

Talent Retention among Malaysian Private Higher Education Institution Academicians through Green Human Resource Management

Mohd Hamran Mohamad^{1*}, Abdul Halim Abdul Majid²

¹Faculty of Defence Studies and Management, National Defence University of Malaysia,

²School of Business Management, Northern University of Malaysia

*Corresponding Author Email: hamran@upnm.edu.my

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Abstract

Talent retention through effective talent management is seen increasingly more significant in today's strategic human resource management due to its function for organizational sustainability. Employee and talent retention is the organizational scenario for which the employees have their loyalty and intend to stay for a long period within the organization. Despite the serious issue pertaining to employee turnover mainly among the talented employees in various employment sectors, researchers have argued that it is yet to promote and emphasize a talent retention strategy that leads to sustainable and reliable outcomes mainly in the private higher education institution (PHEI) organizations. Evidence proves that high employee turnover affects many weaknesses, risks and financial implications. This indicates that it will be essential to truly embed the desire to stay within the talented employees of PHEI if they perceive the role of green organizational support such as green human resource management (HRM) as motivator antecedent. Literature study is performed as a method to generate relevant past empirical studies' findings and conceptual theory namely Social Exchange Theory. Therefore, this paper constructs a conceptual framework to share extent knowledge on how green HRM through its practices (green recruitment and selection, green training and development, and green compensation) influence talent retention. This paper also developed justified research hypotheses for future empirical studies. The framework of research will be shared as a meaningful guideline for strategies design in sustaining PHEI business and services, particularly when the expected result will be able to show significant effects of green HRM practices on talent retention. Interestingly, academicians at PHEI will be more loyal and intend to stay long when they perceive PHEI initiates beyond the traditional management and strategy aspects which embark into green HRM.

Keywords: Talent Retention, Green Human Resource Management, Green Recruitment and Selection, Green Training and Development, Green Compensation, Social Exchange Theory, Private Higher Education Institution.

Introduction

Talent retention is part of human resource management strategy to promote organizational sustainability mainly among the Private Institute of Higher Learning (PHEI) besides other strategies like corporate social responsibility and environmental safety (Mehran Khan, 2023). According to Kanabutra (2020), vision and mission are important strategic management elements for stating goals towards organizational sustainability and the way to attain them. Scholars believe that the theme and terms towards retaining talents should be clear in the vision and mission of PHEI to achieve that concept. Roorda (2001) stated that participation of institution of higher learning in environmental audits can improve organizational sustainability including providing green environment. Researchers argue that as a higher learning institution it is necessary for a green environment practice campaign for all its citizens since it leads to employees and talent retention.

The talent retention approach and exercise in organizations of PHEI could be the model to other training organizations in the education sector towards the efficiency and sustainability of producing credible and competent academicians who should serve for the successful higher education sector in future. This may not only focus on the traditional training and education aspects, moreover it emphasizes strongly the internationalization of training and education. Indirectly, the practice for retaining talents is in line with the Social Exchange Theory and Green Theory which emphasizes environmental and human security and reduces environmental threats globally (Dyer, 2018). Indeed, talented employees prefer to stay long with the organization which has performed its environmental sustainability.

The role of green theory and social exchange theory in supporting the concept of talent retention is through embedding green human resource management (HRM). Green HRM is about the adoption of environmental management into human resources management (Zihan et al, 2024). Green HRM also refers to the extent of practices in relating to the functional and competitive tools of human resources management. Thus, green HRM functions relate to the area such as recruitment, performance management and appraisal, training and development and compensation (Mathapati, 2013). According to Awwad Al-Shammari et al. (2022), green HRM confirms that organizations are spread successfully and known as environmentally friendly. Green HRM is important for organization management for numerous purposes such as environmental benefits, employee retention, and enhancing an organization's appeal.

In the recent private higher education industry, mainly in the organizational support management discipline, the implementation of green HRM is significant because it sustains the HRM practices in leading various types of misconducts of organizational support management. For example, green recruitment and selection would ensure highly clean employment outcome of new PHEI personnels who finally are qualified and able to realize their talents, thus contribute to the organizational sustainability performance. Thus, by understanding the close relationship between talent retention and green HRM mainly in the present context of private higher education, an initial conceptual study must be proposed to fill in the theoretical and empirical gaps and lastly realizing the government agenda through purely green private higher education industry.

