantifiable and role-relevant indicators, it is possible to incorporate these environmental indicators into the reward systems. In the case of Uzbekistan, it is not a question of whether green KPIs are theoretically useful, it is the question of whether organizations are able to implement simple, credible and low-burden indicators.

The data indicates that companies ought to start with a small number of KPI. Some examples are monthly electricity consumption per unit or office space, reduction of paper use, involvement in training, adherence to waste segregation, and submission of green suggestions by employees. The indicators could be resource efficiency in production, minimization of leaks, downtime caused by non-compliance with the environment, or housekeeping. The metrics must be incorporated into the current appraisal systems, and not as a new bureaucratic division.

This aspect is vital to the Uzbek SMEs. Complex environmental scorecard might not be realistic to small firms, and few visible green indicators is possible. When the employees realise that environmental behaviour is being monitored formally, symbolic commitment will then be changed to behavioural accountability.

Green Compensation and Rewards

The least developed GHRM practice in most of the literature (and probably in Uzbekistan) is compensation and rewards. Most companies are likely to be unwilling to tie money to environmental objectives due to the lack of reliable measurements or the fear of extra expenses. However, literature suggests that rewards need not be in the form of money alone. Green incentives can be recognition systems, team awards, public appreciation, certification, and career-development visibility.

A pragmatic solution to Uzbekistan is that a hybrid model should be adopted. In the short-run, organizations can count on cheap symbolic awards like, green team of the month, certificates, internal recognition, or feature in promotion conversations. In the medium term, companies with better systems are able to provide small bonuses to proven resource saving outputs or improvement suggestions. It is not the reward that matters but rather the credibility, transparency, and consistency of the reward.

Leadership, Involvement of Employees and Culture.

The most impactful cross-study message of the review is that GHRM is successful when leadership and employee engagement complement. Leadership behaviour makes formal HR tools legitimate, as they provide structure. According to studies by Ansari et al. (2021), Ahmad et al. (2021), and Farrukh et al. (2022), the behavioural impact of GHRM is reinforced by engagement, ethical leadership, environmental knowledge, as well as transformational support.

It is a particularly important theme in Uzbekistan, where organizational cultures based on hierarchy might continue to have a strong influence on the behaviour of employees. The staff of such environments can see how managers save on energy, embrace digitalisation, reduce superfluous waste, and how they take environmental processes seriously. GHRM will lack credibility when leaders do not follow their own rules. On the other hand, even basic HR interventions can have more intense cultural impacts, when the leaders act as green leaders.

The mechanisms of participation among employees are necessary as well. Suggestion system, cross-functional green teams, in-house campaigns, and regular improvement meetings enable employees to come up with locally applicable solutions. Within the Uzbek culture, engagement is bound to be more productive when linked to tangible operation issues as opposed to abstract business slogans. As an illustration, employees may be asked to discover the instances of unneeded electricity consumption, water waste, unnecessary printing, or even some straightforward housekeeping that could help lessen dust and waste.

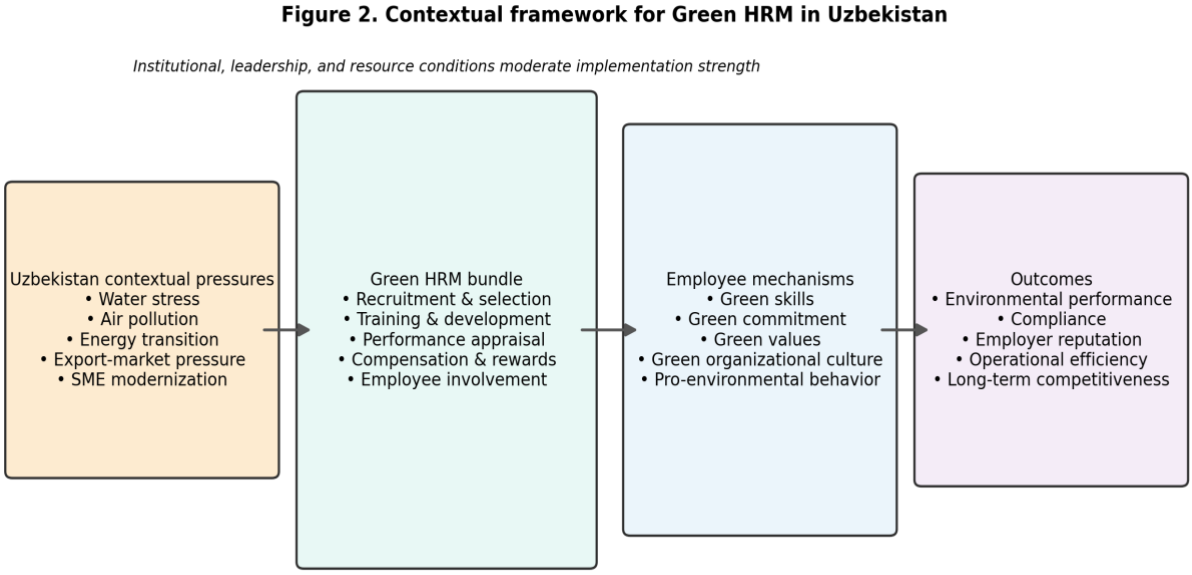

Figure 2. Contextual framework for Green HRM in Uzbekistan
Source: Author's conceptual synthesis based on RBV, AMO, institutional theory, and reviewed evidence.

