

*Research Article*

# Employee Retention in light of Green HRM practices through the Intervening role of Work Engagement

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Received: 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020; Accepted: 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020; Published: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020

**Abstract:** The current research examined the relationship of green human resource management practices with employees' retention in the pharmaceutical industry of Oman. The study also checked the mediating effect of work engagement in the relationships of Green HRM practices with employee retention. Following the current purpose, the study targeted employees in the pharmaceutical industry as the unit of analyses. Five hundred seventy-six respondents were selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected through a self-administrative questionnaire. Collected data was screened through SPSS23, which concluded with 349 usable questionnaires for data analysis and assessment. Structural equation modeling via Smart PLS 3.2.8 was employed to test the proposed model. The findings of the study show a positive but insignificant association of green HRM practices toward employee retention. However, the study found a significant positive influence of green HRM practices with work engagement and work engagement with employee retention. The study also reported the mediation of work engagement in the green HRM and employee retention relationship. The findings of the study have contributed theoretically and practically.

**Keywords:** *Employee retention; Work engagement; Green HRM practices; Mediation*

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## 1. Introduction

Firms with green policies normally advantage through rising sales and brand (Yang, Hong, Modi, 2011; Wee & Quazi, 2005) and desired outcomes of employees (Salem, Hassan, & Osman 2012). Employees being company agents execute green policies of organizations. Therefore, it becomes necessary for any organization to uplift these employees and to retain them so that organizational green goals can be achieved (Ones & Dilchert, 2012).

Among the important function of management, human resource management is one of the key functions. It relates to valuable resources that is human capital. According to Ahmad (2015), HRM is considered as necessary under sustainability throughout the globe. Companies are on the way to a journey from HRM to green HRM practices, which can be defined as a set of activities that ultimately increase resourceful environmental results (Kramar, 2014). Further green HRM is a set of policies used to motivate for proper utilization of organizational resources to promote environmentalism, enhancing employees' satisfaction and morale.

Employers invest while recruiting the best employees and put much effort into training and develop them so that these employees can be retained for a more extended time. According to Cardy and Lengnick-

hall (2011), efforts being taken to retain employees and making organizational environments in such a way so that the hired employees can be retained. Retention can be defined as efforts taken by employers to develop and create an environment in such a way that seems to be encouraging employees through proper practices and well-designed policies through which employees' needs can be focused (Sinha & Shukla 2013). Further addressing employee retention issue in the pharmaceutical industry is, jobs are more stressful, complicated, and there is no dearth of opportunities for talented people, which create hurdle in retaining the valuable HR personnel. Along with this, there are many problems like injustice in financial packages defined by the organizations, lack of satisfaction in employees, and autocratic styles are among serious problems, as stated by Hejase, Dirani, Hamdar, and Hazimeh (2016). Besides this, Imam et al. (2018) also identified retention as a critical issue in the pharmaceutical industry of Pakistan.

In Oman, the lack of indigenous human resources in the healthcare and pharmaceutical fields also hinders growth in the industry as both government-owned and private facilities find it challenging to secure a strong and stable staff. There is a need to retain employees for better organizational achievement (Oman: Healthcare & pharmaceuticals, 2019). Though literature is available on green HRM, there is still doubtful association globally regarding the proper execution of green HRM policies in different organizations for creating suitable corporate culture. Current research focuses on how the pharmaceutical industry in Oman is taking part in environmental management programs by devising policies and ensure employee retention with the help of green HRM by examining existing empirical evidence. Despite available literature on green HRM and its link with employee retention (Cardy & Lengnick-hall 2011), this relationship so far has not received adequate attention following the examination of the mediating role of work engagement.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Employee Retention**

Khalid et al. (2016) defined employee retention as a set of activities of an organization utilized for retaining employees. Besides this, Heman (2005) defined employee retention as an effort taken by organizations for providing and maintaining a work environment for the motivation of employees to uphold them with the organization. Employee retention is essential and beneficial for firms. Different firms address retention policies by focusing on employee needs for improvement in the work setting to retain employees for a longer time. According to Lockwood (2006), among organizational strategies, employee retention is a critical component through which an organization can maintain talented human capital. As stated by Hausknecht, Rodda, and Howard (2009) that talented employees working in different levels judge organizational strategies and processes in a system if they found it suitable, then they decide to stay or to leave the organization.

