

The importance of green human resource management practices for sustainable organizational development: Evidence from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Jamila Jaganjac, Jelena Lukić Nikolić, Snežana Lazarević **

Abstract

To behave in a socially responsible manner and to support the concepts of sustainable development, organizations apply various processes and activities for greening their business. In addition to green marketing, supply and distribution chain, production, packaging and recycling, green human resources management (GHRM) also plays a big role. For this purpose, organizations incorporate a green component into all human resources management (HRM) phases, thereby building a green employer brand. This paper examines the extent to which organizations in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina apply GHRM activities and practices, and whether there are differences in the application of these practices depending on the size and business sector. Empirical research carried out in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina has found that green activities and HRM practices are applied to a small extent, with slightly higher results achieved by small and manufacturing organizations. The findings indicate the need for greater engagement of organizations to strengthen the awareness of the importance of GHRM, support their sustainable development and strengthen the brand in domestic and foreign markets.

Keywords: human resources, green organization, sustainable development, green employer brand, socially responsible business

JEL Codes: M50, L20, Q01

1. Introduction

Traditional economic development is primarily focused on profit and increasing material wealth. Due to weak awareness of environmental protection and the pursuit of maximizing economic interest, cheap production methods have been adopted, disregarding pollution-free technologies and scientific management of environmental resources (Jianping/Minrong/Jinnan/Jianjian/Hongwen/Maoxing 2014). Such rapid industrial development has opened numerous environmental issues, which require the establishment of a balance between economic development and environmental protection (Sabadie 2014; Wan/Yang/Wen/Gang/Gan

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** *Jamila Jaganjac* (Corresponding author), Full Professor, University Vitez, Faculty of Business Economics, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Email: jamila.jaganjac@unvi.edu.ba. Main research interests: intellectual capital and knowledge management, human resource management, entrepreneurship, innovation.

Jelena Lukić Nikolić, Associate Professor, Modern Business School, Belgrade, Serbia. Email: jelena.lukic@mbs.edu.rs. Main research interests: human resource management, organizational behavior, leadership, digital transformation.

Snežana Lazarević, Professor of vocational studies, College of Sports and Health, Belgrade, Serbia. Email: snezana.lazarevic@vss.edu.rs. Main research interests: human resource management, teamwork, organizational learning, employee wellbeing.

2020) by building and applying a strategic framework for sustainable development at all levels (Oertwig/Galeitzke/Schmiege/Kohl/Jochem/Orth/Knothe 2017; D'Amato/Korhonen 2021; Velenturf/Purnell 2021; Ordóñez-Ponce/Weber 2022). Sustainable development implies meeting the needs of today without jeopardizing the needs of future generations (WCED 1987), which requires the simultaneous preservation of the economic, ecological, and social capacity of each system (Dyllick/Hockerts 2002).

Given that organizations play a major role in creating a sustainable environment through their actions, the question is to what extent they are committed to those goals, not only when they are imposed on them by legislation, but rather regarding the awareness of the footprints that each organization's operations leave on the environment.

Although according to previous research, organizational management often makes decisions that are not adapted to the environment (Linnenluecke/Griffits/Winn 2013; Lupp/Huechele/Renner/Syrbe/Konold/Siegrist 2016), modern organizations are under pressure to implement green initiatives in their businesses, as an important indicator of their corporate social responsibility (CSR). Therefore, the achievement of organizational green goals, through the effective definition of policy and the application of green business practices and initiatives, has become a corporate obligation, but also an important factor in gaining a competitive advantage in the market (Shen/Dumont/Deng 2018). Many organizations have started to apply the concepts of green marketing, supply and distribution chain, production, packaging, and recycling (Chen/Shih/Shyur/Wu 2012).

Additionally, many organizations have turned to green practices and activities in all HRM functions intending to encourage employees to behave responsibly towards the environment (Ercantan/Eyüpoglu 2022). GHRM greatly contributes to organizations' socially responsible behaviour, which benefits the employees, the organization, and the entire community (Saeed/Afsar/Hafeez/Khan/Tahir/Afridi 2018; Napathorn 2021).

At the same time, GHRM plays one of the key roles in organizational sustainability (Amjad/Abbas/Rehman/Baig/Hashim/Khan/Rehman 2021; Darvishmotevali/Altinay 2022), as it includes not only issues of environmental protection but also a broader perspective of awareness of the importance of the social and economic well-being of an organization and its employees (Ahmad 2015). The shift towards GHRM confirms that this function is becoming of strategic importance for long-term sustainable growth and development (Karoliny/Farkas/Poor 2009).

