

Pathways Towards Green Management Policies in Public Sector

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Abstract

Sustainable development is becoming the topic most discussed nowadays. It is a universal issue targeting peace and freedom for people, the planet and prosperity. Supporting sustainable sectors, encouraging sustainable lifestyles, and allocating time and resources to scientific research are important strategies to promote sustainable development. This research paper purposes a theoretical framework of green HRM and its effects on an organisation's sustainable performance. This study aims to understand the influence of green human resource management (green HRM) practices on sustainable performance in Malaysia's public service organisations. This article is expected to help researchers develop an interest in green HRM and perhaps gain conceptual knowledge of this as well. Finally, this paper is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the managerial perspectives on green HRM and the perceived importance of sustainable performance for future researchers.

Keywords: Green HRM, Management, Policy, Sustainable Performance, Public Sector.

1. Introduction

Sustainability has recently received much attention from researchers, businesses and stakeholders. The dire condition of the global environmental deterioration, economic and social decline has driven the participating countries under United Nations Member States to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2012). The sustainable development goals or also known as SDGs, have outlined seventeen (17) targets to tackle universal issues such as ending poverty and hunger, reducing inequalities, improving quality of life in terms of healthy lives, clean water, clean energy, and other deprivations related to sustainable of economy, people and the environment. These global goals have put everyone in the society from institutional, organisational, and individual levels to play their role and contribute to sustainable development.

Among 178 countries of the United Nations members, Malaysia also pledges to achieve sustainable development goals. Maintaining the global partnership in adopting the SDGs is needed as the world's climate has changed substantially in the past decades and will continue

to do so at a rapid pace (Janaka et al., 2018). The Malaysian government has taken several initiatives to address the SDGs. Mainly, the government has put some effort to incorporate the SDGs through the national plans and policies, starting from the New Economic Policy (1971-1990), followed by the National Development Policy (1991-2000), the National Vision Policy (2001-2020), the Eleventh Plan (2016-2020) and most recently the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-2025). All these plans aim toward achieving the 2030 Sustainable Agenda that is developing the economy together with the society and at the same time preserving the environment. Thus, in conjunction with the plans, the government has also introduced and implemented numerous environmental policies such as the National Policy on the Environment, the National Forestry Policy, the National Policy on Biological Diversity, the National Mineral Policy, and the National Policy on Climate Change. On the other hand, the regulations that have been reinforced are Environmental Quality Act 1974, National Forestry Act 1984 and Wildlife Conservation Act 2010.

In addition to that, the government also have initiated environmental movements and campaigns to support the policy implementation at every level of society, including students, educators, rural and urban communities, non-government organisations (NGOs), and others. Environmental awareness campaigns, tree replantation programs, environmental exhibitions, and collaborative workshops and conferences with the ministry departments, government agencies, and the private sector have enhanced public awareness of environmental preservation. As a result, many organizations are willing to establish environmental management systems or green initiatives to ensure that their daily operations are less harmful to the environment (Fawehinmi et al., 2020). Green human resource management (green HRM) is one of the green initiatives that can help improve human resource management by incorporating environmental awareness into the organisation's management system. The green HRM activities can be varies depending on the nature and size of organizations but usually maintain the main functions for example green recruitment, green training, green compensation and rewards, and green performance management. These initiatives will raise environmental awareness and promote environmentally friendly beliefs, practises, and activities, leading to enhanced organisational efficiency and environmental sustainability (Anwar et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, it appears that the efforts are only having a minimal effect. The reinforcement does not give the impression to have been compelling enough to improve the overall national sustainability. According to the Sustainable Development Report 2021, Malaysia was ranked number 65 with 70.9 per cent of index scores. Only one goal is considered SDG achieved and on track to maintain the achievement that eliminates poverty. However, the other sixteen targets still encounter significant and major challenges such as zero hunger, good health, inequality, clean water and sanitation, climate action, and life on land and below water. This report proved that Malaysia still needs a lot of work and effort to improve SDG attainment. Therefore, as the country's backbone, the government should make more comprehensive efforts, such as implementing green management in the organisation. Hence, it becomes a culture that could impact the organisation's sustainable performance and eventually drive the country in achieving the goals for the people, economy and the environment.

