

# Human Resources And Environmental Sustainability Through Inclusive Leadership And Green Organizational Culture

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## Abstract

This study examines the pivotal role of human resource practices in promoting environmental sustainability through the mediating influences of inclusive leadership and green organizational culture within selected organisations in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Drawing from both Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the research employs a quantitative descriptive survey design involving 200 valid responses (out of 280 distributed) from employees of small and medium enterprises. The descriptive results indicate that firms increasingly embed green training, recruitment, environmentally aligned appraisals, and reward systems into their HR practices. The regression analysis shows that HR practices significantly predict environmental sustainability ( $\beta = .672$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .450$ ). Mediation tests reveal that inclusive leadership ( $Z = 2.92$ ) and green organizational culture ( $Z = 3.05$ ) significantly mediate this relationship. These findings suggest that while HR practices alone drive sustainable outcomes, their effectiveness is substantially enhanced when supported by leadership styles characterised by inclusivity and by a culture committed to ecological values. The study contributes to the literature by integrating leadership and culture as mechanisms in the HR-sustainability paradigm and provides practical implications for HR professionals and organisational leaders in developing contexts to align people management systems, leadership behaviours, and cultural norms towards sustainability imperatives.

*Keywords: Human Resource Practices; Environmental Sustainability; Inclusive Leadership; Green Organizational Culture; Social Exchange Theory; Sustainable Development.*

## Introduction

In contemporary global discourse, environmental sustainability has emerged as a central pillar of organizational strategy and societal responsibility. The escalating challenges posed by climate change, environmental degradation, and depletion of natural resources have compelled firms to reconsider traditional business models and adopt sustainable operational frameworks (Ahmad, 2015; Jehan, Hussain, Batool, & Imran, 2020; Sibhatu, Debela, & Kero, 2025).

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Beyond regulatory compliance, sustainability has become a competitive necessity, as stakeholders increasingly demand corporate accountability for ecological footprints and social impacts (Jabbour & Renwick, 2022). Within this evolving context, Human Resource Management (HRM) has transformed from an administrative function into a strategic mechanism for driving sustainability through employee engagement, capability development, and value alignment (Renwick, Redman, & Maguire, 2013; Aremu & Adepoju, 2022).

This transition has birthed the concept of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM); a contemporary HR philosophy that integrates environmental goals into HR functions such as recruitment, training, performance management, and reward systems (Fawehinmi et al., 2020; Faeni, Jehan, & Imran, 2025). GHRM seeks to develop employees who are environmentally conscious, motivated to adopt green behaviors, and aligned with the organization's sustainability objectives (Pinzone, Guerci, Lettieri, & Redman, 2016). Studies have demonstrated that GHRM enhances environmental performance, employee green behavior, and organizational citizenship behavior for the environment (OCBE) (Tang et al., 2018; Singh, Del Giudice, & Chierici, 2020). However, scholars emphasize that GHRM's effectiveness depends on contextual enablers—particularly leadership style and organizational culture—which shape how environmental objectives are interpreted and operationalized within the workplace (Adeel, Jamil, & Ullah, 2022; Balogun & Kabuoh, 2023).

Among contemporary leadership paradigms, inclusive leadership has gained increasing scholarly attention for its capacity to enhance employee engagement and pro-environmental behavior (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2010; Ng & Sears, 2020). Inclusive leadership emphasizes fairness, openness, and active participation, thereby fostering psychological safety and empowering employees to contribute innovative ideas that support sustainability initiatives (Shore et al., 2011). Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), inclusive leadership promotes reciprocity—employees who perceive inclusion and respect are more likely to reciprocate through heightened commitment, creativity, and environmental responsibility (Aremu & Adepoju, 2022; Choi, Tran, & Park, 2015). Recent empirical findings suggest that inclusive leadership enhances green innovation, collective efficacy, and employee green engagement, thereby mediating the relationship between HRM practices and environmental performance (Balogun & Kabuoh, 2023).