Problem Statement

Singhal et al. (2020) once stated that the issue of talent retention or sustainable employees in recent times is worrying and requires serious focus and attention. This is consistent with the previous statement by Ng'ethe, Namusonge & Iravo (2012) who stated that retaining teaching staff in universities is difficult, especially among lecturers in PHEI. The widespread resignation and termination of talented employees, especially among PHEI lecturers, is a scenario that is seriously seen as weakening the country's private higher education industry, especially in the perspective of sustainability of teaching talent (Nuzul Akhtar & Amirah Sajidah, 2022). In Malaysia, the issue of PHEI losing lecturers, especially those with experience and expertise, is currently being hotly debated because it involves the loss of qualified and competent human capital.

Findings from the Malaysian Employers Federation explain that the education sector is among the three sectors with the highest occurrence of layoffs among employees, at an annual rate of 29 percent compared to other sectors (Goh, 2012). This issue has persisted and is a concern and indirectly hinders the smooth running and effectiveness of the existing education system (Ooi et al., 2022). This issue also poses a challenge to the extent of the effectiveness of the role of PHEI management in acting to address the symptoms of high turnover rates among these talented employees. According to reports highlighted through newspapers and research articles, there are cases of resignations among academicians which have an impact on the reduction of talented employees in PHEI (Zamri, 2023). Thus, retaining talented academicians in PHEI is a worrying issue for the management.

Literature Review*Talent Retention*

Employee retention is part of popular practices in the human resources management discipline that has been discussed and found by many quality journals and other article platforms (Hayfaa et al., 2017; Umma Nusrat Urme, 2023). These scholars further emphasize that many organizations are fighting to maintain their talents and having pressure in determining the appropriate strategies in managing those talents. According to Wee (2013), talent refers to an individual who can perform identifiable skills, knowledge, capability and has experience to meet the present and future organization needs. Later, Tlaiss (2021) operationally defined talent in the context of talent management as human capital, which can be determined in terms of value and uniqueness.

In the era of economic development growth and globalization, Malaysia has experienced rapid expansion of different industries across the nation. This affects the encouragement in the necessity for professionals and expertise mainly in the higher education sector in which there is a requirement for the development of more academic experts to bring the organization sustain in the competitive and challenging business atmosphere. Even so, many organizations are facing difficulty affected by the scenario of employee turnover and lack of interest among qualified job seekers to pursue a career as an academician, despite the beneficial rewards (Halid, Kee & Rahim, 2020). The trait of high turnover rates in the working environment affects serious concern among the higher education providers for employee retention (Shin & Mustapha, 2023). It is conscious that higher education providers are facing loss and incur relevant costs when employees leave their institutions.

It has been found that still limited study pertaining talent retention has been performed on higher education academicians mainly in the private institutions located in northern area of Peninsular Malaysia (Ooi et al., 2022). This study is so relevant because towards achieving the country's economic landscape expansion, country needs more private higher education institutions (PHEIs) to put the efforts to retain their talents. However, during the economic challenges in recent years, talent retention has been considered as a critical employee outcome for human resource management (HRM) in sustaining organization survival (Mohamad Mazlan & Jambulingam, 2023). Most PHEIs have been involved in the intense competition for talents and various strategies have been identified to retain their talented employees. Therefore, the aspects like employee motivation, employee engagement, job satisfaction, authentic leadership, HRM roles and practices are part of strategy approaches that have been initiated in promoting talent retention. However, and interestingly, little is known that considering specific HRM such as Green HRM is becoming an effective HRM strategy for talent retention.

Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM)

Human resource management is the process and strategy of managing groups of employees in an organization. Researchers stated that effective human resource management is important because it enables employees in an organization to contribute to achieving objectives and maintaining competitive advantage (Boselie, Paauwe & Richardson, 2003; Zainee & Puteh, 2020). Another view by Sudin (2011) states that the role of strategic human resources is believed to be able to impact environmental management initiatives through the human resource system. Thus, it is understood that a green concept needs to be embedded in this discipline area.

Green human resource management (Green HRM) is a holistic application of the concept of balance in organizations and employees (Aravamudhan, 2012). Green HRM can be defined as the policies, practices, and systems that promote green behavior among employees in order to build an environmentally conscious, resource-efficient, and socially responsible workplace and organization as a whole (Islam et al. 2022). Green HRM is also seen as the application of human resource management policies to promote more balanced use of organizational resources and encourage environmental sustainability (Mandip, 2012) and environmental friendliness (Peerzadah, Mufti and Nazir, 2018).