2. Underpinning Theory

This section focuses on the theoretical background of this research. The theory is an interrelated set of constructs formed into proposals or assumptions that indicate the relation between variables (Creswell, 2009). The research paper aims to examine the influence of green management on sustainable performance in the public sector in Malaysia. Triple-Bottom Line Theory (TBL) by Elkington (1998) and the Resource-based View (RBV) by Barney (2001)

were chosen to explain the link between green management and sustainable performance in the context of the public sector in Malaysia.

2.1 Triple Bottom Line (TBL)

Scholars and the industry's key players have widely used the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) concept to produce public reporting about its sustainability. The TBL simultaneously emphasises economic, social, and environmental performance (Colbert & Kurucz, 2007). John Elkington initially introduced the notion of TBL in the 1990s. Some mentioned the term “triple bottom line” by the founder of a British consultancy called ‘Sustain-Ability’ by John Elkington himself in the year 1994 (The Economist, 2009; Yusmazida Mohd Yusoff, Omar, Kamarul-Zaman, et al., 2019), although most scholars started to recognise the idea when he produces articles related organisation’s measurement towards sustainability in the late 1990s (Brockner et al., 2006; Jabbour & Santos, 2008; Yong et al., 2019).

The TBL has become a significant contributor to the sustainability-related framework that embraced the three Ps: Profit, People, and Planet (Montabon et al., 2016) from the sustainable development main objectives. The three Ps were measured by the three lines in TBL, including environmental and social performance while recognising its economic performance (Elkington, 1998). Therefore, TBL, sustainability, corporate responsibility or sustainability reporting were used interchangeably (Alhaddi, 2015; Colbert & Kurucz, 2007). Figure 1 illustrates the interactions of the triple bottom line model.

Furthermore, the TBL principle introduced report formatting for business report reporting and the requirement to include business assessment in risk judgment, responsibility, social, environmental, and financial aspects. Similarly, the concept provides a consistent and balanced framework on economic, social, and environmental lines for measuring the performance and success of an enterprise (Alhaddi, 2015). The balanced sustainability indicators serve as sustainable objectives to ensure that environmental goals are weighed appropriately against economic and social objectives and allocate sufficient financial resources (Hojnik et al., 2020). Figure 1 shows the Triple Bottom Line Model developed by Elkington in 1998.

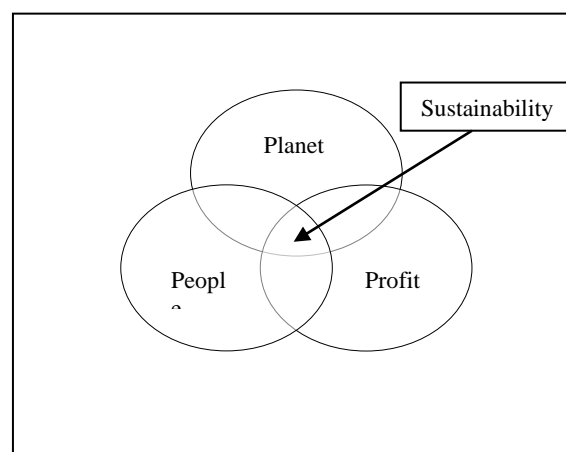


Figure 1 The Triple Bottom Line Model

2.2 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The resource-based view (RBV) is an established theory commonly used to explain a firm’s performance in strategic management. The theory has gone through a series of theoretical development and expansion since the early 1990s. It serves as a tool to analyse firm-level sources of sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 2001). The initial idea of the theory emphasised the firm’s resources and its relationships as sources of sustained competitive

advantage. The concept is divided into three perspectives: the firm resources, competitive advantage, and sustained competitive advantage.

Additionally, the RBV explain the factors influencing an organisation's competitive advantage. An organisation's competitive advantages depend on the variability and fixity of the organisation's resources. Then, the resources will be evaluated in terms of their value (monetary and non-monetary), rareness, imperfect imitability, which means whether the essential resources are either impossible, costly or difficult to duplicate by other organisations. Figure 2 illustrates the resource-based view framework introduced by Barney (1991).

