



The role of green human resource management practices in improving competitive advantage an applied study on a number of industrial companies in Iraq

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the relationship of correlation and influence between green human resource management and competitive advantage in industrial companies in Iraq the society. The sample of the research was (82) individuals from company managers, their assistants, department heads, unit managers and department managers working in industrial companies in them, and the questionnaire was used as a main tool for collecting information and data, and it was entered, sorted and statistically analyzed by (SPSS V.20) program, in addition to the personal interview of some managers The results demonstrated the high degree of presence and practices of green human resources management dimensions, and the results also showed a high level of achieving competitive advantage, and the results showed the presence of correlation and impact relationships between the research variables, and the research reached the most important conclusion that there is a significant statistical effect of green human resources management in the advantage. Competitiveness, and this indicates that industrial companies in Iraq pay more attention to the dimension of green training and development in Iraq. Achieving a competitive advantage. The most important recommendations are to expand the use of information technology in recruitment processes because it reduces costs and preserves the environment, especially in the selection of employees. • Holding some competitions among employees to encourage them to invent advanced green and environment-friendly work methods. Qualification of specialized cadres in green human resource management systems.

Keywords: green human resource management practices, competitive advantage

Introduction

Nowadays, the presence of a green concept in the organization has become an important criterion (Margaretha & Saragih, 2013) ^[11] and also in the field of management, the scope of research is increasing day by day on the literature of green marketing, accounting, environmental management, as well as green human resource management (DW Renwick, Redman, & Maguire, 2012) ^[16]. The urgent need for green human resources management and practices emerged in response to the initiatives of international organizations concerned with preserving the environment and its resources after the industrial revolution and the expansion of global business and the negative effects and practices that these businesses and industries leave, which contributed greatly to the increase in pollution and environmental degradation in general, since decades ago. Scientists have drawn attention to these catastrophic problems for the environment and society (Al-Skarna, 2017: 2). Parallel to this, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) issued a specification for environmental management systems that enables industrial enterprises to manage the environment and relieve the pressures imposed on them, which prompted an increase in the number of institutions applying this system so that green practices became a key to competition between organizations in order to adopt the green approach. To build intellectual capital capable of enhancing competitive advantage. (Bohniya and Ramadani, 2011: 337) ^[4].

First: the problem of the study

Since the nineties of the last century, the environmental management of organizations has faced great challenges and a difficult and promising journey by organizations working in the environment to carry out practices and procedures aimed at making the organization's work greener. The term green has become a buzzword and the dominant practice to describe an organization as being environmentally friendly through the way it offers its products, services, processes and technologies (Bon and *et al*, 2018:167) ^[3]. Therefore, the organizations focus on the organization's green human resource management practices (being integrating between environmental management and human resource management) as a modern intellectual orientation and a new culture that must be taken care of and applied in organizations to help them achieve financial savings and send a positive message to the community and the customer in addition to its importance in Gain a competitive advantage among other organizations.

Second: The questions of the study

In light of the above problem, the following study attempts to answer the questions below: 1- What is the concept of the three study variables represented by (green human resource management practices, green intellectual capital, and competitive advantage)? 2- What is the level and nature of the presence of the three research variables in the surveyed organizations? 3- What is the nature of the correlation and impact relationships between green human resource management practices and competitive advantage?

Third: Objectives of the study

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Seeking to provide a conceptual structure or a philosophical knowledge framework for the three research variables (green human resource management practices, green intellectual capital, competitive advantage) that reviews the concept and dimensions of each of these variables, in a way that contributes to bridging the knowledge gap that occurs, especially the variables of green human resources practices and the head of Green intellectual money.
2. Knowing the nature of the impact relationship and the correlation between the study variables in terms of their strength and morale.
3. Diagnosing the level and nature of the practices of the study variables in the organizations under research to know the strong and weak dimensions of them to enhance what is strong and treat what is weak

Fourth: The importance of the study

The study derives its importance from the importance of the problem that it seeks to address, and the goals it seeks to achieve, which were mentioned previously, as follows:

1. A study of new variables in contemporary Arab administrative thought and in the field of human resources, namely (green human resource management practices, green intellectual capital, and competitive advantage), and an attempt to enrich the Arab library by reaching the latest intellectual and knowledge contributions to the study variables.
2. The scarcity of studies that linked the three study variables (to the knowledge of the modest researcher). Which has been applied in a number of industrial companies.
3. The importance of the industrial sector, which is considered the cornerstone of increasing local production, in which the study was applied in a number of industrial companies in Iraq