Various external and internal factors force organizations to commit to socially responsible and sustainable business concepts (Ercantan/ Eyüpoglu 2022). Ex-

ternal factors stem from different policies and goals at the global level, but also from the increasing consumer demand for eco-friendly products (Úbeda-García/Marco-Lajara/Zaragoza-Sáez/Manresa-Marhuenda/Poveda-Pareja 2022). In the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) – 2030 Agenda, created by the United Nations, one of the goals addresses "Climate Change" implying the active participation of all organizations in environmental protection and social responsibility. Additionally, the „Decent Work and Economic Growth" goal emphasizes sustainable, environmentally friendly, and inclusive growth and development (United Nations 2015). The Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal are other regulations that greatly encourage organizations to behave in a socially responsible manner (Omarova/Jo 2022). As a result, organizations have gained a more significant role and a greater sense of responsibility to fully engage in the environmental protection and preservation process using their activities (Cesário/Sabino/Moreira/Azevedo 2022).

In addition to the influence of these globally set goals, organizations are beginning to feel additional pressure from various stakeholders, among which the most prominent are the government, business partners, clients, and employees (Singh/Giudice/Chierici/Graziano 2020; Merlin/Chen 2022).

Internal factors that influence the development of green HR practices stem from the determination and commitment of top management to support green HR through development strategies and organizational culture. A new business paradigm that is oriented towards sustainable business indicates that the long-term goals of every organization are based on sustaining a collective livelihood and is called Common Good HRM. This paradigm requires organizations to revise their operating procedures to meet all prescribed regulations and rules, but also to shift the focus from profit to broad social impact and sustainable business (Aust /Matthews/Muller-Camen 2020). In practice, a tendency has been observed for organizations to advocate and emphasize their social responsibility through their communication channels, trying to build a good reputation and image by pretending to be "eco-friendly" (Merlin/Chen 2022). Their business strategy, policy, and practice of applying the concept of socially responsible and sustainable business through changes in attitudes, behaviour, and perceptions of internal stakeholders do not fully confirm this (Cooke/Dickmann/Parry 2022).

2. Literature Review

GHRM, as an increasingly significant field of organizational research since the 1990s, represents a coordinated and planned approach to activities related to the preservation and protection of the environment (Wehrmeyer 1996; Shah 2019) with the aim that employees in an organization accept values and norms which relate to social responsibility (Opatta/Arulrajah 2014). As a critical step for sustainable competitive advantage (Aykan 2017), it implies changing and adapt-

ing all HRM processes to new management directions (Darvishmotevali/Altinay 2022; Tanova/Bayighomog 2022). Some of the advantages that companies achieve by implementing GHRM include: improving organizational and environmental performance (Gotschol/De Giovanni/Vinzi 2014; Wu/Tseng/Lim/Chiu 2019); obtaining stronger brand recognition (Napathorn 2021); attracting talent; enhancing employee retention and motivation (Muster/Schrader 2011; Shafaei/Nejati/Yusoff 2020); and achieving cost advantage and differentiation by using technologies that prevent pollution (Carmona-Moreno/Lorente/Martinez-del-Rio 2012). The activities of GHRM start from the process of job analysis and design and continue to permeate through all its functions.

Green Jobs: job analysis and design, new job positions. Although there is no consensus on a clear definition of Green Jobs, different definitions do not deviate from the United Nations Environment Program basic concept, which states that green jobs are those that contribute to the quality of the environment and avoid future harmful consequences for the ecosystem (Song/Kim/Cha/Lee 2021). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO 2011) the Green Job concept has an environmental and social aspect, whereby environmental jobs are oriented towards energy efficiency, pollution control, and eco-friendly services, while the social aspect requires that economic and ecologically sustainable activities meet conditions of decent work criteria.

From the perspective of GHRM, jobs in an organization can be seen as Green Jobs and other jobs, where Green Jobs are directly related to the protection and preservation of the environment. The primary goal of Green Jobs is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the utilization of energy and raw materials, to eliminate or reduce the emission of harmful gases, pollution, and waste, and to preserve the environment.

Other jobs that are not described with the attribute "green" have a great potential to contribute to environmental protection indirectly. All employees, when performing work tasks, can and should consider reducing and/or eliminating negative effects on the environment. Depending on the type of job, the level at which the job can be greened will differ, that is, we can say that there are several shades of green (ILO 2008).