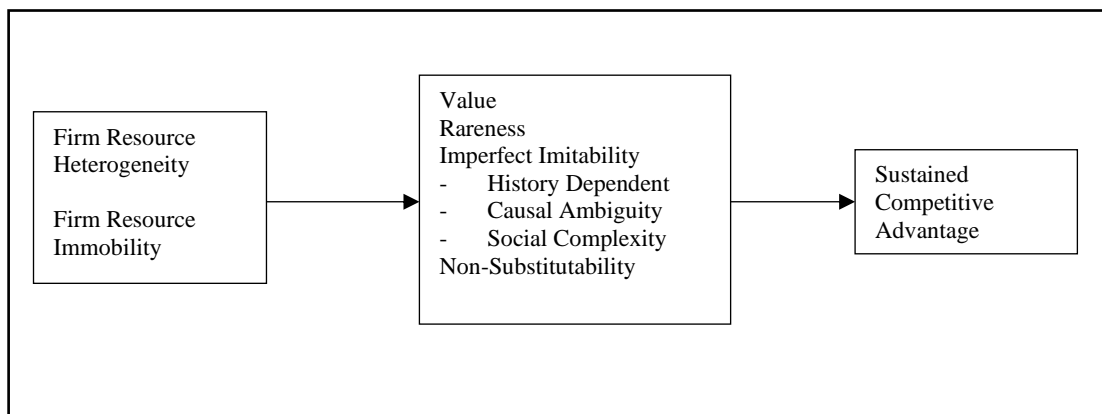


Figure Error! No text of specified style in document. Resource-Based View Framework by Barney (1991)

3. Literature Review

3.1 Sustainable Performance

The growing interest in sustainable development has driven sustainable organisations to seek input from internal and external stakeholders to form their business strategies and operations, considering their financial, sociological, and environmental implications (Das & Singh, 2016). Studies on sustainable performance have been published since the early 2000s. The studies started to emerge with the Triple-Bottom Line theory that proposed a business measure and managed the organisation's outcome. According to Elkington (1998), the formulation of the triple bottom line is to reflect the organisation's economic, social, and environmental performance. The organisation's economic state is closely associated with environmental protection in the long run. With solid economic foundations, businesses are willing to invest in other domains, such as environmental and social aspects (Ong et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, Scholtens (2008) contends that while a change in environmental activities may boost economic growth, it may also have a negative impact on social performance. According to research that looked at the relationship between financial and social performance, high financial performance always comes before social performance since it provides finances and puts investments in place that might boost the firm's environmental and social performance. However, if the organisation does not reward pro-environmental activity, social (employee) performance will suffer (Ong et al., 2019). From another perspective, outstanding environmental and social performance will result in appropriate financial performance because of the effective use of resources and the dedication of employees and stakeholders. For example, by adhering to corporate social responsibility, the company will maximise shareholder value and profit. This outcome also demonstrates that as the company's economy grows, it will improve its social and environmental performance (Kitzmueller & Shimshack, 2012).

Environmental performance refers to the reduction of environmental damage and the protection of resources from exploitation (Yusliza et al., 2019). As economic and social performance are concerned with the financial health of an organisation, environmental performance is concerned with the well-being of employees, customers, and stakeholders. Earlier studies have shown that employee (individual) and organisational (group or unit) environmental performance may be measured (Anwar et al., 2020; Gilal et al., 2019; Guerci et al., 2016; Masri & Jaaron, 2017; Paillé et al., 2020). According to these studies, individual environmental performance is influenced by various elements, including environmental understanding and intention, environmental dedication, and environmental enthusiasm.

In addition to that, employees' environmental performance will increase when employees are highly environmentally satisfied with perceived organisational support for the environment. Despite this, previous studies on corporate environmental performance among managerial employees identified that only green training significantly influences employee environment commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour towards the environment (Pham et al., 2020). Therefore, the organisations could identify the link between pro-environmental activities and performance by including other mediating and moderating variables such as environmental complexity, attitude, knowledge, and awareness (Yusliza et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019).

Based on the above discussion, Figure 3 presents the sustainable performance indicators.