Therefore, organizations should have to be focused on processes like selection, training environment so that organizations can retain talented staff with them. Employees, before deciding to stay with the organization they consider the organizational environment. Therefore, they are currently focusing on making the work environment more attractive through various initiatives while considering the policies and green philosophy (Ahmad, 2015). Green policies are essentially important within HR, making it as green HR practices. According to Ahmad (2015), green HRM is found to help manage inefficiencies, cost reduction, and employee retention. Looking at the literature, evidence on employee retention in the pharmaceutical industry of Oman seems quite challenging because Oman every year target sending their medical professionals for training (Oman: Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals, 2019). Till the return of these trained staff, create stress level on existing employees and may lead them to leave the organization as other different pharmaceutical firms are offering considerable benefits in different countries (Sinha, & Shukla, 2013). Therefore, the Oman pharmaceutical industry has to create Green HRM practices to make the environment greener to attract the employees to remain part of the organization.

For the development of green skills, to motivate the employees, creating awareness, and participating in different CSR activities, green HRM practices and policies play an essential role. Additionally, green HRM helps in implementing green initiatives, so it is related to CSR but is different from activities performed in CSR (Shen, Dumont, & Deng, 2016). Notably, due to the worth of Green HRM practices and their role in employee retention, the current study has focused on Green HRM practices' effect on employee retention and the intervening influence of work engagement in the pharmaceutical industry of Oman.

## 2.2. Green HRM Practices and Employee Retention

The term Green HRM is an emerging concept among academicians and professionals involved in human resources management (Shahriari, & Hassanpoor, 2019). Green HRM is a helping tool for developing green skills among employees, such as awareness, and motivates them to participate in important initiatives (Shen, Dumont, & Deng, 2016). Green HRM involves several functions such as Green hiring, Green training, green remuneration, and benefit green employee motivation (Shahriari, & Hassanpoor, 2019).

Green HRM has several benefits such as it increase employees' morale, talent acquisition, cost-saving, and corporate social responsibility, this green HRM helps in reducing employees turnover rate; when the turnover rate is reduced by any activity on other side this will increase retention rate which means Green HRM practices helps in increase of employee retention (Deshwal 2015). Besides this, in scholarly work by Dutta (2012) stated by defining green HRM as an eco-friendly function of HR and further stating that Green HRM helps in employee retention. Moreover, in the study of Likhitkar and Verma (2017) to measure the combined consequence of Green HRM practices such as compensation on employee retention review analyses showed that Green HRM practices help increase employee retention.

H1: Green HRM practices have a significant positive effect on Employee Retention

## 2.3. Green HRM practices and work engagement

For a successful business, dedicated HRM practices should be well established by considering the environment. Green practices and performance relationship has been investigated earlier (Zhu & Sarkis, 2004), the current study has focused on covering the result of green HRM practices on work engagement of the working employees in the pharmaceutical industry of Oman. Green HRM practices play an important role (Dumont, Shen, & Deng 2016) in business sustainability. Environment friendly HR practices (GHRM) show greater efficiencies and better employee engagement at work (Deshwal 2015). This infers that with green HRM practices, employees become more committed and show their engagement with work. Notably, it has been evident in the study by Dutta (2012) green HR helps in increasing engagement of the employees at work, which shows that green practices have a positive association with employees' work engagement.

The workforce involved in the execution of green policies becomes obligatory for the organizations to encourage the employees' behavior for organizational outcomes (One & Dilchert 2012). Workforce's work engagement has been predicted by HRM practices (Karatepe & Olugbade 2016). Thus, green HRM at the workplace can be treated as a motivational factor that has a positive association with employees' work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004). Based on the given discussion, this study has proposed the association of Green HRM practices with work engagement.