Green recruitment and green employer branding. GHRM reflects an organization's environmental values, strategies, and orientations, and as such can differentiate it on the labour market and attract talents who are interested in the natural environment (Kivinda/Su/Hau/Hashmi 2021). A green employer brand is the best indicator of an organization's attractiveness to potential employees (Renwick/Redman/Maguire 2013). During the recruitment process, it can attract candidates who are committed to improving environmental management (Tang/Chen/Jiang/Paille/Jia 2018). The talent competition becomes even more intense when it is necessary to attract the best candidates from the labour market

who practice socially responsible behaviour. Therefore, an employer's socially responsible behaviour is positioned as an important factor when a candidate is deciding whether to apply for an advertised position or not.

Green selection. The process of green candidate selection implies the application of several different HRM activities. Organizations are increasingly applying online forms of interviewing candidates or online tests during the initial stages of selection. In this way, they send a clear message to the candidates about their commitment and practices related to environmental protection. In the selection process, organizations ask candidates questions related to their socially responsible behaviour to assess their awareness of the importance of preserving and protecting the environment (Jeronimo/Henriques/de Lacerda/da Silva/Vieira 2020), as well as their knowledge of protecting the environment, through a special type of tests (Saeed et al. 2018). Personal values related to ecology and environmental protection have a great influence on the socially responsible behaviour of employees (Chaudhary 2020). An increasing number of organizations additionally value candidates who are aware of the need to preserve the environment and who are engaged in some initiatives or projects related to environmental protection (Arulrajah/Opatha/Nawaratne 2015).

Familiarization of employees with the green principles of the organization. Greening organizations should ensure that new employees understand their duties and responsibilities in terms of socially responsible behaviour, that they fit into the organizational culture as best as possible, that they accept and implement environmental protection policies and practices, and that they are introduced to employees who actively promote social responsibility. The *Green Employee Handbook* contains information on previously implemented socially responsible practices and initiatives, as well as a list of job positions that support socially responsible behaviour in the organization.

Green training and development. Green Human Capital represents the set of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, experience, commitment and engagement of employees related to environmental protection and green innovation (Chen 2008). Education about environmental protection and green behaviours leads to a positive attitude of managers and employees towards socially responsible activities and practices. Thus, awareness of the impact of organizational activities on the environment is strengthened (Bansal/Roth 2000), and employees acquire skills to engage in environmental problem-solving (Zoogah 2011). In the process of developing training, it is required to identify an organization's and employees' special needs about the activity, as well as the peculiarity of the workplace and activities, so that the training is aligned with the organizational goals and thus generates the desired effects (Skinner 2014). It is considered that in the aftermath, with adequate training and development, employees working in the production process can see more clearly the possibilities of reducing

waste (Renwick et al. 2013). Training also has a social component, because an individual can learn by observation while interacting with other employees (Tang et al. 2018).

Evaluation and rewarding of employees' green performance. In the process of employee performance evaluation, it is necessary to set green goals and standards, evaluate achieved results, and provide constructive feedback. The three key categories evaluated in green performance are: (1) efficiency and rational use of inputs by employees; (2) innovativeness and initiative of employees towards environmental protection; and (3) employee contribution in implementing organizational environmental and green initiatives (Arulrajah/Opatha/Nawaratne 2016).

When pursuing green goals, organizations apply various material and non-material rewards. The objective of the reward system is to motivate employees to achieve environmental goals (Renwick et al. 2013), which are aligned with their professional goals and interests (Jackson/Seo 2010). In some organizations, employees receive bonuses, raises, and incentives, while in others they receive intangible rewards in the form of praise, recognition, and promotions. Organizations that have created energy-efficient procedures and accompanying rewards can more easily promote a culture of environmental awareness (Gupta 2008).

Green organizational culture. The values, attitudes, behavioural norms, assumptions, procedures, and practices that represent how all employees, independent of position and workplace, observe the environment are known as "green organizational culture" (Harris/Crane 2002). Organizations that want to establish a green employer brand must build and nurture a sustainable green organizational culture whose key motto is "*reduce, reuse and recycle*" (Al Kerdawy 2018). Employees' environmental behaviour will be encouraged if they realize that an organization's cultural values suggest environmentally conscientious behaviour (Mancha/Yoder 2015).

Motivators that encourage a company's employees to keep in mind the requirements of GHRM arise from its activities, mostly through a reward system, organizational culture, and training.

The approaches used to assess whether organizations meet the requirements of GHRM are focused on the organization – its products, services, structure, plans, organizational culture, employees, and sustainability reports (Lozano/Barreiro-Gen 2022). It is considered that an organization has met the goals of GHRM when it achieves pro-environmental behaviour of employees that is oriented towards the development of eco-friendly processes and products, recycling, reuse and responsible use of resources, as well as effective waste management and adequate disposal of harmful waste materials. This certainly includes the daily activities of employees that are directed towards socially responsible behaviour,

such as double-sided printing of materials, avoiding printing documents unless necessary, using glass cups instead of plastic ones, and saving electricity.