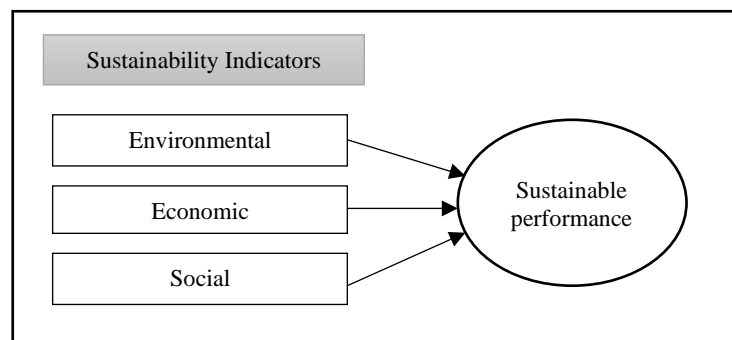


Figure 3 Sustainable Performance Indicator

3.2 Green Human Resource Management

In terms of sustainable development, green human resource management (green HRM) encompasses a wide range of descriptions. Green HRM is a concept that describes the management procedures that organisations use to adapt to environmental problems (Guerci et al., 2016). Green HRM also refers to all activities and practices aimed at improving, developing, implementing, and repairing systems to develop employees to a level of green and environmentally friendly working style (Mehta & Chugan, 2015). In general, green HRM is defined as human resource policies to improve organisational efficiency in human resource functions and practices (Dutta, 2012). As a result, green HRM is seen as comprehensive and integrates its environmental policy with its employees. The goal of implementing green HRM in the workplace is to improve HRM by including environmental awareness (Anwar et al., 2020).

Previous research has highlighted the urgent need to create theoretical and empirical measurements of green HRM to understand better its impact on the individual or organisational performance (Arulrajah et al., 2015; Ren et al., 2017; Renwick et al., 2012). Scholars are at the lead in creating such metrics in a variety of scenarios, such as embedding green HRM in their organisations utilising the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) theoretical lens (Eib et al.,

2020; Gould-Williams & Gatenby, 2010; Kim et al., 2015; Renwick et al., 2013). According to these researches, green HRM methods can impact workers' capacity, motivation, and opportunity to participate in environmental initiatives. Renwick (2018), on the other hand, contends that if businesses do not engage in the whole range of green HRM activities, their efficacy would suffer, which will jeopardise their long-term viability. As a result, more research is needed.

Alternatively, other researchers use resource-based view (RBV) perspectives to identify the linkages between HRM practices and organisational sustainability (Jabbour & Santos, 2008; Malik et al., 2020; Sobaih et al., 2020). These researches proved that green HRM practices might increase workers' environmental knowledge and dedication, resulting in competitive advantages and long-term sustainability for businesses. Nonetheless, not all green HRM strategies contribute to long-term sustainability. In order to incorporate environmental values and environmental management objectives throughout the company, a variety of human resource solutions were established (Jabbour et al., 2017; Jabbour & Santos, 2008). Yong, Yusliza, et al. (2019) agree with the assertion, stating that just a few green HRM practices have been recognised as impacting long-term performance. An overview of green issues is shown in Table 1. These studies provide empirical data and valuable insights into the significant role of green HRM in sustainability.

Table 1 Summary of Green HRM Indicators

Author(s)	Year	Country	Green HRM Indicators
Yusmani Mohd Yusoff, Mehran Nejadi, Daisy Mui Hung Kee, Azlan Amran	2020	Malaysia	Green Recruitment and Selection Green Training and Development Green Compensation
Yuris Danilwan, Dewi Budhiartini Yuli Isnaini, Ikbar Pratama, Dirhamsyah	2020	Indonesia	Green Hiring Green Training and Involvement Green Performance Management and Compensation
Hiba Masri, Ayham Jaaron	2017	Palestine	Green Recruitment and Selection Green Training and Development Green Performance Management and Appraisal Green Reward and Compensation, Green Employee Empowerment and Participation Green Organisational Culture
Jing Yi Yong, Mohd Yusoff Yusliza, Thurasamy Ramayah, Charbel Jose Chiappetta Jabbour, Simone Sehnem, Venkatesh Mani	2019	Malaysia	Green Recruitment Green Training
Saqib Yaqoob Malik, Yasir Hayat Mughal, Tamoor Azam, Yukun Cao, Zhifang Wan, Hongge Zhu and Ramayah Thurasamy	2021	Pakistan	Green Recruitment and Selection, Green Training, Green Rewards, Green Performance Evaluation
Ahmed A. Zaid, Ayham A.M. Jaaron, Abdul Talib Bon	2018	Palestine	Green Hiring Green Training and Involvement Green Performance Management and Compensation
Noor Ullah Khan, Wenya Wu, Roselina Binti Ahmad Saufi, Nur Ain Ayunni Sabri and Ashfaq Ahmad Shah	2021	Malaysia	Green Selection and Recruitment Green Training and Development Green Assessment and Rewards
Neeta Jayabalana, Zafir Khan Mohamed Makhbul, Ramesh Kumar Moona Haji Mohamed, Hayati Yusof, Mai Farhana Mior Badrul Munir	2020	Malaysia	Green Training and Development Green Performance Management Green Employee Involvement