H2: *Green HRM practices have a significant positive effect on employee work engagement.*

## 2.4. Work engagement and employee Retention

Schaufeli and Baker (2003) stated that promising employees are found to be dedicated to their work while comparing to those who are exhausted and burnout. Similarly, the importance of work engagement

has been rigorously highlighted in various scholarly empirical work (Ahmed, Isa, Majid, Zin, & Amin 2017; Awang et al., 2017) in different work settings. As stated by Armstrong and Brown (2009) that promising employees have an interest in their work, and they put their best level of effort leading towards performance. Similarly, engaged employees are more resourceful for the organization, and their engagement with work keeps them in the organization for a longer period. To remain a part of any organization for a long time leads toward a higher retention ratio, and it is better when employees are found to be engaged with their work.

Given the importance of work engagement, scholarly evidence has noted the relationship of work engagement with employees' retention. Different strategies such as performance management, expertise development in employees increase the retention ratio of employees (Cascio 2014). Besides this, scholarly evidence by Alzyoud (2018) stated that engagement has an association with employee retention. More the engaged employees, the more will be the retention rate. Retention rates normally reduce when employees are preoccupied, confused, and distracted from potential outcomes by following the organization's transactions, thus causing employees to switch (Griffeth, Hom, & Campion 2000). Less is acknowledged to different factors that may induce the employees to stay especially from work engagement. Hence the current study has focused on checking the direct output of work engagement on employee retention and as a mediating effect in the relationships of green HRM practices with employees' retention.

H3: *Work engagement has a positive significant effect on employee retention*

## 2.5. Work Engagement as a Mediator

Current research has claimed that work engagement as a mediating variable between green HRM practices and employee retention. For example, empirical evidence from the literature has shown work engagement as a mediator (Karatepe 2013). As the current study was proposed to be executed on employees working in the pharmaceutical industry of Oman and focusing on the mediating role played by work engagement on the relationship of green HRM practices and employee retention.

Besides this, different research empirical evidence resulted that work engagement was a significant mediator between the relationship of work engagement's antecedents and consequences (Agarwal, Datta, Blake-Beard, & Bhargawa, 2012; Vincent-hoper, Muser, & Janneck, 2012; Schaufeli & Bakker 2004; Shah et al., 2016). Research conducted on frontline employees study found that work engagement was mediating the direct relationships. Hence, the findings from the literature about mediation by work engagement show that work engagement has the potential to mediate the relationship between green HRM employee retention. In the current study, work engagement was used as a mediator between the relationships of green HRM practices with employee retention. Based on evidence current study hypothesized that;

H4: *Work engagement mediates the relationship between green HRM practices and employees' retention.*