In practice, certain criteria are increasingly applied to evaluate socially responsible business organizations – environmental performance, green product development performance, collective organizational citizenship behaviour for the environment (OCBE), social performance, and green organization reputation (Tanová/Bayighomog 2022). The Republic of Serbia must harmonize the Law on Business Companies and the Law on Accounting with the EU Directive that requires all companies in the EU with more than 500 employees to compile a non-financial report, which in terms of structure and information, constitutes a report on sustainable development. Therefore, organizations that are obliged to prepare a non-financial report should include the measurement, monitoring, and reporting of the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) performance in their internal policies and procedures. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a framework for non-financial reporting on sustainable business was created in 2019 through the project "Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Roll-Out Support and Private Sector Engagement". The methodology used to create the framework is based on the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards. The creation and application of the framework is the first step in the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3. Research methodology

To assess the extent to which GHRM practices are applied in organizations in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the following hypotheses are developed:

A report of the European Commission (2022a; 2022b) stated that Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina recorded little progress within the green agenda and sustainability, while in terms of climate change, those two countries are in the initial stages. The main weaknesses in Bosnia and Herzegovina that have been observed regarding green practices application are poor infrastructure and insufficient knowledge and information about waste management, recycling, and organic production (Licastro/Sergi 2021). Some weaknesses have also been observed in Serbia, including the lack of awareness and responsibility towards environmental protection, insufficient understanding of CSR, and the low purchasing power of citizens, preventing them from turning to organic products (Licastro/Sergi 2021). The first hypothesis in this paper was derived from the observation that organizations in these countries are to a small extent oriented towards the activities and practices of GHRM.

Hypothesis 1: Organizations in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina apply activities and practices of GHRM to a small extent.

Small organizations have proven to be significantly more agile in conducting business. They are progressively attempting to embrace more creative business practices to capitalize on all potential benefits. Small organizations realize that by applying green practices and principles, they reduce the amount of waste, use fewer resources, separate waste by appropriate materials, and support recycling (Roscoe/Subramanian/Jabbour/Chong 2019). This leads to numerous positive effects such as cost reduction, greater market recognition, sales growth, and the attraction of new customers who are also oriented towards socially responsible behaviour (Dumont/Shen/Deng 2017; Usman/Rofcanin/Ali/Ogbonnaya/Babalola 2022). Another reason for small organizations to shift their focus towards green forms of HRM is that banks are more inclined to provide favourable loan conditions for green projects undertaken by small and medium-sized organizations (Radovic-Markovic/Radovic 2016). On the other hand, it is considered that large organizations are profit-oriented, with no regard for the environmental impact of their operations (Licastro/Sergi 2021). Therefore, the second hypothesis is stated in this paper.

Hypothesis 2: Small organizations apply GHRM activities and practices to a greater extent compared to medium and large ones.

Manufacturing organizations cause significant pollution of the environment – pollution of air, land, and rivers, which consequently threatens the environment (Guerci/Longoni/Luzzini 2016; Zailani/Jeyaraman/Vengadasan/Premkumar 2012). A positive impact of GHRM on long-term sustainability has been observed in manufacturing organizations in developing countries (Masri/Jaaron 2017). In this context, green training aims to give employees all of the knowledge and skills they need to perform their work in a socially beneficial way (Yong/Yusliza/Ramayah/Chiappetta Jabbour/Sehnem/Venkatesh 2020). Employee training is important because it contributes not only to more rational use but also to the reuse of resources, inputs, and materials (Usman/Rofcanin/Ali/Ogbonnaya/Babalola 2022), which is especially important in manufacturing organizations. Therefore, the third hypothesis is stated in this paper.

Hypothesis 3: Manufacturing organizations rely more heavily on green employee training compared to commerce and service organizations.

Empirical research was conducted using a specially designed questionnaire. The first four questions refer to information about an organization, i.e., the number of employees, the length of the organization's operation, the sector in which it operates, and the market in which it is represented. The fifth and sixth questions were formulated in the form of statements to which respondents from the HR

sector answered to rank their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale. The fifth question consisted of a set of statements from which the following Likert measurement scales were formed: "Green job descriptions and job positions", "Green recruitment and selection", "Green training and education", and "Green evaluation and rewarding of employees". The sixth question consisted of two statements that aimed to determine whether companies encourage green behaviours among employees and whether they report on the green activities and practices they have implemented.

