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Green human resource management, a gateway to employer branding: Mediating role of corporate environmental sustainability and corporate social sustainability

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Abstract

This study proposes a model based on competitive advantage and signaling theories that show how green human resource management (GHRM) leads to corporate environmental sustainability and corporate social sustainability and is thus source of employer branding. Structural equational modeling was used for data analysis through Smart PLS. The results confirm that GHRM positively influences on corporate environmental sustainability, which in turn positively influences corporate social sustainability. Furthermore, the results confirm that corporate social sustainability has a positive influence on employer branding. The results also support the mediating effects of corporate environmental sustainability between GHRM and corporate social sustainability. Additionally, we show the mediating effect of corporate social sustainability between corporate environmental sustainability and employer branding. In the human resource literature, previous studies emphasize on corporate environmental sustainability. By contrast, this study confirms that a corporate social sustainability is a source of employer branding. By implementing GHRM, organizations can gain a competitive edge, which helps them attract potential employee.

KEYWORDS: corporate environmental sustainability, corporate social sustainability, employer branding, GHRM

1 | INTRODUCTION

In recent years, environmental problems like climate change have gained considerable attention, and business organizations are increasingly called upon to take responsibility for addressing society's escalating challenges (Ren et al., **2020**). Global environmental concerns and stakeholder pressures that demand organizations deploy green processes (Meuer et al., **2020**; Yu & Ramanathan, **2015**) and pay attention to social issues (Mani et al., **2016**). Organizations must do so for their effectiveness and long-term viability (Paillé et al., **2014**). In modern societies business organizations that convert natural

resources into products of wealth are at the center of discourses on unsustainable practices (Imbrogiano, **2021**).

Sustainability is an emergent field related to the environment (Piwowar-Sulej, **2021**). The idea of sustainable development extremely popular as it sets common trends for all spheres of human and business activities (Hojnik et al., **2022**). It is recognized as development without compromising the needs of future generations and harming the environment. Sustainability in the corporate environment will be fully achieved if organizations pay attention to all stakeholders in their business models (Khan et al., **2020**; Konietzko et al., **2020**). Additionally, sustainability awareness is critical in implementing sustainability management tools (Talbot et al., **2020**).

To promote sustainability, the United Nations UN in September, 2015 through the members' consensus developed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs aim to tackle in depth issues by setting 17 goals and 169 associated targets that are to be achieved in the next 15 years, starting from 2016. SDGs focus on achieving sustainable development in economic, social, and environmental dimensions (UN SDGs, **2016**). The 17 goals are directly or indirectly relevant to the business sector as they can contribute to the alleviation of global crises (Poddar et al., **2019**). However, achieving the 17 SDGs is challenging for organizations (Tsalis et al., **2020**).

The need for sustainable environment management has increased and green management has emerged as an important tool for organizations (Úbeda-García et al., **2022**). The need to build a sustainable environment has invoked the concept of Green Human Resources.

The amalgamation of Human Resource Management (HRM) with environmental sustainability is described as green human resource management (GHRM) (Renwick et al., **2013**). GHRM has emerged as a new research trend (Jabbour & Dee Sousa Jabbour, **2016**), provides a competitive edge and is a success factor for organizational strategies (Garzella & Fiorentino, **2014**). It is one of the key tools that helps organizations to incorporate green strategies into their business models. It plays a substantial role in building environmental sustainability in organizations (Schuler & Jackson, **2014**). GHRM practices involve using HRM policies to support the sustainable use of organizational resources and to corporate sustainability (CS) (Amjad et al., **2021**).

CS is a vibrant business strategy that utilizes sustainability practices to achieve shareholders' goals and satisfy stakeholders. CS broadly refers to “company's activities demonstrating the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in interactions with stakeholders” (van Marrewijk & Werre, **2003**, p. 107). It involves creating environmental, social and economic value (Mio et al., **2022**). This study focuses on corporate environmental sustainability (CES) and corporate social sustainability (CSS); the latter has not been thoroughly explored in organizational contexts (Ahi & Searcy, **2015**).

CES is significant to economic development (Li et al., **2020**). It is essential to align HRM functions with the environmental management system to achieve organization's environmental sustainable goals (Ren et al., **2018**). CES improves environmental performance, provides a sustainable competitive edge (Goyal et al., **2018**), and enhances CSS (Landorf, **2011**).