Equally critical to sustainability is the presence of a green organizational culture—a system of shared values, norms, and practices that prioritize environmental stewardship (Harris & Crane, 2002; Lo, Peters, & Kok, 2017). A green culture fosters collective responsibility toward environmental protection by embedding ecological awareness into organizational identity and daily operations (Nart, Bilgili, & Orgut, 2024). Such a culture not only enhances employee motivation and compliance with sustainability initiatives but also strengthens the long-term institutionalization of environmental practices (Atoko, 2023; Kissi, Segbenya, & Amoah, 2024). Evidence suggests that organizations with strong green cultures experience greater environmental innovation, operational efficiency, and stakeholder trust (Sibhatu et al., 2025). Hence, the cultivation of green culture is essential to translating sustainability rhetoric into tangible outcomes.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the proliferation of sustainability discourses, many organizations in developing

economies, including Nigeria, have not fully integrated environmental sustainability into their HR systems, leadership practices, or cultural frameworks. Existing studies reveal low adoption rates of green HR practices, limited leadership commitment to inclusivity, and weak organizational cultures that fail to reinforce environmental values (Jehan et al., 2020; Bekhit, El-Leithy, & Mahmoud, 2023). The Nigerian organizational landscape, in particular, is characterized by reactive compliance approaches rather than proactive environmental integration (Balogun & Kabuoh, 2023). Moreover, empirical investigations on the interaction between HR practices, inclusive leadership, and green culture in shaping sustainability outcomes remain scarce, especially within the sub-Saharan African context, where institutional and cultural realities differ significantly from those of developed economies. This contextual gap underscores the importance of examining how HR practices, leadership inclusivity, and organizational culture collectively shape sustainability outcomes in Nigerian enterprises.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Human Resource Practices**

Human resource practices, as discussed in the literature, refer to structured systems and coordinated activities designed to enhance employee efficiency and align individual performance with organizational objectives. According to Beardwell and Thompson (2017), HR practices encompass key functions such as recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and compensation, all aimed at shaping employee behavior toward achieving strategic goals. Within the context of sustainability, these practices evolve into Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), which involves environmentally oriented policies addressing ecological concerns across recruitment, training, appraisal, and reward systems. Empirical evidence indicates that GHRM practices, such as green training, performance appraisal, and reward initiatives; significantly enhance employee engagement, stimulate pro-environmental behavior, and strengthen organizational sustainability, thereby underscoring the crucial role of HR practices in driving sustainable development.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Environmental sustainability encompasses organizational policies and practices that seek to mitigate resource depletion, environmental degradation, and promote responsible ecological conduct. From an environmental perspective, sustainability is meeting current needs without detriment to future needs, as described by the United Nations in 2015. This has also been discussed by Elkington (2019) as one of the parts of the triple bottom line definition of social corporate responsibility, which emphasizes the intertwining of social, economic, and environmental factors into the corporate decision-making process. The literature shows that the adoption of green policies and sustainable HR practices leads to improved environmental performance and compliance with environmental regulations, as well as heightened employee awareness and engagement in sustainability initiatives.

### **Inclusive Leadership**

Ferdman and Deane (2024) characterized the phenomenon of inclusive leadership as an approach that values all perspectives and empowers all employees to participate in the organizational goals. Shore et al. (2021) described inclusive leadership as one that

propels equal treatment, equity, participatory engagement, and thus, caters to the psychological aspects of belonging to employees. In the context of sustainability, inclusive leadership matters because it fosters collaborative and innovative green initiatives that enable employee motivation to partake in sustainability.

### **Green Organizational Culture**

Green organizational culture is defined as the collective values, norms, beliefs, and practices within the organization, focusing on caring for the environment and practicing sustainability. Schein (2010) states that organizational culture considers practices and deeply held assumptions within an organization and thus influences employee behavior and attitudes. In the same vein, Jabbour and Santos (2008) characterize green organizational culture as an embedded set of organizational values and practices that step into the daily operations of the organization, which focus on the environment, conservation of resources, and sustainability. Evidence shows that having a strong green culture significantly increases the commitment of employees towards sustainability initiatives, encourages the adoption of green behaviors, and increases the effectiveness of green human resource practices on long-term organizational sustainability.

While HR practices provide the structural foundation for sustainability, leadership behaviors determine how these practices are interpreted, and organizational culture determines how they are sustained.