Fifth: The hypotheses of the study

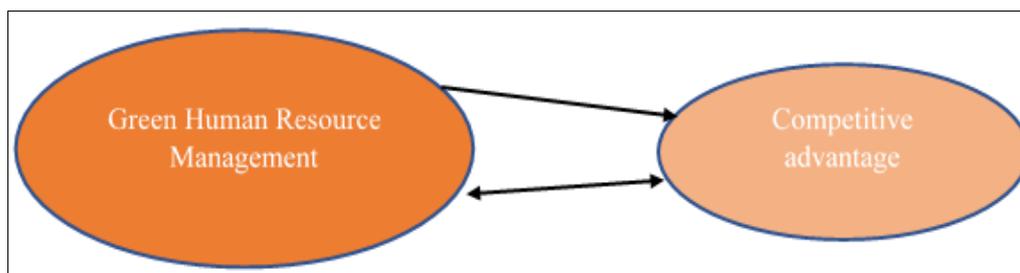
In order to reach scientific and accurate results and in compliance with the scientific method, this study seeks to test the validity of the following hypotheses:

1. Correlation hypotheses

The first main hypothesis: There is a significant correlation between green human resource management practices with its sub-dimensions (green human resource culture management, green recruitment and recruitment, green training and development, green empowerment and participation, green wages and rewards system, green performance management and evaluation) and the competitive advantage in its dimensions Subsidiary (cost reduction, customer retention, supplier cooperation, innovative innovation)

2. Impact hypotheses

The second main hypothesis: There is a significant impact relationship of human resource management practices with its dimensions (green human resource culture management, green recruitment and recruitment, green training and development, green employee empowerment and participation, green wages and rewards system, green performance management and evaluation) on competitive advantage with its sub-dimensions (reducing Costs, customer retention, supplier cooperation, innovative innovation)

Sixth: The hypothetical study plan**Seventh: Study Methodology**

In his study, the researcher relied on the use of the descriptive analytical approach, which means describing the phenomenon accurately, identifying it and justifying the circumstances and practices or evaluation and comparison, in addition to trying to link, analyze and interpret between the research variables to reach

conclusions and recommendations that enhance the reality of the surveyed organizations, so this approach is considered the most appropriate for administrative topics (Kandelji, 2008: 159).

Eighth: The study population and sample

- a. Study community: a number of industrial companies operating in Iraq were selected as a study community
- b. Study sample: a sample of company managers and their assistants, in addition to department heads, unit managers and division managers working in industrial companies, was selected.

Ninth: The limits of the study

1. Spatial boundaries: industrial companies were selected
2. Temporal limits: the period that requires distributing the questionnaire and conducting the necessary interviews.
3. Human limits: company managers and their assistants in addition to department heads, unit managers and division managers working in industrial companies.
4. Scientific limits: These limits are limited to the research variables that have been studied (human resource management practices, competitive advantage).

Tenth: sources of study data collection

In collecting its data and information, the study relied on the following sources:

1. **Sources of the theoretical aspect:** This aspect has been covered by a group of Arab and foreign literature such as books, periodicals, conference proceedings, master's theses and doctoral theses related to the variables of the study, in addition to the scientific resources provided by the World Wide Web (Internet) related to the subject of the study.
2. **Sources of the field side:** a number of sources will be relied upon in this aspect, as follows:
 1. **The questionnaire:** The researcher relied on the questionnaire as a main source for collecting data and information related to the field aspect, and it will be designed by relying on the standards available in the Arab and foreign literature related to the subject of the study.
 2. **The interview:** the interview method will be adopted in this aspect for the purpose of collecting data for revealing the research problem in addition to conducting the interview for the purpose of clarifying some paragraphs of the questionnaire after its distribution and conducting interviews as well to identify the reality of the situation of the surveyed organizations to enhance the data obtained through the questionnaire.