According to Uddin and Islam (2016), green HRM is environmentally friendly human resource policies and practices and at the same time it helps organizations in achieving financial goals through environmental branding and protecting the environment from any negative impacts that may be caused by the policies and actions of the organization. Uddin and Islam (2016) also stated that employees are a key element in achieving the organization's goal of balancing the environment. This statement is seen in line with the view of many people regarding employees as a valuable asset to the organization (Cia, 2023).

Green HRM practices seek to integrate environmental sustainability into an organization's HR policies and procedures. These embrace ideas like environmentally sensible recruitment, green training programs, and the fostering of environmentally responsible leadership (Irani, Kilic, & Adeshola, 2022). Similarly, as stated by Lenny and Ahmad (2019), Green HRM practices, is perceived as the human resources management functions such as recruitment,

selection, training, performance, appraisal, compensation as well as separation which are combined with environmentally friendly behavior. Thus, for this study, Green HRM practices are determined as the environmental human resource management practices such as green recruitment and selection, green training and development and green compensation.

Green Recruitment and Selection

Green recruitment and selection (GRS) can be defined as a process of recruiting and selecting job applicants who are responsive to environmental issues and are prepared to contribute to environmental standard (Tang et al., 2018). It can be understood that GRS acts not only with a bigger number of job seekers candidates, but importantly a quality pool of candidates who are sensitive to the environment from which the organization chooses the well performed individuals. These selected individuals are trusted and able to realize the organization's targets.

Green recruitment and selection are part of the practices of human resource management that the organization applies its green HRM approach to job applicants. It is very challenging for the HR managers to acquire, develop and keep quality employees. For this, organizations are portraying themselves as environmental based entities to win the acquiring the most efficient green workers. Meanwhile, candidates who seek the jobs are also hardly trying to position themselves as environment-based workers who are responsible for environmental sustainability. Therefore, this kind of employee will have priority to have a place in new organizations which care about the environment and society (Masri & Jaroon, 2017).

Specifically, part of the significant practices of recruitment and selection are doing an online job advertisement by describing the environmental matters, highlighting the organization's green policies and goals and proper interview arrangements to determine the right candidates with relevant skills, knowledge and experiences to suit the organization's greening goals (Asif et al., 2022). Thus, some interview questions should be embedded with environment and green perspective.

The advantages of Green HRM such as green recruitment and selection extend further than environmental outcomes and promote significantly to employee engagement and talent retention. Talented employees often have pridefulness serving for an organization that is prioritized to sustainability, which increases job satisfaction and motivation (Sathappan & Khin, 2024). Moreover, as mentioned by Vijaya and Prasad (2024), by embarking insights into the strategic combination of Green HRM practices within the realms of recruitment and retention, organizations are encouraged to not only attract and retain talented employees but to place themselves as committed agents of the environment as well. Those notions are supported by studies by Kothiswari (2018) and Makarim and Muafi (2021) who also found negative effects of green recruitment and selection of employees on the desire to quit and confirm continued employee retention.

H1: Green recruitment and selection have a positive and significant impact on talent retention.

Green Training and Development

Green training and development aim to improve employees' specialized skills, knowledge and attitudes as well as know-how about the green perspective. It is important for the

organization to have sustainable growth performance through achieving significant human resource management (Stahl et al., 2020). Green training and development is defined as continuing learning process aims to improve the knowledge, skills and attitude of employees for sustainable environmental growth (Liu et al., 2020). Importantly, green training and development emphasizes the relevant environmental matters and brings the employees to focus on organization performance and environmental issues integration (Teixeira et al., 2016).

In green HRM, green training and development would make employees improve their knowledge and expertise on environmental sensitivity, develops a useful way to environmental matters, increase energy preservation as well as waste controlling (Mishra, 2017). Some scholars have shared the importance of green training and development for organizational sustainability. For example, environmental awareness is a basis for organizational sustainability, and it is needed among the employees through various training activities such as seminars, conferences and workshops (Fapohunda et al., 2022). Pham et al. (2020) suggested that employees' creative and innovative are important to be created from training program since it improves employees' skills and abilities for environmental performance and leads to organizational sustainability. Indeed, it is very hard to achieve the optimum environmental performance for the organization without awareness and proper skills, knowledge and attitudes among the employees. Therefore, green training and development value need to be prioritized by organizations mainly those in higher education industry.

Past researchers found that HRM practices such as training and development have a significant impact on reducing employee turnover intention (Santhanam et al., 2017; Sinniah & Kamil, 2017). In specific, scholar such as Kothiswari (2018) and Islam et al. (2023) argue that the green HRM practices such as green recruitment and selection, green training and green rewards have significant influence on developing employee retention, increasing performance as well as avoiding turnover intention.