Competition among organizations prompts them to focus on incorporating social sustainability in their business (Vachon & Mao, **2008**). However, information regarding CSS is scarce as the topic has been not adequately investigated (Taticchi et al., **2013**) and needs more exploration (Popovic et al., **2018**) especially from the GHRM perspective.

CSS's impact on business has been under investigated in corporate culture (Schonborn et al., **2019**). However, the literature has underlined a scarcity of empirical evidence (Galbreath, **2010**) regarding the relationship between CSS and corporate success. (Schonborn et al., **2019**). Organizations that care for society and their employees, build a good reputation in society. Moreover, dealing with employees in a socially sustainable way is one of the pathways for an organization to cope with labor market challenges (Ehnert, **2011**).

Organizations desire to be the first choice of job aspirants and try to attract the best talent. Appealing to talented and experienced employees is the primary task in the “war of talent.” Therefore, to attract potential employees, organizations, focus on employer branding and with the aimed at making the organization an “employer of choice” (Armstrong, **2006**). The image and reputation of an organization are called employer branding. For organizations, employer branding becomes important as they are enthusiastic about attracting, developing, and retaining the right talent (Kashive et al., **2020**).

Limited studies in the GHRM literature emphasis on CSS (Amrutha & Geetha, **2020**). Pham et al. (**2019**) suggest that future studies must look into the relationship between GHRM practices, and candidate attraction. Additionally, there is a substantial gap in the literature developing GHRM practices and introducing a new comprehensive framework to rank enablers of GHRM practices, particularly in developing countries (Mehrajunnisa et al., **2021**). Generally, in developing countries, insufficient consideration is given to CSS (Huq et al., **2014**), and CSS has not attracted as much attention as CES (Silva et al., **2019**; Yawar & Seuring, **2017**).

This study aims to identify the research gaps and propose a model based on the theoretical framework of competitive advantage and signaling theories. The model confirms that GHRM is also a source of employer branding. Further CES and CSS can be achieved by introducing GHRM practices.

1.1 | This study makes numerous contributions to literature

First, it contributes to the literature regarding the perceived GHRM role in shaping prospective employee outcomes, which is nearly nonexistent (Chaudhary, **2020**). Partial literature regarding GHRM primarily connects it to the existing employee outcomes (Shen et al., **2018**). Previous studies have not explored how GHRM is a source of branding for an organization to attract potential employees. This study covers this and extends the GHRM literature.

Second, it extends the literature on CSS which is insufficiently investigated (Ahi & Searcy, **2015**; Taticchi et al., **2013**). We also respond to the scholarly call made by Staniškienė and Stankevičiūtė (**2018**) that future research should cover social sustainability. Third, based on competitive edge theory, this study confirms that an organization that implements GHRM has an edge over its competitors and that GHRM is a source of employer branding. Fourth, this study draws on signaling theory that considers CSS as a factor that attracts potential employees.

Fifth, based on signaling theory this study shows that organizations that emphasize on CES and CSS have good public reputation, which is a factor that attracts potential employees. Sixth, this study answer Amjad et al. (**2021**) to conduct more studies on Pakistan's textile industry relating to GHRM practices.

Seventh, previous studies explored antecedents and barriers in GHRM, whereas this study focuses on the impact of GHRM practices. Last, the mediating role of CES and CSS has not been studied before.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study's theoretical framework built on the arguments from the competitive advantage and signaling theories.

2.1 | Competitive advantage theory

A competitive advantage is an organization's advantage over competitors in a given market, strategic group or industry (Kay, **1993**). An organization may have many advantages over others, such as a improved production system or an ability to provide exceptional customer service (Coyne, **1986**).

Competitive advantage theory delivers a sophisticated tool for evaluating competitiveness with all its implications. According to this theory, organizations compete in international markets and to gain a competitive edge in the international market. Therefore, organizations need to sustain their competitive advantage. Green innovation is a source of an organization's competitive advantage (Chen et al., **2006**) and smart companies use environmental strategies to gain a competitive advantage (Esty & Winston, **2009**). Ambec (**2017**) argued that green industrial policy could improve green competitive advantage. Protecting the environment and creating awareness regarding green production through eco-labeling can improve an organization's competitiveness. Green production serves as competitive edge for organizations (Zameer et al., **2020**).