Recognizing the importance of the topic and the fact that no previous study on this topic has been conducted in these countries, there was an opportunity at the end of the questionnaire for respondents to give their comments/suggestions/opinions on the topic of GHRM. Considering the unfavourable epidemiological situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the questionnaire was implemented and conducted in an online form. In 2021, 84 organizations participated in the research, of which 52 were from Serbia and 32 were from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The collected answers were processed and analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences – SPSS, version 21.0. (Armonk, NY: IBM Corporation). The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated for all three scales. Based on the results presented in Table 1, values of this coefficient are higher than 0.7, which demonstrates a high degree of reliability (DeVellis 2003).

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for Likert measurement scales

Scale	N	Cronbach's Alpha
Green job descriptions and job positions	4	0.81
Green recruitment and selection	5	0.72
Green training and education	4	0.85
Green evaluation and rewarding of employees	4	0.88

Source: Authors' analysis

The normality of data distribution was tested with Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, as well as by reviewing histograms, skewness, kurtosis, normal probability curve, and boxplot. Based on the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the values of Sig. for each of the measurement scales are less than 0.05, which indicates that the assumption of normality of data distribution is not satisfied and that it is necessary to apply non-parametric statistical techniques. Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to examine the differences in three or more groups. The confidence interval was set at 95 %. Levene's test for equality of variances was applied in all the tests comparing differences between groups. In all cases, the homogeneity of variance assumption was met ($p > 0.05$).

4. Results and discussion

Table 2 shows general information about the organizations that participated in the research. According to the number of employees, the largest number of organizations are of medium size and have from 50 to 249 employees (35.7 %). The largest number of organizations have been operating on the domestic market for over 10 years (67.9 %) and have been providing services (59.5 %) on the international market (46.4 %).

Table 2. General information about the organizations

	Serbia		Bosnia and Herzegovina		Overall sample	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Number of employees						
Up to 10	1	1.9	4	12.5	5	6.0
From 10 to 49	11	21.2	6	18.7	17	20.2
From 50 to 249	14	26.9	16	50.0	30	35.7
From 250 to 1000	11	21.2	4	12.5	15	17.9
Over 1000	15	28.8	2	6.3	17	20.2
The length of an organization's work						
Up to 5 years	5	9.6	5	15.7	10	11.9
From 5 to 10 years	11	21.2	6	18.8	17	20.2
Over 10 years	36	69.2	21	65.5	57	67.9
Sector						
Production	14	26.9	7	21.9	21	25.0
Commerce	7	13.5	6	18.7	13	15.5
Services	31	59.6	19	59.4	50	59.5
Market						
Domestic	16	30.8	15	46.9	31	36.9
Regional	7	13.5	7	31.2	14	16.7
International	29	55.7	10	21.9	39	46.4

Source: Authors' analysis

Table 3 shows the mean values and standard deviations for the individual statements for each of the measurement scales at the overall sample level, as well as the countries of origin of the organizations that participated in the research.

Table 3. Descriptive statistical analysis for the measurement scale "Green job descriptions and job positions"

Statements	Serbia		Bosnia and Herzegovina		Overall Sample	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
In the description of all jobs, some tasks also contribute to the preservation of the environment.	2.37	1.44	3.25	1.34	2.70	1.46
In the specification of executors, the possession of green competences (environmental knowledge) is included.	1.77	1.02	2.91	1.40	2.20	1.30
There are positions in the organization that are responsible for the greening of the organization (application of ecological principles and practices).	2.40	1.51	3.34	1.38	2.76	1.53
The organization has formed a green team that oversees the implementation of green behaviours.	1.69	1.13	2.38	1.18	1.95	1.19

M – Mean; SD – Standard Deviation

Source: Authors' analysis

The highest mean value was recorded for the statement that there are positions in the organization responsible for greening (2.76), while the lowest mean value was recorded for the statement that the organization formed a green team that oversees the implementation of green behaviours and activities (1.19). The job description in 25 organizations (29.8 %) defined tasks that contribute to the preservation of the environment, while in 15 organizations (17.8 %), the specification of executors includes the possession of green competencies (environmental knowledge). Additionally, in 31 organizations (36.9 %), there is a documented existence of positions responsible for the greening of the organization. Lastly, only 11 organizations (13.1 %) are documented to have a green team that is tasked with ensuring the implementation of green behaviours. The obtained results indicate that organizations are just starting to form special job positions intended for the greening of the organization, indicating that in the upcoming period, organizations will necessarily reach a stage in which they will form teams in charge of implementing green behaviours.

Table 4 shows the results for the measurement scale "Green recruitment and selection".