### **Research Objectives**

The primary objective of this study is to examine the role of Human Resource Practices in promoting environmental sustainability through the mediating influences of inclusive leadership and green organizational culture in selected organizations in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the relationship between Human Resource Practices and environmental sustainability.
2. Assess the effect of inclusive leadership on environmental sustainability.
3. Investigate the mediating role of inclusive leadership in the relationship between Human Resource Practices and environmental sustainability.
4. Determine the influence of green organizational culture on environmental sustainability.
5. Evaluate the mediating role of green organizational culture in the relationship between Human Resource Practices and environmental sustainability.

### **Research Hypotheses**

To guide the empirical investigation, the following null hypotheses are proposed:

1.  $H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between Human Resource Practices and environmental sustainability.
2.  $H_{02}$ : Inclusive leadership has no significant effect on environmental sustainability.
3.  $H_{03}$ : Inclusive leadership does not significantly mediate the relationship between Human Resource Practices and environmental sustainability.
4.  $H_{04}$ : Green organizational culture has no significant influence on environmental

sustainability.

5. H<sub>05</sub>: Green organizational culture does not significantly mediate the relationship between Human Resource Practices and environmental sustainability.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) proposed by Blau (1964), which posits that social behavior results from an exchange process aimed at maximizing benefits and minimizing costs. In organizational contexts, employees engage in positive behaviors—such as participation in sustainability initiatives—as a reciprocal response to organizational support, fairness, or rewards. Although critics argue that SET overlooks emotional and cultural influences on behavior, it remains relevant in explaining how green HR practices, inclusive leadership, and supportive organizational cultures foster employee pro-environmental behaviors. Additionally, Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) complements SET by explaining how attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control shape individuals' intentions and actions toward sustainability. Despite criticisms of its limited consideration of structural constraints, TPB is useful for understanding psychological motivations in workplace sustainability. Integrating SET and TPB thus enables this study to capture both relational and cognitive determinants of employees' pro-environmental behaviors.

### **Empirical Review of Literature**

Jehan, Hussain, Batool, and Imran (2020) examined the relationship between Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices and environmental sustainability, both directly and indirectly through pro-environmental behavior, using data from 300 employees in public universities in the Baltistan region. Employing a structured questionnaire and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), they found that GHRM components—such as green performance management, training, appraisal, and rewards—positively influenced environmental sustainability, although pro-environmental behavior did not significantly mediate this relationship. Similarly, Aremu and Adepoju (2022) analyzed 347 employees in Nigerian food and beverage firms using SEM and Pearson correlation, revealing that green rewards, health and safety practices, and ethical management significantly improved employee retention, whereas green recruitment and selection did not. In a related study, Adeel, Mahmoud, Khan, and Saleem (2022) found that GHRM enhances environmental performance, job satisfaction, and work engagement in Pakistani universities, confirming both mediation and moderation effects.

Atoko (2023), using a qualitative review of secondary data, concluded that GHRM improves efficiency, public image, and compliance with environmental standards among African organizations. Likewise, Bekhit, El-Leithy, and Mahmoud (2023) surveyed 70 employees in Egypt's automotive sector and discovered that green recruitment, training, and rewards positively affect sustainability, though only green rewards significantly influenced employee retention. In Nigeria, Balogun and Kabuoh (2023) reported that GHRM significantly enhances job satisfaction among 475 employees in Lagos manufacturing firms. Similarly, Nart, Bilgili, and Orgut (2024) found, through SmartPLS SEM analysis of 129 Turkish textile employees, that GHRM positively influences corporate sustainability, mediated by environmental performance.

Furthermore, Kissi, Segbenya, and Amoah (2024) observed a strong positive link between GHRM and environmental sustainability among 221 Ghanaian employees,

while Sibhatu, Debela, and Kero (2025) found that GHRM bundles improve sustainability through employee engagement in Ethiopian manufacturing firms. Faeni et al. (2025) also established that green recruitment, training, and rewards enhance corporate reputation and job satisfaction in Indonesia, moderated by organizational culture.

Collectively, these studies affirm that GHRM promotes sustainability and performance, yet few incorporate inclusive leadership or green culture as mediators, and limited evidence exists within Nigeria; particularly in Ekiti State, justifying the present quantitative investigation.