From Table 1, there are several practices mainly researched and proved to significantly influence sustainable performance, such as green recruitment and selection (or green hiring),

green training and development, green compensation and rewards, and green employee involvement (or engagement) and green performance management (or assessment). However, only four green HRM practices will be selected for this research: green recruitment, green training, green compensation and rewards, and green involvement. Green performance and management (or assessment) will not be researched in this study because it has the least or no significant influence on sustainable performance, according to previous research by (Yong, Yusliza, Ramayah, et al., 2019; Yusmani Mohd Yusoff et al., 2020). Hence, this research identifies human resources as a set of practices to improve an organisation's sustainable performance.

Additionally, Renwick et al. (2013) recently reviewed various empirical research that confirms the existence of a green HRM bundle, which is a collection of human resource management techniques that deliberately target environmental performance. It consists of constant and consistent HRM strategies to improve environmental performance, which play a central role in greening the organisation. Nonetheless, some scholars have argued that previous studies have focused extensively on individual practices rather than a set of practices (Longoni et al., 2016). Thus, this study only investigates the influence of green recruitment, green training, green compensation and rewards, and green involvement on local authorities' sustainable performance. Furthermore, previous studies have recommended that future research conduct more studies on the relationship between GHRM bundle practices and firm outcomes (Renwick et al., 2013).

From the above discussion, Figure 4 summarises the conceptual framework of this study.

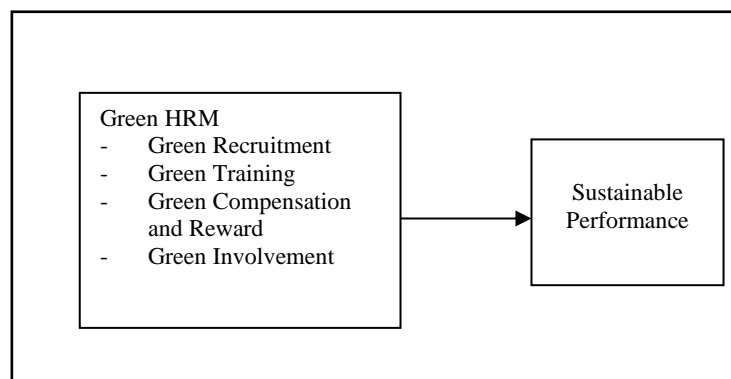


Figure 4 Conceptual Framework

4. Methodology

This research aims to investigate the determinant factors of sustainable performance in the public sector in Malaysia. While previous studies have examined the determinants of sustainable performance in the manufacturing and production sectors (Wasim Syed et al., 2020; Zaid et al., 2018), this study intends to examine the sustainable issue in the service and government sector, which literature is still scarce (Duffy, 2015). Thus, this research will adopt an exploratory research design to understand the sustainable issue better. Exploratory research is practical when there is limited pre-existing information about an issue and new relationships, themes, ideas and patterns (Hair et al., 2020).