Literature review

A. Green human resource management

In the twenties of the last century, people management witnessed a remarkable transformation, as the focus was on humanizing and strengthening the relationship between the employer and employees (Stojanoska, 2016:5) [20]. The writer Walter Wehrmeyer is considered one of the first who contributed to the presentation of the concept of environmental human resource management in the nineties of the last century, through a book he published in (1996) entitled *Greening People: Human Resources and Environmental Management*, which includes chapters by academics and practitioners from different countries, in addition to studying the case that analyzes the links between human resource management and environmental management, and explains (Wehrmeyer) in his book, the role of human resource management at the heart of environmental practices, and proposes a new model for the effective implementation of environmental human resource management, (Pandey *et al.*, 2016:35) [14]. As it can clarify the concept of green human resource management" It is the implementation of environmentally friendly human resources initiatives that lead to greater efficiencies, reduce costs, improve employee participation and retain their roles. Today, many organizations view green workplaces as an essential requirement for a competitive advantage. A green work place means greening of traditional business functions, namely, human resource management, and marketing, operations and supply chain. In addition, the greening of the workplace also means integrating different organizational functions (Bahuguna *et al.*, 2022:1) [1], Green human resource management consists of a number of functions in the human resource management of the organization. It helps implement green HR policies such as planning, appointing, selecting and managing employees and employee relations. Where it makes the environment green in the workplace (Deepika & Karpagam, 2016:427) [6], While it shows (Popli, 2014:114) [15] in its definition" It is the use of human resource management policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within business organizations, and to promote the cause of sustainable environment and green initiatives within human resource management that form part of broader programs of corporate social responsibility.

The importance of green human resource management

Green practices of human resource management for an organization facilitate employee retention, improve public image, improve productivity, and improve sustainable use of resources. Alternative to reduce cost and reduce the loss of their talents (Chowdhury *et al.* 2017:3), While (Mehta & Chugan, 2015: 75) [12] pointed out that there are several aspects that show the importance of managing green human resources by making

environmentally friendly decisions: through employees who realize the importance of sustainability, which enables them to make decisions that help them innovate in finding solutions to environmental problems. The increased desire to work in green jobs, which is considered one of the best options in attracting green talent, which gives the organization a competitive advantage, in addition to the low rate of work turnover and employee retention, especially in green organizations compared to other organizations, Using environmentally conscious HRM practices or Green HRM has become one of the ways that many companies have responded to the environmental problems that we are faced with. With growing public awareness about the environmental consequences of business operations, such as climate change, pollution, and their impacts on society, businesses, as well as governments, are expected to respond to the unfolding environmental crisis Many stakeholders are demanding more effective measures as well as more active involvement by governments and businesses(Tanova & Bayighomog,2022:1) [21].

B. Competitive advantage

Competitive advantage has become a popular topic in both the academic fields, the practitioner, and the management literature. Despite its prevalence, Flint (2000) and Klein (2002) assert that competitive advantage is amorphous. The definition proposed by Michael Porter establishes an acceptable understanding, Later Michael Porter (1996) argued that “competitive advantage grows principally from the value a firm can create for its purchasers that exceeds the firm’s cost to create it,” and later suggested that in order for a firm to make superior profits and outperform its competitors, it must choose between cost leadership or differentiation strategy, in order to avoid “the contradictions inherent in different strategies” (Bednarski, 2019:66) [2], Competitive advantage is defined as the situation which places the organization in a favorable position in terms of brand value and profits earned among other important measures. It arises from the way an organization obtains resources and implements strategies to improve them (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991). Competitive advantage can also be understood as the result of implementing a strategy that creates value for the company and is difficult for its competitors to copy (Barney, 1995) (Roy, 2017:14) [17], Competitive advantage remains a significant concept, both in strategic management studies and in the practice of organizations in the market One of the main difficulties for SMEs is deciding their investments and their competitive advantages In this sense, sources of competitive advantage take on particular significance for SMEs regarding organizational decision-making. In terms of their capabilities and strategic assets, SMEs’ competitive advantages are based on their level of entrepreneurship, their simple capital structures, and their dynamism sources (Fabrizio, *et al*, 2021:1) [7]

Competitive Advantage Strategies

Porter's competition theory suggests that there are three general types of strategies that an industry generally uses to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage (Sogoni, 2019:40-42) [19]

1. **Cost Leadership or Low Cost Strategy** Companies using a cost leadership strategy should aim to get the lowest price in their target market. To successfully achieve this strategy, companies must be able to operate at lower prices than their competitors while remaining competitive (Mungai and Ogot, 2017:53) [13].