H2: Green training and development have a positive and significant impact on talent retention.

Green Compensation

Compensation is important in HRM because it is the HRM function that relates to the traded by managers and their respective organizations to attain organization goals. Employee compensation comprises financial returns and actual benefits provided to employees as part of an employment relationship (Ooi et al., 2022). According to Idris et al. (2017), compensation is divided into direct and indirect compensation. Mardiyanti et al. (2018) described more that direct compensation is a financial compensation provided to the employees directly from the place they work such as salary, bonuses, overtime pay, and allowances. In contrast, indirect compensation is a non-monetary benefit employees received like health insurance, social security, and annual leave (Mardiyanti et al., 2018).

In today's green HRM, green compensation becomes more meaningful, and it is undeniable as an effective practice for motivating employees to achieve organization goals (Saputra & Renata, 2023). Green compensation is defined as a provision of financial and non-financial rewards, benefits and incentives by the organization to motivate employees to adopt and

contribute to environmentally friendly practices (Ciocirlan, 2018). Indirectly, it would associate employee rewards, benefits and incentives with the organization's sustainability goals and develop pro-environmental behaviors. Effective green compensation has proper strategies, policies and procedures which employees are appreciated and acknowledged because of their performance towards goals achievement (Armstrong, 2010). Green compensation makes the employees receive their rewards, benefits and incentive fairly, equally and constantly based on their contributions to the organization business (Fatehi et al., 2015).

Effective organization strategies that satisfy various employee needs lead them to stay with the organization for longer periods and be able to reduce employee problems. Basically, to retain employees, organizations fundamentally employ their resources to offer attractive extrinsic compensation (Alhmoud & Rjoub, 2020). Khan (2021) argued that green compensation recognizes the valuable contribution of employees in terms of their time, energy sacrifices and skills, showing that an organization's compensation system can significantly affect employee performance and their intention to stay longer with the organization. This is supported by the recent study that mentioned an organization needs to offer financial and non-financial green compensation as tools to motivate employees to do their work. If employees have poor compensation by their organization, there will be dissatisfaction, absenteeism, separation, mental health problems and others among them. This is because employees exchange their time, energy and loyalty for financial and non-financial compensation (Ooi et al., 2022). Thus, the ideal green compensation can influence employees to work hard and promote organization commitment as well as can reduce employee turnover intention (Ng & Kadi, 2023). With this, it can be expected that green compensation in PHEI plays the role to generate talent retention.

H3 : There is a positive and significant effect of green compensation on talent retention.

Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) by Blau (1964) is employed as an underpinning theory for this study to support and examine the relationship and effect of green HRM on talent retention among the academicians at PHEI organizations. According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), SET is based on the norm of reciprocity, which states that one party behaves with good manners and does not harm those who show good. This norm predicts that HRM roles, such as recognition, empowerment, investment in human assets and other favors will be returned. Therefore, the beneficial HRM practices are predicted to contribute to the establishment of a dyadic relationship that makes employees reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors.

Many past studies applied SET as a theoretical foundation to investigate the relationships between the studied variables. However, studies such as by Rudawska (2025), Wahab et al. (2021), Wang et al. (2020), Ooi (2022), Idris et al. (2017), Abu Bakar et al. (2015), Ertas (2015) and Johari et al. (2012) were looking at HRM practices and employee-based outcomes in different areas such as employee engagement, job satisfaction, performance and turnover intention. It is not established yet either the green HRM would be successful for the enhancement of the talent retention, it is justified to conduct a study base on the social exchange theoretical postulation to fill the study gap. This is consistent as pointed out by Kim

et al. (2019) to apply SET in assuming the association and effect of green HRM on employee turnover intention reduction.

Green HRM for this study refers to its practices such as green recruitment and selection, green training and development and green compensation. Islam et al. (2023) emphasized that green HRM has a significant impact on talent retention. Green HRM facilitates an organization to stimulate talent retention. It is an interesting scenario when employees perceive green HRM as a source of cognitive and affective solidification, and motivation through job satisfaction and higher work performance (Jing Xie et al., 2023). Referring to the concept of SET, when the academicians obtain valuable green HRM (green recruitment and selection, green training and development and green compensation) with efficient supply of resources, they are comfortable and feel grateful. This can build among them a sort of sense of obligation to act back on the resources received with the intention of remaining with the organization. Impact of this, the academicians will be more committed and willing to stay longer in the organization.

Research Framework

This paper derives a conceptual framework (See Figure 1) from the literature review as discussed above as well as from the theoretical assumption as addressed in Social Exchange Theory by Blau (1964).