This research will employ a survey research strategy to obtain standardised information that could be used to examine the associations between constructs. The survey is designed based on the literature review on organisation sustainable performance. The survey method is ideal for this study because it can be cost-effective, allow quick responses and more representative samples (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method is practical for this research since it allows the researcher to collect qualitative and quantitative data from respondents to describe, compare, or explain their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

This research chooses the local authorities or municipalities in Malaysia as the population. The local authorities were chosen as the population of this study for several reasons. First, the local authorities play an essential role in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically on the local agenda of Agenda 2030 in the Malaysian context. They need to define, implement and monitor at the local level and cooperate with the federal and state government agencies, civil society organisations, private sectors and academia to ensure the achievement of SDGs at the national and sub-national level (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018). Moreover, the local authorities must integrate the sustainable goals with the national vision to achieve better state-level results. The incorporation will bring implications to policy, legal and institutional arrangements for SDGs implementation at the local level. Therefore, local authorities are an ideal research subject population for this study as these organisations are directly involved in environmental protection activities and are aware of sustainability issues.

A self-administrated survey questionnaire will be distributed as an instrument to collect data. The item of the instrument will be adopted and adapted from previous studies. This study will apply multi-item scales consisting of multiple variables and indicators; therefore, each item's scores (rating) should be correlated for the instrument to be reliable. The stronger the correlations between the indicators, the higher the scale's reliability will be.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Many countries and stakeholders have committed to making the necessary transformational efforts to change the world toward a more sustainable and resilient future (Assembly, 2015). With the notion, organisations worldwide have been facing constant pressure to become more sustainable to lessen their environmental consequences, improve their firms' social benefits, and foster economic growth beyond conventional profit-related initiatives (Jabbour & Renwick, 2020). Therefore, organisations had to develop strategies and policies to instigate sustainable development programs and, at the same time, comply with environmental legislation. This trend has increased concern among business leaders, governments, customers, and management scholars to search for innovations to deal with these dilemmas (Jabbour & Santos, 2008).

Additionally, management needs to consider adopting green HRM practices in its organisation functions to meet sustainable organisational targets. Bon et al. (2018) imply that adopting good practices is essential for the firm's survival and enhancing its sustainable performance. Most past studies have used sustainable performance as a measurement or indicator to examine their organisation's sustainable performance. Since the early 2000s, researchers have started developing an interest in this topic and exploring the domains and determinants of sustainable performance. Labuschagne et al. (2005) emphasised the importance of business incorporating sustainable development into an organisation's

operational practices. In addition to that, the company must commit and report the overall sustainable performances.

From other perspectives, various sustainability indicators, metrics, and indexes are increasingly recognised as valuable tools in conveying information on countries and corporate performance for policy-making and public communication (Singh et al., 2009). Among them are the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework, the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD) Theme Indicator Framework, the Institute of Chemical Engineers (IChemE) Sustainability Metrics, and others. While many studies have assessed the organisation's sustainable performance, there are also past studies exploring the employee's perception of their organisation's commitment towards sustainability and its sustainable performance. Jerónimo et al. (2020) studied how the employee perceived the role of green human resource management on the organisation's sustainability. Using the fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis, the results reveal that perceived organisational rationale for sustainability (ORS) was mainly established in green hiring and training. The findings from this study are helpful for future researchers to determine and understand the employees' perception of the organisation's commitment to sustainability.

In addition to that, there are also past studies exploring the role of the organisation's intangible assets, such as human capital and employee capabilities (e.g., knowledge and skills) on the environment for business sustainability (Huang & Kung, 2011; Yong et al., 2019). The integration of environmental elements and intellectual capital has derived the concept of green intellectual capital (Yusoff et al., 2019). Furthermore, there have been previous studies conducted to understand better the role of green practices in sustainable issues, such as creating a green culture in the workplace, involving employees in reducing office waste, encouraging them to use resources efficiently, and other environmentally friendly activities (Das & Singh, 2016; Mehta & Chugan, 2015; Rajjani et al., 2015).

In conclusion, the past studies discussed earlier show that researchers and scholars have begun to set their interest in this area as they realise the importance of building sustainability strategies and measuring their sustainable performance. Nevertheless, Ren et al. (2018) claim that applying green management practices in most organisations is still in its infancy. Thus, this current research is needed to examine the factors that influence an organisation's sustainable performance. Green HRM practices (green recruitment, green training, green compensation and reward and green involvement) will be tested as the determinant factors of an organisation's sustainable performance.

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