2. Differentiation strategy

Differentiation strategy relates to a company that offers differentiated products or services where the features are completely different from the competitors and meet the needs of consumers. These features are often unique to the company or brand and often come at a high price, a price that consumers consider important to them and are willing to pay for (Kinyuira, 2014:14) [10].

3. Focus strategy

A focus strategy can also be called a niche strategy. This strategy is used by companies that want to compete in a particular market segment (Jaradat *et al.*, 2013:12) [8]. It includes different target sectors.

4. Best Cost Strategy The hybrid strategy ("hybrid", "hybrid" or "integrated")

Also known as the best cost strategy is not part of Porter's overall strategies but may be useful for the needs of a particular business environment, unique customer demographics in the future (Wiid *et al*, 2016:66) [22].

The third topic: the practical aspect

First: testing the correlation hypotheses between the research variables. The correlation and influence relationship between green human resource management in its dimensions and the competitive advantage in its dimensions, which was stipulated by the main hypothesis first and sub. The hypotheses deriving from it will be tested, and to accept the statistical hypothesis or not, the correlation coefficient (Pearson) was tested. Table 1

Table 1: Correlation coefficient (Pearson) test

Sub-variables main variables	Competitive advantage		The number of links
	X	Y	
green human resource management	X	0.706**	1
The number of links		1	

The correlation coefficient between green human resources management as an influential variable and competitive advantage as a responsive variable was (0.706**) at the level of significance (0.01), which is a strong positive statistical correlation with high moral significance, and this indicates the importance. And the effective role played by green human resources management in achieving competitive advantage. Through the above table, the first main hypothesis was proven and accepted, which states (there is a statistically significant relationship between green human resource management and competitive advantage).

Second: Test the effect between the research variables

This paragraph aims to test the hypotheses of the effect between the research variables using the simple linear regression model. The levels of analysis were taken at the sub- and total levels to find out the significance of the effect for each of the explanatory sub-variables in each sub-variable of the response variable. As for the acceptance or rejection of the effect hypothesis, the number of significant models is calculated as a percentage of all models. If a large proportion is achieved, the hypothesis is accepted, but if the significant models are less than this ratio, the hypothesis is rejected. This is done by comparing the calculated value (F) with the tabulated value (F) under two significant levels (0.05) and (0.01).) and as shown in Table2:

Table 2: Test the effect between the research variables

responsive variable influential variable	Competitive advantage Y							
	Constant		Beta	R ²	F	T	Sig	
	B ⁰	B1						
green human resource management	X	27.96	0.560	0.704	0.495	78.55	8.50	0.000
N= 82								

Green Human Resources Management and Competitive Advantage: The calculated F value was (78.55), which is greater than its tabular value of (7.08), and this indicates a strong influence relationship of green human resources management on competitive advantage, and this confirms that the regression. The curve is very good to describe the relationship of influence between them, and this effect was significant, as the value of (t) was (8.50), which is greater than its tabular value of (2.60) and the value of (R2) was (0.495), explaining (49.5%) of the changes in competitive advantage, while The remaining percentage (50.5%) indicates the presence of other variables that were not included in the research model, and the value of (b) equals (0.74) and this indicates that the change in green human resources management by one unit leads to a change in competitive advantage (74%), and the effect is equal to As follows:

$$\hat{Y} = b^0 + b_1 X_2$$

$$= X_2 27.96 + 0.56\hat{Y}$$

Through the above table, the second main hypothesis was proven and accepted, which states (there is a statistically significant effect relationship between green human resource management and competitive advantage).

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. After testing the research hypotheses statistically, it was found that there is a statistically significant effect of green human resources management on competitive advantage, and this indicates that industrial companies in Iraq pay more attention to the dimension of green training and development in Iraq.
2. The results of the statistical analysis showed that there is a statistically significant effect at a significant level of green human resource management practices in the competitive advantage through the quality of social relations, as the quality of social relations has explained its percentage, and this indicates that universities in Jordan exploit the quality of social relations among their employees to activate Its green practices through which it seeks to achieve competitive advantage.
3. The necessity for industrial companies in Iraq to exploit the efforts of their employees to increase the environmental awareness of workers through training courses and workshops that support environmentally friendly behavior.
4. Expand the use of information technology in recruitment processes because it reduces costs and preserves the environment, especially in the selection of employees. • Establishing some competitions among employees to encourage them to invent advanced green and environmentally friendly work methods. Qualifying cadres specialized in green human resource management systems.

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