Table 4. Descriptive statistical analysis for the measurement scale "Green recruitment and selection"

Statements	Serbia		Bosnia and Herzegovina		Overall sample	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
The organization shows effort in trying to attract and hire candidates who are aware of the protection and preservation of the environment.	1.87	1.14	2.72	1.17	2.19	1.22
In the job advertisement, the organization emphasizes environmental values to attract candidates who are aware of environmental protection.	1.44	0.83	2.72	1.46	1.93	1.27
During the selection, the candidate's knowledge of ecology and environmental protection is checked.	1.13	0.40	2.44	1.41	1.63	1.18
In the selection process, the candidate's knowledge and skills are scored on the importance of environmental protection.	1.21	0.46	2.34	1.36	1.64	1.06
The first stages of the selection process are organized online, without the need for the candidate to be present physically.	3.53	1.64	2.03	1.45	2.95	1.72

M – Mean; SD – Standard Deviation

Source: Authors' analysis

The highest mean value was recorded for the statement that the first stages of the selection are organized online, without the need for the physical presence of the candidate (2.95), while the lowest mean value was recorded for the statement that during the selection, organizations conduct an assessment of the candidate's knowledge of ecology and environmental protection (1.63). This indicates that organizations lack a formalized system for assessing "green" knowledge throughout the selection process.

Out of the total number of organizations, 12 of them (14.3 %) show effort in trying to attract and hire candidates who are aware of environmental protection and preservation, and 11 of them (13.1 %) emphasize the organization's environmental values in their job advertisement to attract candidates who have awareness of environmental protection. Only 8 organizations (9.6 %) have reported the practice of checking the candidate's knowledge about ecology and the environment during the selection process, while 7 of them (8.4 %) provide a score for knowledge and skills about the environment during the selection process, while in 35 organizations (41.6 %) the first phase of the selection is organized online. The online selection of candidates became relevant due to the COVID-19 pandemic, when many organizations, to protect the health and safety of employees and candidates, reoriented themselves to online and remote ways of working (Lukić Nikolić/Jaganjac/Lazarević 2022).

The results related to the "Green recruitment and selection" scale are not encouraging because a small number of organizations that participated in this research work on the process of attracting those candidates who are aware of the protection and preservation of the environment and grounded ecological values. Given that employees impact the functioning of an entire organization by their behaviour, there is little possibility that the organization will succeed in reaching impressive outcomes in this field if the best employees are not recruited in terms of green values and norms.

Table 5 shows the results of the "Green training and education" measurement scale.

Table 5. Descriptive statistical analysis for the "Green training and education" measurement scale

Statements	Serbia		Bosnia and Herzegovina		Overall sample	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Within the first month, new employees are introduced to the organization's green practices and principles.	1.87	1.05	2.78	1.21	2.21	1.19
The organization organizes training and workshops with the aim of employees acquiring environmental knowledge and skills.	1.90	1.07	2.88	1.41	2.27	1.29
The organization encourages employees to share acquired knowledge and skills regarding green behaviour.	2.21	1.21	2.75	1.11	2.42	1.19
The organization encourages employees to make suggestions about green practices.	2.56	1.47	2.81	1.12	2.65	1.35

M – Mean; SD – Standard Deviation

Source: Authors' analysis

The highest mean value was recorded for the statement that organizations encourage employees to give their suggestions on green practices (2.65), while the lowest mean value was recorded for the statement that new employees are introduced to green practices and principles of an organization within their first month of working (2.21).

Out of the total number, in 15 (17.9 %) organizations new employees are introduced to green practices within the first month, in 17 organizations (20.2 %) training and workshops are organized with the aim of employees acquiring environmental knowledge and skills, and in 16 organizations (19.1 %) employees are encouraged to share acquired green knowledge and skills, while 24 (28.6 %) organizations encourage employees to make suggestions about green practices.

The obtained results for the "Green training and education" scale show that less than 1/3 of the organizations encourage employees to give their suggestions on

green activities and practices, while only 1/5 of the organizations organize training and workshops, and encourage employees to share acquired environmental knowledge and skills.

Table 6 shows the results of the "Green evaluation and rewarding of employees" measurement scale.

Table 6. Descriptive statistical analysis for the "Green evaluation and rewarding of employees" measurement scale

Statements	Serbia		Bosnia and Herzegovina		Overall Sample	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Environmental criteria (green behaviour of employees) are included in the performance evaluation system.	1.60	1.03	2.16	1.22	1.81	1.13
The company defines green goals for its employees.	1.60	0.93	2.66	1.31	2.00	1.20
Employees receive financial rewards for achieving green goals (bonuses, incentives, raises).	1.37	0.86	2.00	1.27	1.61	1.08
Employees receive various non-financial rewards for achieving environmental goals (praise, recognition).	1.79	1.29	2.16	1.32	1.93	1.31

M – Mean; SD – Standard Deviation

Source: Authors' analysis

The highest mean value was recorded for the statement that organizations define green goals for their employees (2.00), while the lowest mean value was recorded for the statement that employees receive financial rewards for realizing/achieving green goals (bonuses, incentives, raises) (1.61).