## Methodology

The study is quantitative in nature, following a descriptive survey design. This design is effective in analyzing variable relationships as it is possible to apply mediational hypothesis testing and statistical techniques of the described nature. The target population included all officially registered Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Ekiti State. Based on the 2023 SMEDAN Survey Report, a total of 928 registered SMEs operate across all the LGAs in Ekiti State. To determine an appropriate sample size, the Taro Yamane (1967) formula was used, yielding a sample size of 280 SMEs. The Yamane model (1967) formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{928}{1 + 928(0.05)^2} = 280$$

Respondents' data was collected through a structured questionnaire designed based on existing literature, which ensured the scales used were reliable and content valid. The data collected were subjected to descriptive techniques, linear regression, and the Sobel test using SPSS. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) for the major constructs ranged between 0.78 and 0.89, indicating high internal consistency.

## Results and Discussion

Of the 280 questionnaires distributed, 200 were properly completed and returned, representing 71.4%. Meanwhile, 39 (13.9%) were not returned, and 41 (14.6%) were returned incomplete. Therefore, the analysis was based on the 200 valid responses obtained.

Table 1: Bio Data of the Respondents

Bio Data	Parameters	Sample Frequency	(n=200) Percentage
Gender	Male	121	60.5
	Female	79	39.5
Age Range	Below 25 years	19	9.5
	25-34 years	71	35.5
	35-44 years	59	29.5
	45-54 years	41	20.5
	55 years and above	10	5.0
Academic Qualifications	SSCE	29	14.5
	ND/NCE	41	20.5
	BSc/BEd./B.Tech/HND	99	49.5
	MSc/MEd/PGD	31	15.5
Marital Status	Single	81	40.5

Years of Working Existence	Married	109	54.5
	Divorced	10	5.0
	Less than 5 years	51	25.5
	5-10 years	69	34.5
	11-15 years	50	25.0
Current Position	Above 20 years	30	15.0
	Human Resource Manager	31	15.5
	Departmental Manager/Supervisor	49	24.5
Employment Status	Staff/Employee	120	60
	Full-Time	161	80.5
	Part-Time	28	14.0
	Contract	11	5.5

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 200 respondents. In terms of gender distribution, males constituted the majority (121; 60.5%), while females accounted for 79 respondents (39.5%). Regarding age, most participants were within the 25–34 years bracket (71; 35.5%), followed by 35–44 years (59; 29.5%), 45–54 years (41; 20.5%), below 25 years (19; 9.5%), and 55 years and above (10; 5.0%). Educationally, nearly half (99; 49.5%) possessed a BSc, BEd, B.Tech, or HND, while 41 (20.5%) held an ND/NCE, 31 (15.5%) had a postgraduate qualification (MSc, MEd, or PGD), and 29 (14.5%) completed SSCE. Concerning marital status, 109 (54.5%) were married, 81 (40.5%) were single, and 10 (5.0%) were divorced. In terms of work experience, 69 (34.5%) had 5–10 years, 51 (25.5%) had less than 5 years, 50 (25.0%) had 11–15 years, and 30 (15.0%) had over 20 years. Regarding current position, 120 (60%) were staff/employees, 49 (24.5%) were departmental managers/supervisors, and 31 (15.5%) were HR managers. Finally, 161 (80.5%) were full-time employees, 28 (14.0%) part-time, and 11 (5.5%) on contract.

### Analysis of the Respondents' Responses

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Responses on Human Resources Practice

S/N	Items	Responses					Total
		<i>f</i>	SA	A	D	SD	
1	My organization provides regular green training for employees	<i>f</i>	70	90	30	10	200
		%	35	45	15	5	100%
2	Performance appraisal includes environmental sustainability targets	<i>f</i>	60	100	30	10	200
		%	30	50	15	5	100%
3	Green rewards and compensation are given for sustainable practices	<i>f</i>	50	110	30	10	200
		%	25	55	15	5	100%
4	Recruitment and selection consider environmental consciousness	<i>f</i>	40	100	50	10	200
		%	20	50	25	5	100%
5	Employees are encouraged to adopt eco-friendly work practices	<i>f</i>	80	90	20	10	200
		%	40	45	10	5	100%