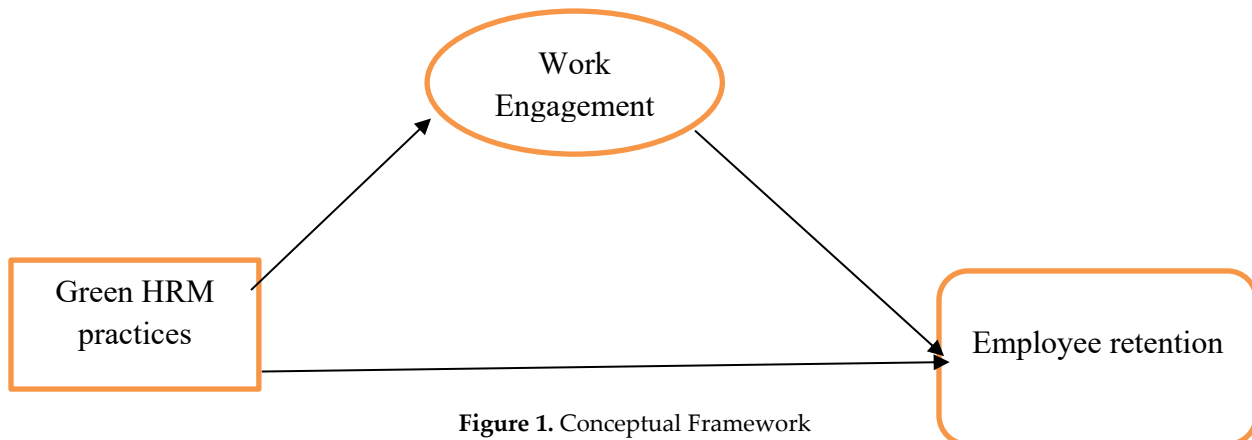


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Instrumentation

Questionnaire technique of the quantitative approach was used for the present study. Based on the sections, first section covered questions about demographics of respondents, and the second section covered items about the framework of study (employee retention 3 items, work engagement 9 items, and green HRM 6 items). Instrument regarding green HRM practices was taken from the study of Dumont, Shen, and Deng (2016). Questions regarding work engagement Utrecht work engagement scale was utilized (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova 2006). Instrument regarding employee retention was taken for current study the instrument was used in Angadi, and Naik (2012).

#### 3.2. Data Collection

Data were collected from the individuals working in the pharmaceutical industry in Oman. The sample for the current study was 384. Out of 550 distributed questionnaires, 370 were received back, outlining a response rate of 64.42%. After screening data through SPSS23, a final 349 responses were utilized for model assessment and hypothesis testing. Further detail regarding demographic data is illustrated in table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic data of respondents

Factor	Category	Frequency
Gender	Male	270
	Female	79
Age	30 years or less	55
	31years-35 years	145
	36years-40 years	90
	41years-45 years	59
Qualification	Diploma	90
	Graduate	115
	Postgraduate	89
Marital Status	Unmarried	130
	Married	170
	Not disclosed	49

#### 3.3. Data Analysis

The present study adopted the two-stage approach for model assessment. The approach assesses measurement model assessment was done through PLS algorithm for reliability and validity of the model. Second, the hypotheses testing through structural model (Anderson & Gerbing 1988) by applying bootstrapping technique through structural equation modeling with Smart PLS 3.2.8.

### 4. Findings

#### 4.1. Assessment of Measurement Model

Reliability and validity was assessed by following the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria. In this, AVE scores were checked to ensure they are above the 0.50 suggested cut off. Moreover, composite reliability scores were also checked to ensure they meet the cut-off of 0.70. Individual item loadings were also checked to ensure they are above 0.50 threshold (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

In addition, the discriminant validity was assessed through HTMT criteria (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt 2015). Recommended maximum values of HTMT are HTMT<sub>0.85</sub> and HTMT<sub>0.90</sub> (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt 2015). Results regarding HTMT values in the current study all values were well below the criteria of HTMT<sub>0.90</sub>. Data presented in Table 3.

**Table 2. Measurement model**

Latent Variable	Loading	CR	AVE
<b>Green HRM</b>		0.864	0.516
G-1	0.590		
G-2	0.709		
G-3	0.782		
G-4	0.776		
G-5	0.750		
G-6	0.683		
<b>Work Engagement</b>		0.908	0.523
WE-1	0.698		
WE-2	0.687		
WE-3	0.628		
WE-4	0.754		
WE-5	0.822		
WE-6	0.644		
WE-7	0.764		
WE-8	0.774		
WE-9	0.718		
<b>Employee Retention</b>		0.879	0.709
	0.889		
	0.853		
	0.781		

**Table 3. HTMT Values**

	ER	GHRM	WE
ER			
GHRM		0.769	
WE		0.854	0.882

After the assessment of reliability and validity, the current study also checked model assessment with R<sup>2</sup> and f<sup>2</sup>. According to Falk and Miller (1992), the R<sup>2</sup> value shows variation in dependent variable due to independent variables. Current study findings regarding R<sup>2</sup> value show employee retention with 0.643, and work engagement shows 0.56. Beside this current study also checked effect size through f<sup>2</sup> value. F<sup>2</sup> values show the effects of each independent variable on the dependent variable. Table 4 and Figure 2 shows weak effect of GHRM on employee retention and substantial effect on work engagement. Likewise, work engagement posed a substantial effect on employee retention.