Thematic Synthesis of The Evidence Base

The thematic coding confirms that green training and employee involvement are the most prominent and most actionable dimensions of GHRM, followed by leadership/culture and performance management. Recruitment is moderately represented, while compensation remains comparatively underdeveloped. This pattern suggests that the pathway most suited to Uzbekistan is sequential rather than simultaneous. Organizations should first create green awareness and participation, then institutionalize green indicators, and only afterwards build stronger reward structures.

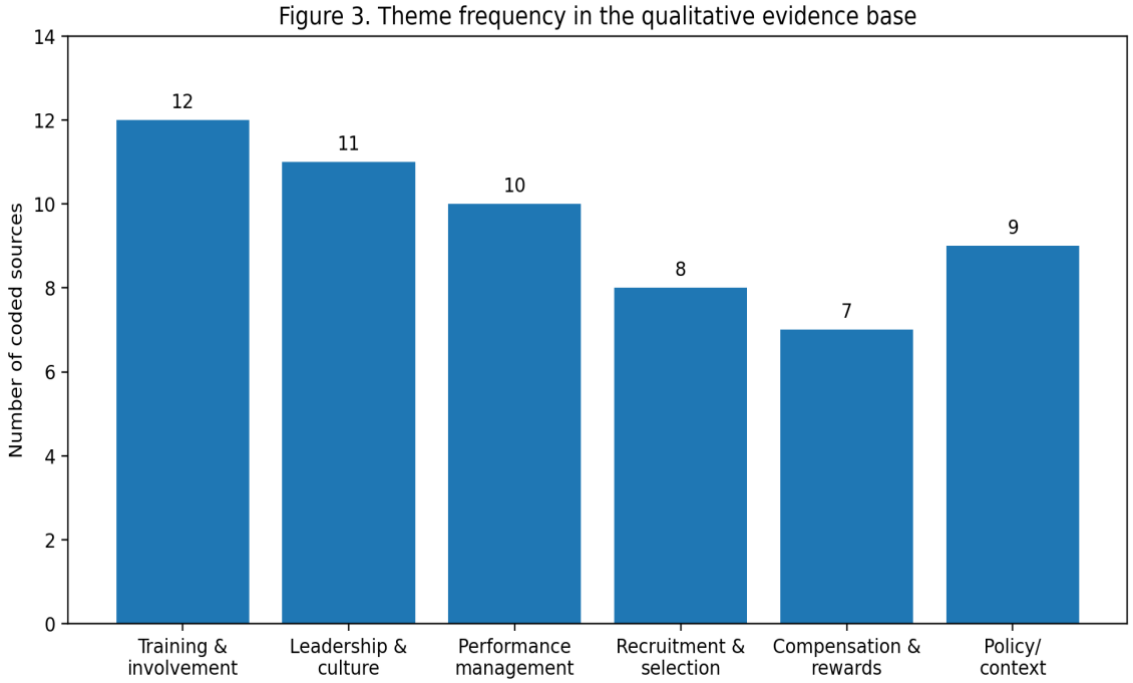

Figure. Selected literature and its contribution to this review
Source: Author's coding of the final synthesis corpus.

Table 3. Thematic Synthesis of The Evidence Base

Source	Type	Main contribution	Relevance for Uzbekistan
Jackson et al. (2011)	Conceptual	Established green HRM as a bridge between environmental and people management.	Useful for framing the field and legitimising the topic academically.
Ren et al. (2018)	Review	Mapped the emergence of GHRM research and future directions.	Supports the use of a bundled-practice perspective.
Pham et al. (2019)	Review	Provided a comprehensive agenda for GHRM research.	Helps strengthen the literature review section.
Amrutha & Geetha (2020)	Systematic review	Showed the importance of GHRM for social sustainability.	Supports qualitative review logic and links to employee outcomes.
Ansari et al. (2021)	Empirical	Connected GHRM with pro-environmental behaviour through green commitment.	Suggests behavioural mechanisms for Uzbek firms.
Ababneh (2021)	Empirical	Highlighted employee engagement and personality as mediators.	Shows why green HRM requires employee buy-in, not only formal policy.
Ahmad et al. (2021)	Empirical	Linked ethical leadership, GHRM, and environmental knowledge.	Important for hierarchical organizational settings.
Farrukh et al. (2022)	Empirical	Confirmed the role of transformational leadership and knowledge.	Supports leadership-centered implementation.
Ahmad et al. (2023)	Empirical	Showed the role of recruitment, training, performance, and compensation in shaping green culture.	Useful for practical HR design.
Marrucci et al. (2024)	Case-based	Developed environmental indicators linked to employee rewards.	Useful for designing feasible green KPIs.
World Bank (2023; 2024)	Institutional	Provided climate-risk, emissions, and air-quality evidence.	Explains why GHRM has operational urgency in Uzbekistan.