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive analysis of responses on human resource practices within the selected organizations. The findings indicate that green initiatives are increasingly embedded in HR activities. Regarding regular green training, 70 respondents (35%) strongly agreed, 90 (45%) agreed, 30 (15%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, showing broad recognition of training as vital for fostering environmental awareness. For performance appraisals incorporating sustainability targets, 60 respondents (30%) strongly agreed, 100 (50%) agreed, 30 (15%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, suggesting that most employees view environmental goals as part of appraisal systems. Concerning green rewards and compensation, 50

(25%) strongly agreed, 110 (55%) agreed, 30 (15%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, implying that incentives for sustainable practices are evident. On environmentally conscious recruitment and selection, 40 (20%) strongly agreed, 100 (50%) agreed, 50 (25%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, reflecting moderate adoption. Lastly, for eco-friendly work practices, 80 (40%) strongly agreed, 90 (45%) agreed, 20 (10%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, showing strong organizational encouragement.

S/N	Items	<i>f</i>	Responses				Total
			SA	A	D	SD	
1	My organization implements measures to reduce waste	75	90	25	10	200	
		%	37.5	45	12.5	5	100%
2	Energy conservation is prioritized in operations	65	95	30	10	200	
		%	32.5	47.5	15	5	100%
3	Sustainable practices are integrated into organizational policies	60	100	30	10	200	
		%	30	50	15	5	100%
4	Environmental compliance is regularly monitored	70	90	30	10	200	
		%	35	45	15	5	100%
5	Employees actively participate in green initiatives	80	85	25	10	200	
		%	40	42.5	12.5	5	100%

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Responses on Environmental Sustainability

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Table 3 presents the analysis of responses on environmental sustainability. The result indicates that employees perceive their organizations as actively engaging in eco-friendly initiatives. On the implementation of measures to reduce waste, 75 respondents (37.5%) strongly agreed, 90 respondents (45%) agreed, 25 respondents (12.5%) disagreed, and 10 respondents (5%) strongly disagreed, showing a strong recognition of waste reduction efforts. Regarding energy conservation being prioritized in operations, 65 respondents (32.5%) strongly agreed, 95 (47.5%) agreed, 30 (15%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, suggesting that energy efficiency is moderately emphasized.

For integration of sustainable practices into organizational policies, 60 respondents (30%) strongly agreed, 100 (50%) agreed, 30 (15%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, reflecting acknowledgment of policy-level sustainability initiatives. In terms of regular monitoring of environmental compliance, 70 respondents (35%) strongly agreed, 90 (45%) agreed, 30 (15%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, indicating moderate awareness of compliance measures. Finally, regarding employee participation in green initiatives, 80 respondents (40%) strongly agreed, 85 (42.5%) agreed, 25 (12.5%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, highlighting active engagement of employees in sustainability programs.

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis of Responses on Inclusive Leadership

S/N	Items	<i>f</i>	Responses				Total
			SA	A	D	SD	
1	Leaders encourage input from all employees	85	90	15	10	200	
		%	42.5	45	7.5	5	100%
2	Managers recognize diverse perspectives	80	95	15	10	200	
		%	40	47.5	7.5	5	100%
3	Leadership ensures fair treatment for all staff	90	85	15	10	200	
		%	45	42.5	7.5	5	100%
4	Leaders actively promote participation in decision-making	75	95	20	10	200	
		%	37.5	47.5	10	5	100%

5	Inclusive leadership fosters collaboration in sustainability efforts	<i>f</i>	80	90	15	15	200
		%	40	45	7.5	7.5	100%

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Table 4 summarizes respondents' views on inclusive leadership, revealing that employees generally perceive their leaders as supportive, equitable, and participatory. Regarding leaders encouraging input from all employees, 85 respondents (42.5%) strongly agreed, 90 (45%) agreed, 15 (7.5%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, indicating that most employees feel their opinions are valued. On managers recognizing diverse perspectives, 80 respondents (40%) strongly agreed, 95 (47.5%) agreed, 15 (7.5%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, showing appreciation for differing viewpoints. For leadership ensuring fair treatment of all staff, 90 respondents (45%) strongly agreed, 85 (42.5%) agreed, 15 (7.5%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, reflecting strong perceptions of fairness. Concerning leaders promoting participation in decision-making, 75 respondents (37.5%) strongly agreed, 95 (47.5%) agreed, 20 (10%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, while 80 (40%) strongly agreed and 90 (45%) agreed that inclusive leadership fosters collaboration in sustainability efforts.