Competitive advantage theory further states that businesses should pursue policies that create high-quality products that can be sold in the market at high prices. Competitive advantage rests on the notion that cheap labor is pervasive and natural resources are not essential for a good economy. Barney (**1991**) suggested that the resources that are simultaneously scarce and valuable can create a competitive advantage, and if these resources are also difficult to duplicate, substitute and hard to deliver, they can sustain the advantage (Wang et al., **2011**).

Competitive advantage can help stay ahead of present or potential competition. Thus, superior performance via competitive advantage will ensure market leadership. Organizations gain competitive advantages by focusing on human, physical, knowledge, capital and infrastructure resources. Therefore, in this study, we assume that organizations implementing GHRM can gain a competitive edge over their competitors.

2.2 | Signaling theory

This study uses signaling theory (Spence, **1973**) as a broader lens. Signaling theory gives a message of effective signal crating and has considerable promise for branding research (Nyagadza et al., **2021**). The theory refers communication by organizations (Bergh et al., **2014**; Connelly et al., **2011**) and is presented as an approach to advance the study of HRM processes (Guest et al., **2021**). At its core, it is concerned with the roles of the signaler, the signal, and the receiver (Guest et al., **2021**). The theory describes the process through which a sender attempts to convince the intended receivers (Berger, **2019**).

According to this theory organizations (signaler), via their behavior and their business practices deliver a message (signal) to the general population (receiver), based on which the general population makes assumptions about the organizations. These business practices serve as a branding tool for organizations. In doing so, we disclose how signaling theory offers novel and hitherto mainly neglected perspectives on the HRM process.

Outsiders, deemed external stakeholders of the organizations, tend to gain more information on inside operations “signals” (Perkins & Hendry, **2005**). Signaling theory suggests that negative or positive information when illustrated by a signaler will be useful to a receiver (Kirmani & Rao, **2000**). The signal is either new information or in addition to previously held information by a receiver. The signal itself is significant, but for the receiver to show interest, it must be of significant quality (Connelly et al., **2011**).

From the HRM perspective, signaling theory indicates that job seekers get information about the organizational culture, workplace atmosphere, and leadership of the organization, this information builds an image of organization in their minds. Job seekers create image of an organization into their minds based on this information. Based on such images job seekers categorize organizations. Just like how organizations try to get the best available human resource, employees are also keen to work for the best organization. Therefore, organizational practices are a source of signals for potential employees. If these signals are strong, more employees are interested in applying for jobs.

Organizations that carry out GHRM and engage in environmental and social sustainability are likely to attract potential employees due to certain organizational characteristics and traits. For example, they may be positively view such organizations dedicated to the natural environment as a good corporate citizens. Applicants then recognize that organization is concerned about the natural environment, workplace safety, and society, it should offer valuable concentration on the employees and their welfare. Thus, organizations anticipate improving their external prestige by sharing information on their green working environment (Amaya et al., **2019**).

3 | LITERATURE REVIEW

GHRM is a set of specific HRM practices that empower and sustain a proactive attitude toward environmental management and the accomplishment of high-performance outcomes concerning CES and other business objectives. GHRM practices accelerate information sharing and the formation of alliances with employees to advance a proactive natural environmental strategy (Aragón-Correa et al., **2013**). GHRM is believed to have a holistic view to associating employees with the organization's environmental strategy (Mishra et al., **2014**).

3.1 | Relationship between GHRM and CES

GHRM practices are aligned with environmental sustainability goals (Jackson et al., **2011**). GHRM designs and implements HRM practices to achieve organizations' environmental goals and employee behavior to improve organizational environmental performance (Ren et al., **2018**). Organizations achieve environmental sustainability goals through employee green behavior (DuBois & Debois, **2012**; Goyal et al., **2018**).

Implementing GHRM policies and practices contribute toward environment conservation, by making, employees work toward the accomplishing the organization's green goals. Promotions and rewards based on employee green performance inspire employees to engage in and promote green activities (Renwick et al., **2013**). Dumont et al. (**2017**) also endorsed these arguments in the case of Chinese employees; the researchers stated that GHRM directly and indirectly influences green behaviors by creating a psychological green climate. Saeed et al. (**2019**) affirmed that GHRM practices positively affect on employee pro-environmental behaviors.