Table 4. Practical GHRM pathways for organizations in Uzbekistan

GHRM practice	Short-term action	Medium-term action	Expected outcome
Recruitment & selection	Add environmental responsibility to job descriptions; use digital hiring workflows.	Assess green values and compliance mindset during interviews.	Better value fit and easier socialization.
Training & development	Run low-cost modules on energy, water, waste, and workplace behaviour.	Develop role-specific green training and manager modules.	Improved green skills and routine discipline.
Performance management	Use 2–4 basic green KPIs linked to existing appraisal systems.	Expand KPIs by department and monitor trends over time.	Higher accountability and measurable improvement.
Compensation & rewards	Use symbolic recognition and internal awards.	Add modest performance-linked green incentives where data are reliable.	Greater motivation and idea generation.
Employee involvement	Create green suggestion channels and team-based campaigns.	Formalize green committees and periodic review meetings.	Stronger culture, participation, and ownership.
Leadership	Managers model green routines and communicate clear expectations.	Include environmental accountability in managerial evaluation.	Higher credibility and reduced symbolic compliance.

Major Barriers in the Uzbek Context

The review identifies five major implementation barriers. First, many organizations still treat environmental management as a technical or compliance matter rather than an HR issue. As a result, HR departments may remain peripheral to sustainability strategy. Second, measurement capacity is limited, especially in SMEs. Without simple indicators, managers struggle to connect green behaviour with appraisal and rewards. Third, financial constraints may discourage investment in structured environmental training or digital systems. Fourth, institutional diffusion is uneven: firms linked to foreign investment or export markets move faster than domestically oriented businesses. Fifth, direct Uzbekistan-specific GHRM case evidence remains limited, which reduces the availability of local models and peer examples.

These barriers do not imply that GHRM is impractical in Uzbekistan. Rather, they suggest that an incremental model is more suitable than a fully formalized Western-style system. Symbolic imitation should be avoided. A small number of credible and visible green practices is more effective than a large number of poorly implemented policies.

\Implications for Managers and Policymakers

For managers, the first implication is strategic positioning: green HRM should be attached to productivity, cost control, risk reduction, and employer reputation rather than communicated only as a moral duty. The second implication is sequencing. Firms should begin with digitalisation, training, leadership signalling, and simple KPIs before building formal green bonus structures. The third implication is localisation. Green HRM messages should use familiar problems such as water use, heating costs, printing habits, waste handling, and air quality rather than generic global terminology.

For policymakers and business associations, the priority is diffusion support. Uzbekistan's national green transition agenda will advance more quickly if HR-related implementation templates are made available to firms. Ministries, chambers of commerce, and universities could develop low-cost toolkits, short certificate programmes, and model green KPI templates for SMEs. Because small business remains central to GDP, such support is essential for broad-based organizational change.

Universities and business schools also have a role. The next generation of HR professionals in Uzbekistan should be trained not only in recruitment and payroll systems but also in environmental communication, behaviour change, sustainability reporting basics, and green performance design. This would reduce the current gap between macro-policy ambition and firm-level execution.

Conclusion

This qualitative systematic review shows that Green Human Resource Management is highly relevant to Uzbekistan, not despite the country's developmental priorities but because of them. Uzbekistan faces a combination of ecological stress, energy transition, and organizational modernization that makes workforce-level sustainability increasingly important. The evidence reviewed here suggests that GHRM is most effective when implemented as an integrated bundle of recruitment, training, performance management, compensation, and employee involvement supported by visible leadership.

The main contribution of this revised article is contextualisation. Instead of importing GHRM theory in an abstract manner, the review links it to Uzbekistan's concrete realities: high water stress, harmful air pollution, significant greenhouse gas emissions, the need for workplace skills in a green transition, and the economic importance of SMEs. The findings indicate that training, culture-building, and leadership are the most immediate levers, while compensation systems should be introduced more gradually.

The article also makes a methodological contribution by showing how a publication-oriented qualitative review can combine peer-reviewed GHRM literature with authoritative national indicators and policy evidence. For future research, the clearest need is for primary empirical work in Uzbek organizations, especially comparative case studies across manufacturing, services, and SMEs. Such studies would help move the field from contextual synthesis toward locally grounded theory building.

In conclusion, GHRM should be understood in Uzbekistan not as a luxury for large corporations but as a scalable management approach that can strengthen environmental responsibility, organizational efficiency, and long-term competitiveness. The challenge is no longer whether sustainability matters, but how it is translated into daily work systems. HRM is one of the most direct channels through which that translation can occur.

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