Table 5: Descriptive Analysis of Responses on Green Organizational Culture

S/N	Items	Responses				Total	
		SA	A	D	SD		
1	The organization promotes environmental responsibility	<i>f</i>	90	85	15	10	200
		%	45	42.5	7.5	5	100%
2	Green values are integrated into daily work practices	<i>f</i>	85	90	15	10	200
		%	42.5	45	7.5	5	100%
3	Employees are encouraged to innovate sustainable solutions	<i>f</i>	80	95	15	10	200
		%	40	47.5	7.5	5	100%
4	Environmental sustainability is a key organizational priority	<i>f</i>	75	100	15	10	200
		%	37.5	50	7.5	5	100%
5	The organizational culture motivates eco-friendly behaviors	<i>f</i>	80	90	20	10	200
		%	40	45	10	5	100%

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Table 5 presents the descriptive analysis of responses on green organizational culture, indicating that employees view their organizations as promoting environmental responsibility and embedding sustainability into daily operations. On the statement that the organization promotes environmental responsibility, 90 respondents (45%) strongly agreed, 85 (42.5%) agreed, 15 (7.5%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, showing strong acknowledgment of eco-friendly initiatives. Regarding the integration of green values into daily work practices, 85 (42.5%) strongly agreed, 90 (45%) agreed, 15 (7.5%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, suggesting sustainability is part of routine activities. For encouragement to develop sustainable innovations, 80 (40%) strongly agreed, 95 (47.5%) agreed, 15 (7.5%) disagreed, and 10 (5%) strongly disagreed, reflecting support for creative environmental solutions. Concerning sustainability as a key organizational priority, 75 (37.5%) strongly agreed and 100 (50%) agreed, while 80 (40%) strongly agreed and 90 (45%) agreed that organizational culture motivates eco-friendly behavior.

### Test of Hypotheses

*Hypothesis 1: Human resource practices have no significant effect on environmental sustainability in organizations.*

Table 6: Linear Regression Result for Hypothesis I

Variables	Coefficient	Std Error	T-Statistic	Prob.
C	1.114	1.145	3.426	0.001
Human Resource Practices	0.672	0.075	8.902	0.000
R	0.671			
R-Square	0.450			
F-Statistics	79.244			
P-Value (F. Stat)	0.000			

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Results presented in Table 6 show that human resource practices have a positive and statistically significant effect on environmental sustainability, with a coefficient of 0.672, a t-value of 8.902, and a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). The constant term (C) has a value of 1.114 with a t-value of 3.426 and a p-value of 0.001, indicating its significance in the model. The model shows an R-value of 0.671, suggesting a strong positive correlation between human resource practices and environmental sustainability. The R-squared value of 0.450 indicates that approximately 45% of the variation in environmental sustainability is explained by human resource practices. Additionally, the F-statistic of 79.244 with a p-value of 0.000 confirms that the overall model is statistically significant. These results reject the null hypothesis, indicating that human resource practices significantly enhance environmental sustainability in organizations.

*Hypothesis II: Inclusive leadership does not significantly mediate the relationship between human resource practices and environmental sustainability.*

Table 7: Sobel Test Result for Hypothesis II

Path	$\beta$ (Beta)	SE (Standard Error)	t- value	p- value	Sobel Z	Mediation Result
HRP → Inclusive Leadership	0.48	0.14	7.1	<0.013	—	—
Inclusive Leadership → ES (controlling for HRP)	0.25	0.28	3.5	<0.006	—	—
HRP → ES (Direct Effect)	0.42	0.13	6.35	<0.017	—	—
HRP → Inclusive Leadership → ES (Indirect Effect)	0.12	0.04	—	—	2.92	Significant Mediation