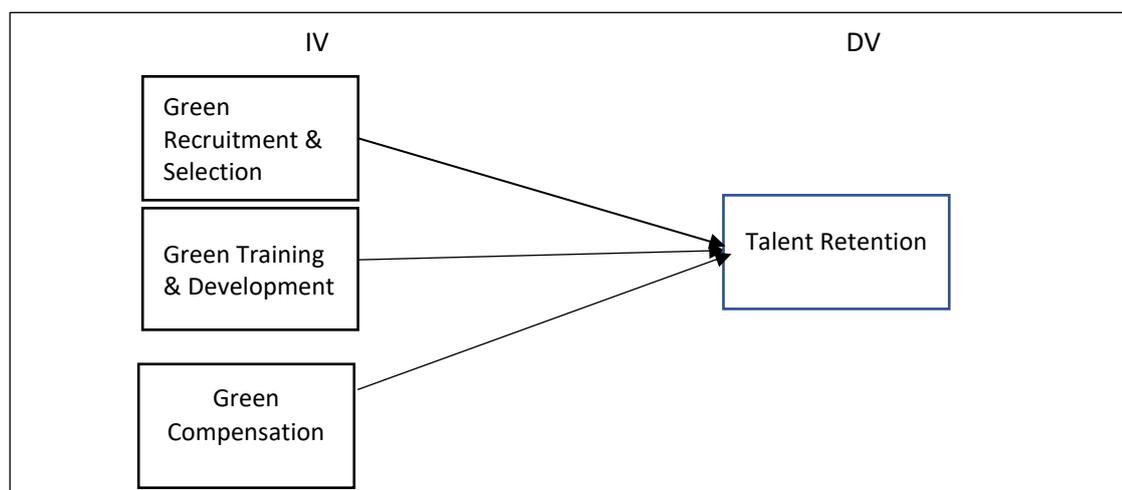


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Discussion and Conclusion

Developing talent retention at PHEI organizations is basically not a big problem and challenges. The talent retention target by HRM becomes a significant cause towards the design of effective rules, policies and strategies in organization. Evidence has shown that talent retention is a strategic action that leads to the remaining utilization of skilled and expert employees for organization sustainability performance within a long period of time. The goal of talent retention is to step ahead in a PHEI setting without losing quality workers and at the same time maintaining competitive advantage strategically. Talent retention of PHEI provides quality research and knowledge about the factors to be emphasized in promoting loyal and engaged excellent employees and consequently creating many environmentalists. Therefore, identification of strategic determinants that suit the PHEI perspective is essential.

The importance of green HRM to retain talented employees in various work environment settings is something that cannot be denied and has been proven by previous studies. This study put the initiative to share insights into green HRM practices such as green recruitment and selection, green training and development and green compensation and providing meaningful input on the talent retention activity among PHEIs. It is expected that those three green HRM antecedents' factors will have a positive and significant influence on talent retention. This is because the sustainable work environment and environmentalists creation promoted by those three green HRM practices lead to employees' satisfaction, motivated employees and trustworthiness of employees, thus desire to remain in the organization for longer period.

There are some valuable things in this study. First, practicing effectively and efficiently green HRM functions; green recruitment and selection, green training and development and green compensation by embedding environmental sustainability awareness, sincerity and fairness, trustfulness, energy saving and appreciated rewards in supporting talent retention. Second, exercising realistic and practical management by example, mainly among the green HR managers in encouraging the workers to engage and remain in institutions. Third, initiate the training to the HR professionals and managers for strengthening more their skills, knowledge and attitudes in green HRM practices area, thus it would stimulate faster effect in managing talent retention.

This study has some limitations that lead to less scope of knowledge expansion for future literature in the area of talent retention. From past studies, researchers revealed that these three green HRM practices (green recruitment and selection, green training and development and green compensation) had potential to be utilized in developing research framework for the coming empirical study of talent retention. Less budget available and time constraint could be the reasons for the small area and location selected in performing surveys (research at PHEIs in northern area of Peninsular Malaysia).

This study could also be extended to other PHEI academicians from other institutions and other area in Malaysia for better generalizability of study findings. This is because a bigger number of respondents will generate more accurate perceptions in measuring the variables as shown in the conceptual framework of the study. Other than that, it is proposed for evaluating other antecedent factors such as leadership style, peers' behaviors as well as extending to other green HRM practices (i.e., green performance management, green career development and green industrial relations) that could yield a close impact on talent retention in PHEI.

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