GHRM practices involve focusing on candidates' environmental values in the recruitment and selection process, providing environmental awareness and management training, encouraging employee involvement in environmental management and considering employee green performance and behaviors during the appraisal and reward process (Tang et al., **2018**). By implementing GHRM policies organizations build a sustainable environment at the workplace. Moreover, GHRM practices influence employee green behaviors which is expected to lead to organizational green culture, where employees adopt green habits in their daily routines (Dumont et al., **2017**). Thus, we assume that by adopting a GHRM practices, Pakistan textile industry will attain CES which will provide it with a competitive advantage.

Therefore, based on competitive advantage theory, we propose.

H1. GHRM is positively related to CES.

3.2 | Relationship between CES and CSS

Environmental management has become a key management research area (Guerci et al., **2016**). In the corporate world, environmental sustainability has gained increasing momentum (Edoho, **2008**). Additionally, increased consumer pressure to enhance environmental sustainability has catalyzed the advancement and execution of corporate strategies to reduce the environmental impacts of the products and services offered by organizations (Smith & Perks, **2010**).

Environmental initiatives increase employee awareness regarding improving the environmental efficiency of processes (e.g., reduction in consumption levels and residues, improved waste sorting and handling) (Granly & Welo, **2014**). CES is achieved by implementing clean technologies (Hohnen & Hasle, **2011**). Organizations that focus on environmental sustainability take initiatives by introducing clean technologies. With the help of green technologies, they make their work environment safe for employees and society. Thus, CES leads to CSS.

CSS can be accomplished when a project works harmoniously agreeably with the environment while diminishing social disparities and distinction and enhancing personal satisfaction (Enyedi, **2002**). Chiu (**2003**) describes CSS as an aspect that contributes to the enlightening and sustaining the human welfare.

Socially sustainable organizations ensure appropriate labor conditions, offer a hazard free and safe environment, offer equal opportunities, promote cultural diversity, and engage in social innovations (Spangenberg & Omann, **2006**). Thus, CES is a source of CSS. We assume that when Pakistan's textile industry cares for the environment, they are concerned about society and not just their profits.

Therefore, based on competitive advantage theory we propose that.

H2. CES is positively related to CSS.

3.3 | Relationship between CSS and employer branding

CSS is a way which a society is formed based on people's wants and needs. The process helps provide social amenities, which promote participation in social and cultural efforts among residents and serves as a place for personal development (Woodcraft et al., **2011**). When an organization engages in human welfare and offers equal opportunities to everyone, it builds a good societal reputation. An organization that deals with its employees in a socially sustainable way; paves the way for

organizations to cope with labor market challenges such as labor force shortages, employee resentment or turnover (Ehnert, **2011**). Additionally, a socially sustainable organization provides a safe working environment (Luo, **2020**) making the organization stand out.

Organizational uniqueness becomes a source of employer branding for existing and potential employees (Love & Singh, **2011**). Organizations attract prospective employees by nurturing a conducive organizational culture (Kupper et al., **2020**). Employer branding creates an organization's brand knowledge that influences job seekers, influences job search and choice along with employees work motivation and retention (Kupper et al., **2020**). An organization's social strategy is one of the crucial factors attracting prospective employees to apply for a job.

Job seekers collect information regarding an organization's activities and description to understand how organizations treat their employees (Jones & Willness, **2013**). Furthermore, organizations with positive green signals can attract job seekers (Jabbour, **2011**). Thus, branding is an effective method to attract and select potential employees who are positive about CSS. Therefore, we assume that if Pakistan's textile industry is conscious of society, it can create good will in the market and signal to all stakeholders that it cares about both profit and society, these signals become a source of its branding. Therefore, based on signaling theory, we propose that.

H3. CSS is positively related to employer branding.

3.4 | Mediating role of CES

CES has emerged as an important strategic issue for every organization (Edoho, **2008**). Stakeholder awareness and regulatory bodies' strict laws regarding environmental issues (Tan et al., **2010**) push organizations to focus on GHRM to attain environmental sustainability (Renwick et al., **2013**).



FIGURE 1 The hypothesized model [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Organizations fulfill environmental responsibilities to strengthen their market position (Brammer et al., **2012**) and organizational investment in environmental management reduces environmental disasters (Kassinis & Vafeas, **2006**). GHRM focuses on implementing a clean work environment and this green working environment leads to CSS. If Pakistan's textile industries adopt GHRM practices it will help the industry thus, the environment impacts society.