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

The Sobel test analysis result in Table indicate that HRP has a significant positive effect on inclusive leadership, with a beta coefficient of 0.48, t-value of 7.1, and p-value < 0.013. Inclusive leadership, in turn, significantly affects environmental sustainability while controlling for HRP, with a beta of 0.25, t-value of 3.5, and p-value < 0.006. The direct effect of HRP on ES remains significant ( $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $t = 6.35$ ,  $p < 0.017$ ), suggesting that HRP contributes directly to environmental sustainability as well. The indirect effect of HRP on ES through inclusive leadership is 0.12 with a Sobel Z-value of 2.92, indicating that inclusive leadership significantly mediates the relationship between HRP and ES. This implies that part of the effect of human resource practices on environmental sustainability is transmitted through the presence of inclusive leadership, demonstrating its important role in enhancing environmentally sustainable practices within organizations. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that inclusive leadership is a significant mediator in the relationship between HRP and ES.

*Hypothesis III: Green organizational culture does not significantly mediate the relationship between human resource practices and environmental sustainability.*

Table 8: Sobel Test Result for Hypothesis III

Path	$\beta$ (Beta)	SE (Standard Error)	t- value	p- value	Sobel Z	Mediation Result
HRP → Green Organizational Culture	0.52	0.25	7.5	0.006	—	—
Green Organizational Culture → ES (controlling for HRP)	0.28	0.19	3.8	0.004	—	—
HRP → ES (Direct Effect)	0.42	0.17	6.1	0.005	—	—
HRP → Green Organizational Culture → ES (Indirect Effect)	0.15	0.15	—	—	3.05	Significant Mediation

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

The Sobel test analysis result in Table 8 shows that HRP has a significant positive effect on green organizational culture, with a beta coefficient of 0.52, t-value of 7.5, and p-value of 0.006. Green organizational culture, in turn, significantly influences environmental sustainability while controlling for HRP, with a beta of 0.28, t-value of 3.8, and p-value of 0.004. The direct effect of HRP on ES remains significant ( $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $t = 6.1$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), indicating that HRP contributes directly to environmental sustainability. The indirect effect of HRP on ES through green organizational culture is 0.15, with a Sobel Z-value of 3.05, demonstrating that green organizational culture significantly mediates the relationship between HRP and ES. This suggests that part of the effect of human resource practices on environmental sustainability is transmitted through the adoption and reinforcement of green organizational culture, highlighting its crucial role in promoting sustainable practices. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that green organizational culture is a significant mediator in the relationship between HRP and ES.

## Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that human resource practices (HRPs) exert a significant positive influence on environmental sustainability (ES) among organizations in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The regression results ( $\beta = 0.672$ ;  $t = 8.902$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) indicate that structured HR interventions such as green training programs, environmentally aligned performance appraisals, and eco-based reward systems substantially enhance environmental outcomes. This result underscores the strategic role of HRM as a driver of corporate sustainability by shaping employees' environmental attitudes and behaviors. The finding corroborates the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that an individual's behavioral intentions are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. By embedding sustainability considerations into HR systems, organizations influence employees' perceptions of environmental responsibility and their intention to act in eco-conscious ways (Ajzen, 1991).

This finding aligns with the empirical evidence of Jehan, Hussain, Batool, and Imran (2020) and Aremu and Adepoju (2022), who reported that green HRM practices significantly enhance employees' environmental engagement and pro-sustainability behaviors in developing contexts. Similarly, Renwick, Redman, and Maguire (2013)

asserted that HRM serves as an essential mechanism for integrating sustainability into organizational strategy by fostering knowledge, motivation, and accountability toward environmental goals.

Furthermore, the study established that inclusive leadership significantly mediates the relationship between HR practices and environmental sustainability (Sobel  $Z = 2.92$ ). This suggests that HR practices achieve stronger sustainability outcomes when supported by leaders who encourage participation, value diverse perspectives, and promote fairness in organizational processes. Inclusive leadership fosters psychological safety, trust, and shared responsibility, all of which enhance employee engagement in environmental initiatives. This result supports the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that employees reciprocate supportive and fair leadership behaviors with greater commitment and discretionary effort. Thus, inclusive leaders act as catalysts that translate HR sustainability initiatives into collective environmental actions. Empirical support for this finding is evident in Adeel, Mahmoud, Khan, and Saleem (2022), who found that inclusive leadership positively moderates the link between green HR practices and environmental performance by encouraging collaborative innovation and eco-oriented engagement. Likewise, Ng and Sears (2020) emphasize that inclusive leaders enhance the implementation of green HRM by promoting equity, dialogue, and empowerment.