**Table 4. R2, F2 Values**

Component	R <sup>2</sup>	adjstd R <sup>2</sup>	f <sup>2</sup>	effect level	
				WE	ER
ER	0.643	0.641			
WE	0.56	0.558	--	0.724	substantial
GHRM	--	---	1.271	0.003	(substantial, Weak)

**4.2. Structural Model Assessment**

After the measurement model, the current study assessed the structural model for hypothesis testing. The bootstrapping results found a significant link between Green HRM practices and work engagement (H2), ( $\beta = 0.748$ , t value=27.721, p-value, =0.000) for H2. Similarly, a significant positive relationship between Work engagement and employee retention was found ( $\beta = 0.766$ . t value = 18.404, p-value, = 0.000) for H3. However, no significant relationship between Green HRM practices and employee retention was found ( $\beta = 0.047$ , t value = 0.942, p-value,= 0.346) for H1. Importantly, the current study found significant results in the mediation process in H4, where it was postulated that work engagement would mediate the link between green HRM practices and employee retention. Current study findings shows significant results in

(H4) ( $\beta = 0.573$ , t value, = 15.107, p-value, = 0.000). Table 5 and figure 3 shows results about structural equation modeling (structural model assessment).

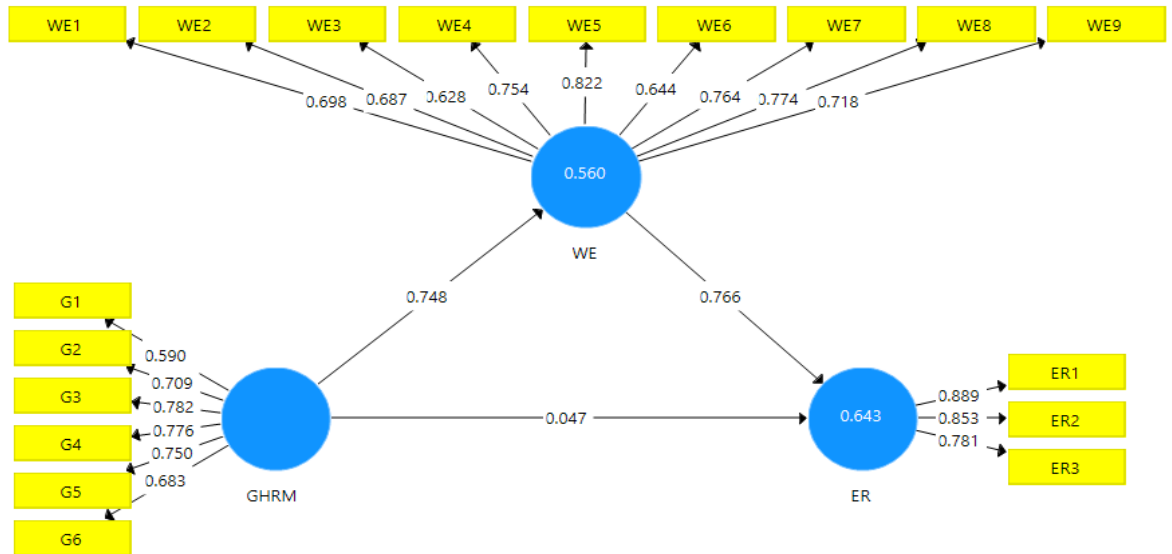


Figure 2. Measurement model (PLS-Algorithm)

Table 5. Structural Model Assessment

Structural model	beta	t value	p value	CI5%,	CI95%	Decision
H1-GHRM>ER	0.047	0.942	0.346	0.555	0.672	Rejected
H2-GHRM>WE	0.748	27.721	0.000	0.696	0.787	Accepted
H3- WE>ER	0.766	18.404	0.000	0.000	0.696	0.833 Accepted
H4-GHRM>WE>ER	0.573	15.107	0.000	0.514	0.636	Accepted