Thus, we propose that.

H4. CES mediates the relationship between GHRM and CSS.

3.5 | Mediating role of CSS

Organizations have started recognizing the need to incorporate social sustainability into their business due to increased competition (Vachon & Mao, **2008**) and CSS is considered a cornerstone for every business (Popovic et al., **2018**). The Global Reporting Initiative classified CSS into four sub-categories: labor practices and decent work, human rights, society and product responsibility. A strong sustainable approach will attract new talent (Phillips, **2007**). CES pushes organizations to focus on a safe working environment, thus reducing the number of occupational accidents and providing a safe working environment to satisfy the existing employees and attract potential employees.

Socially sustainable organizations ensure labor rights, offer good working conditions, wages and focus on equity and social welfare (Hutchins & Sutherland, **2008**). They adopt workplace safety practices, which are also a source of work efficiency (Haas & Yorio, **2016**). Furthermore, a socially responsible organization offers a discrimination free working environment and is concerned about occupational health and work life balance (Sorribes et al., **2021**). Additionally, a socially sustainable organization concerned about society and actively engages in societal welfare programs. When an organization offers a safe working environment to its employees, engages in human welfare and offers equal opportunities to everyone, it has a good reputation in society. Thus, when an organization focuses on CES, its increases workplace safety and offers employees a healthy working environment. When Pakistan's textile industries care about the environment and adopt operations that do not harm the environment, this will impact society. When society knows that organizations care about it and the environment, it builds a positive image and becomes a source of employer branding (**Figure 1**).

Thus, we propose that.

H5. CSS nexus between CES and employer branding.

H6. CES and CSS mediates the relationship between GHRM and employer branding.

4 | METHODOLOGY

4.1 | Importance of the textile sector in Pakistan

The survey concentrated on textile sector because it is the backbone of Pakistan's economy, and is the second major contributor to the export income (Amjad et al., **2021**; Ortolano et al., **2014**). The literature suggests that the textile sector of developing countries face diverse environmental problems (Rehman et al., **2016**). However, developing countries like Pakistan face challenges in executing environmental regulations due to factors such as, lack of resources and consent from officials (Amjad et al., **2021**). The biggest challenge for the Pakistani textile industry is how to reduce its environmental burdens to meet international standards (Muneer et al., **2006**). Additionally, disaster in Pakistan's textile industry, for example, Karachi Baldia town factory incident affects the social environment (Fontana et al., **2021**). In Pakistan, this sector is facing a challenge in meeting global environmental standards and international buyers switch to other countries because of environmental issues (Amjad et al., **2021**; Muneer et al., **2006**). These all are the primary factors that motivated this research on GHRM practices in the textile sector of Pakistan, while also covering environmental and social sustainability.

4.2 | Procedure and sample

Data collection was done through a survey questionnaire filled by employees working in the production department of the textile sector in Pakistan. Two professionals working in Pakistan's textile industry and two academicians reviewed the questionnaire, to detect wording, content and obscurity problems before the survey execution. Some minor modifications were recommended in the questionnaire. First, the researchers contacted the HR department of textile mills in Pakistan and briefed them about the purpose of the study. After they agreed to participate, a total of 600 questionnaires were distributed to full-time employees working as line managers, managers and departmental heads. A total of 329 usable questionnaires were received, a 54.83% response rate. **Table 1** shows the response rate. Respondents' demographics are shown in **Table 2**.

The time-lagged design was adopted to gather data at two time points with a lag of 2 weeks to minimize the potential common method bias. In the first time point (T1), data concerning demographic details, GHRM and CES were gathered. Data regarding, CSS and employer branding were collected in the second time point (T2). The study methodology follows that used by previous researchers (Carmeli et al., **2010**; Javed et al., **2018**). Self-generated identification codes were employed (e.g., grandfather's name) to match the two different surveys completed by employees and maintain privacy and confidentiality.