Out of the total number, 10 (11.9 %) organizations include environmental criteria in the employee performance evaluation system, while 12 organizations (13.3 %) define green goals for employees. Additionally, in 9 organizations (10.7 %) employees receive financial rewards for achieving green goals, while in 13 organizations (15.5 %) employees receive non-financial rewards (praise, recognition). The results for the "Green evaluation and rewarding of employees" scale indicate that few organizations apply green performance evaluation and reward systems.

Table 7 shows the results for the statements related to "The importance and role of the HR sector in the greening of the organization".

Table 7. Descriptive statistical analysis for the statements regarding “The importance and role of the HR sector in the greening of the organization”

Statements	Serbia		Bosnia and Herzegovina		Overall Sample	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
The HR sector encourages green behaviour of employees (printing on paper as little as possible, separating waste, eliminating plastic).	2.88	1.42	4.09	1.03	3.35	1.41
The HR sector creates reports on environmental activities that were carried out during the year.	1.65	1.05	2.78	1.21	2.08	1.23

M – Mean; SD – Standard Deviation

Source: Authors' analysis

The average score for the statement that the HR sector encourages green behaviour of employees is 3.35, while the score for the statement that the HR sector creates reports on environmental activities that were carried out during the year is 2.08. Out of the total number of organizations, the HR sector in 45 organizations (53.6 %) encourages green behaviour of employees, while the process of creating reports on environmental activities that were realized during the year is documented only to occur in 12 organizations (14.3 %).

The average values in almost all measurement scales do not exceed the amount of 3, which indicates a low level of application of GHRM practices and activities. An exception is the statement that the HR sector encourages green behaviour of employees in the form of less printing on paper, separation of waste, and elimination of plastic, which recorded the highest average value of 3.35 (2.88 in Serbia, and 4.09 in Bosnia and Herzegovina). One of the reasons may be the efforts of organizations to achieve savings on paper and plastic cups, and another reason may be the fact that the HR sector has become aware that it must also reorient itself to green forms and types of behaviour and that it started from these “simplest” activities. Based on the obtained results, it is evident that the mean values for almost all statements are higher among the respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which indicates that more attention is paid to this issue, but evidently still not satisfactory. This confirmed hypothesis 1, that organizations in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina apply activities and practices of GHRM to a small extent.

The research conducted on 449 respondents from Serbia and 460 respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina showed that CSR is still insufficiently developed in these countries (Melovic/Milovic/Backovic-Vulic/Dudic/Bajzik 2019). Likewise, it has been shown that in both countries (Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), while implementing the greening process, organizations face corruption, competition, insufficient access to financial resources, and unreliable infrastructure (Sanfey/Milatovic 2018).

It is important to point out the comments that were left as an option at the end of the questionnaire, in free form, where some of the respondents pointed out that environmental awareness is at a low level and that the questionnaire seems futuristic. The comments also indicate that a small number of companies and employees take part in green behaviour and that plastic is still widely used as an accessory.

To determine whether there are differences in the way organizations behave depending on the number of employees, length of business, sector, and market, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was applied. The test results did not show statistically significant differences in any measurement scale about the length of work of the organizations and the market in which they operate. The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed statistically significant differences in relation to the number of employees on the following scales:

"Green job descriptions and job positions" H (df=4, n=84) = 11.11, p=0.025 Mean rank and median are highest in organizations with less than 10 employees (Mean Rank = 63.40; Md=3).

"Green recruitment and selection" H (df=4, n=83) = 11.15, p=0.025 Mean rank and median are highest in organizations with less than 10 employees (Mean Rank = 69.50; Md=2.6)

"Green evaluation and rewarding of employees" H (df=4, n=84) = 11.70, p=0.020 Mean rank and median are highest in organizations that have less than 10 employees (Mean Rank = 58; Md=2.6).