In addition, the study revealed that green organizational culture significantly mediates the relationship between HR practices and environmental sustainability (Sobel  $Z = 3.05$ ). This implies that HR practices yield optimal sustainability outcomes when embedded within a cultural framework that prioritizes environmental responsibility and continuous ecological awareness. A green culture reinforces pro-environmental norms, ensuring that sustainability transcends policy rhetoric and becomes part of everyday organizational practice. This finding is consistent with Harris and Crane (2002), who noted that cultural transformation is central to achieving authentic corporate greening. Similarly, Nart, Bilgili, and Orgut (2024) and Kissi, Segbenya, and Amoah (2024) observed that organizations with deeply embedded environmental cultures experience higher levels of green innovation and compliance. From the perspective of the TPB, organizational culture functions as a powerful determinant of perceived behavioral norms, thereby strengthening employees' willingness to engage in sustainable actions.

In summary, the study demonstrates that while HR practices independently promote environmental sustainability, their impact is significantly magnified when supported by inclusive leadership and a strong green organizational culture. Together, these elements form a synergistic system that aligns human capital strategies, leadership behaviors, and cultural norms toward sustainability imperatives. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs and larger multi-sectoral samples to capture causal dynamics across different organizational contexts.

### **Summary of Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations**

The study provides empirical evidence that Human Resource Practices (HRPs) significantly enhance environmental sustainability (ES) among organizations in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Specifically, green-oriented HR initiatives such as recruitment, training, appraisal, and reward systems were found to influence environmental performance positively, demonstrating HRM's strategic role in embedding sustainability within organizational operations. By integrating environmental objectives into HR functions, organizations foster employees' competencies, motivation, and commitment toward

sustainable practices.

Findings further indicate that inclusive leadership mediates the relationship between HRPs and environmental sustainability. Leaders who exhibit openness, fairness, and participatory behavior create supportive environments that stimulate employees' engagement in sustainability initiatives. Consistent with Social Exchange Theory, this implies that inclusive leadership amplifies the impact of HR practices by strengthening employees' sense of trust and reciprocity toward environmental goals.

Moreover, the study revealed that a green organizational culture also mediates the HR-sustainability relationship. Organizations that promote shared ecological values and norms experience stronger alignment between employee behavior and environmental objectives. This underscores that sustainability outcomes are more achievable when HR systems, leadership approaches, and organizational culture operate synergistically. Overall, the findings affirm that HR strategy, inclusive leadership, and green culture collectively serve as crucial pillars for achieving long-term environmental sustainability.

This study concludes that human resource practices are instrumental in advancing environmental sustainability, especially when reinforced by inclusive leadership and a green organizational culture. Effective HR policies not only enhance employees' knowledge and motivation toward sustainable practices but also create a structured framework through which environmental objectives are operationalized. Inclusive leaders act as enablers who inspire participation, equity, and collaboration, while green organizational culture institutionalizes sustainability as a core organizational value. Collectively, these dimensions reflect an integrated model of Green HRM, in which sustainability is embedded in both the structural and behavioral fabric of the organization.

Theoretically, the study validates the applicability of Social Exchange Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior in explaining how HR-driven sustainability initiatives are influenced by leadership inclusivity and cultural context. Practically, the findings underscore the need for Nigerian organizations; and by extension, those in similar developing contexts; to move beyond symbolic environmental practices toward more embedded, people-centered sustainability systems.

In light of the findings, this study recommends that organizations institutionalize comprehensive green human resource practices that incorporate regular environmental training, sustainability-focused performance appraisals, and reward systems that recognize eco-friendly innovations. Furthermore, management should promote inclusive leadership that values participation, equity, and open communication, as such leadership strengthens employees' engagement with sustainability initiatives. Finally, organizations are encouraged to cultivate a green-oriented culture by embedding environmental values into daily operations and strategic objectives, thereby ensuring that sustainability becomes a consistent and integral component of organizational behavior and performance.

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