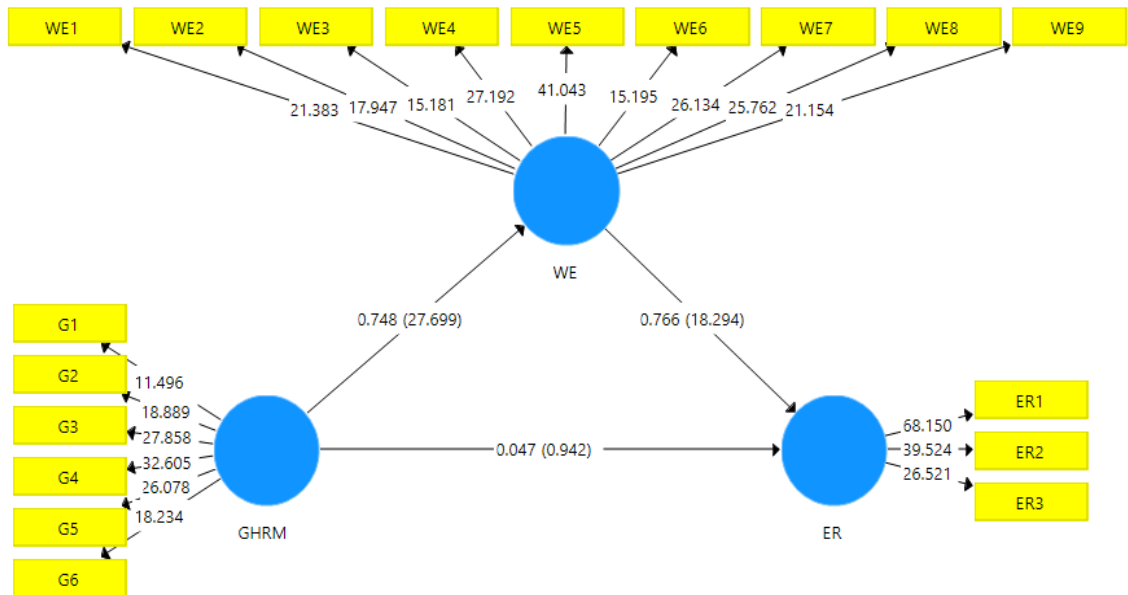


Figure 3. Structural Model

## 5. Discussion and Implications

Current study enriched empirical evidence in the body of knowledge by adding green HRM practices in the research model as an independent variable under the umbrella of resource-based view theory (Barney, 1991) such as training and development, skills and knowledge (Akbar & Islam, 2019). This has been a contribution from current study findings regarding the significant effects of green HRM practices on work engagement and the significant effect of work engagement on employee retention. However, insignificant effects were reported on the relationship of green HRM practices with employee retention. A plausible reason could be that when employees' are committed to their jobs, there may be no need of external influence. Furthermore, the current study tested the mediating effect of work engagement in the relationship between green HRM practices and employee retention; work engagement mediated an insignificant relationship into a significant and positive. This indicates work engagement being a good mediator in such an organizational structure where such green HRM practices are carried out. Dumont, Shen, and Deng (2016) suggested that when employees have green practices, symbols, and values in the work environment, it helps them stay engaged in their jobs. The study by Jackson, Ones, and Dilchert (2012) also indicated that having green HRM practices in an organization is essential for various outcomes. Hence, the current study has provided dynamics by adding evidence to the notion of green HRM practices and its viability for businesses. Under this viewpoint, research results can be helpful for practitioners developing pro-environment policies.

### 5.1. Limitations and Scope for Future Studies

The current study was conducted in the pharmaceutical industry of Oman with green HRM practices as a uni-dimensional factor affecting employee retention and intervening role of work engagement. In comparison, future studies can be carried out by considering green HRM practices dimensions in the pharmaceutical industry as well as other business and services industries. Furthermore, the current study has covered general employees of the pharmaceutical industry as an individual unit of analysis. Future may target top management as a unit of analyses, and organizational level studies can be carried out. The current study was conducted as a cross-sectional study being its limitation to time and resource constraints. Future studies can be carried as a longitudinal study by measuring the causal effect of green HRM practices and employee retention.

### 5.2. Conclusion

The current study aimed to examine green HRM practices and its link with work engagement and employee retention. The study also focused on the intervening role of work engagement in the relationship between green HRM practices and employee retention. The study found significant results for three of the four hypothesized relationships while contributing to the RBV theory.

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