The presented results indicate that small organizations with up to ten employees pay more attention to activities related to green job descriptions, recruitment and selection, evaluation and rewarding of employees. Small organizations, as shown by practice, frequently lead the way in innovation and innovative practices, and are considered to be more agile and flexible, therefore this result is not surprising. Hence, this confirms hypothesis 2 which states that small organizations, measured by the number of employees, apply activities and practices of GHRM to a greater extent compared to medium and large ones.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a statistically significant difference concerning the business sector, on the "Green training and education" scale H (df=2, n=84) = 6.03, p=0.049. Mean rank and median are highest in manufacturing organizations (Mean Rank = 54.88; Md=3). This confirms hypothesis 3 which states that manufacturing organizations rely more on green employee training compared to commerce and service organizations. Throughout history, manufacturing organizations have been a dominant polluter of the environment, and therefore, this result indicates that manufacturing organizations are more focused on different types and forms of training and education in the domain of green behaviour.

The overall findings indicate that GHRM is only partially developed in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and that it is required to raise awareness of all its components and devote more attention to green initiatives. This research on GHRM is pioneering in our region, according to our knowledge based on extensively studied literature.

Some research indicates that GHRM is still an innovative idea in developing countries (Amjad et al. 2021). The research results on GHRM in Ghana indicate that the main barriers to the implementation of green practices are a lack of financial resources and political and regulatory barriers (Kodua/Xiao/Adjei/Asante/Ofosu/Amankona 2022). Research on the adoption of GHRM in education in India points to key challenges: lack of vision and top management cooperation, lack of benchmarking and lack of GHRM procedures (Goel/Mehta/Kumar/Castano 2022). The level of GHRM implementation in companies in Poland is low (Bombiak 2020), and the main barriers are related to limited financial resources, low management competencies for GHRM, and low efficiency of GHRM tools. By comparing results with findings from the Republic of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sanfey/Milatovic 2018) we concluded that common obstacles in Poland, Ghana and Bosnia and Herzegovina are financial resources. Results from India match in terms of infrastructure.

The obtained results are not suitable for generalization due to several reasons. It is known that management success cannot be achieved by simply copying and applying solutions that have proven successful in one organization (Tanova/Bayighomog 2022). It especially applies to the human resources area that largely depends on national culture and regulatory norms, but also on the features of the organization itself – its activities, size, history, financial strength, leadership style, environment, and strategic goals. GHRM should be approached in the same way – adapted to the needs of each organization (Tanova/Bayighomog 2022). An additional reason is that the research was conducted in two developing countries so it is not possible to generalize the obtained results to other countries that are in different stages of development and come from different cultural contexts. However, the obtained results can be partially generalized to other Balkan countries because there are numerous similarities – starting from the historical context, geographical location, and national culture (Licastro/Sergi 2021). However, caution should be exercised because these countries differ greatly depending on whether they are full members of the EU or not. In general, Balkan countries that are not EU members (Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) are considered to have an insufficiently developed awareness of environmental issues and sustainable business therefore the application of socially responsible business is still voluntary (Melovic/Milovic /Backovic-Vulic/Dudic/Bajzik 2019).

5. Conclusion

Environmentally sustainable development has now long been one of the most important challenges in the entire world. Given that the business sector has a significant impact on the environment through its activities and that organizations, depending on their activity, often leave a negative footprint on nature and the environment, they are also a key factor in solving environmental problems. Sustainable organizational development increasingly depends on the proactive approach of each organization in environmental protection. No business system can be viewed in isolation because it forms the entire value chain on a global level. A transition from a nature-exploitative mindset to a nature-collaborative mindset is required.

The results of the research conducted in 2021 in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina imply that, in these developing countries, GHRM is insufficiently developed in organizations. Given that employees are a crucial factor in the implementation of green practices that permeate organizational strategies, GHRM can make a substantial contribution to an organization's sustainable development. The key challenge facing organizations and HR professionals is to understand the importance, scope, and depth of greening HRM that will have a positive impact on the process of transforming the organization into a socially responsible green entity that is aligned with local and international green requirements.

Limitations, implications and future research

The limitation of the conducted research is that a relatively small number of respondents participated in the research and completed the questionnaire. The reason for such a low response rate in the research can be attributed to the generally small number of organizations that engage in GHRM activities, as well as the fact that its importance is still underrepresented.

The results of this research can be useful to all organizations and HR professionals who want to contribute to the process of greening the organization, as well as to policy-makers who want to regulate and promote ecological culture and green behaviour. Any organization that wants to become green should create a green employer brand and thereby initiate a comprehensive process of its greening by attracting the best candidates from the labour market who have already formed green habits and forms of behaviour. In doing so, organizations should take into account the importance of all processes that form the basis for developing a GHRM strategy, as an integral part of the overall organizational strategy. Partial application of the basic activities of GHRM is not enough for the organization to make significant progress in that direction. Future research on this topic should also take into account key characteristics of national and organizational culture, as well as leadership style.

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