TABLE 1 Response rate

Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Distributed questionnaires	600	100%
Returned questionnaires	365	60.83%
Usable questionnaires	329	54.83%
Unusable questionnaires	30	5%

TABLE 2 Demographic characteristics

Demographic variable	Categories	n	%
Gender	Male	309	94
	Female	20	6
Education	Masters	55	17
	Bachelors	274	83
Age	20–30 years	90	27
	31–40 years	100	30
	41–50 years	94	29
	Over 50 years	45	14
Experience	Less than 1 year	20	6
	1–5 years	95	29
	6–10 years	104	32
	11–15 years	88	26
	More than 15 years	22	7
Marital status	Single	143	43
	Married	186	57

4.3 | Measures

Items used in this study were adapted from previously published studies. These items' reliability and validity have already been tested, so they serve a valuable source for data collection. All items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from '1' "strongly disagree" to '5' "strongly agree." GHRM was measured by six items taken from Dumont et al. (2017) and CES was measured by three items adapted from Severo et al. (2015). CSS was adapted from the 15 items scale developed by Mani et al. (2018). Finally, employer branding was measured by the 14 items scale developed by Sivertzen et al. (2013). Items used in this study are given in Appendix A.

5 | DATA ANALYSIS

Smart PLS version 3.2.7 was used to examine the measurement and structural model.

5.1 | Assessment of the measurement model

The measurement model was assessed to confirm the measurement items validity and reliability (see **Figure 2**). In the first step, the loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) were assessed to confirm the measurement model convergent validity (Figure 2).

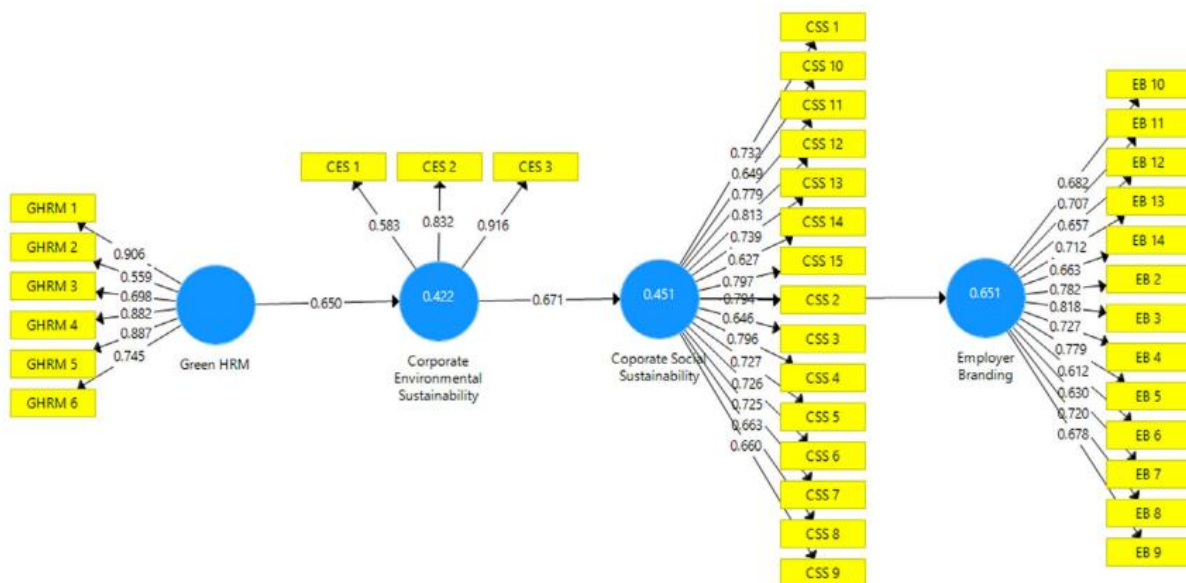


FIGURE 2 Measurement model [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

The loadings of each item should be at least 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014). Therefore, items with a loading of less than 0.5 were deleted, as shown in Table 3. We further, examined CR and AVE to assess the measurement model (Hair et al., 2017). For all the constructs, the CR values were above 0.7 the recommended value (Hair et al., 2014). Finally, the AVEs were used to assess the convergent validity. AVE scores of 0.5 or greater are acceptable (Hair et al., 2011). The results confirm for all the constructs AVE scores were above 0.5, thus fulfilling the minimum threshold as shown in **Table 4**.

TABLE 3 Factors loading

Constructs	Items	Factors loading	No. of items deleted
Green HRM	GHRM1	0.906	
	GHRM2	0.559	
	GHRM3	0.698	
	GHRM4	0.882	
	GHRM5	0.887	
	GHRM6	0.745	
Corporate environmental sustainability	CES 1	0.583	
	CES 2	0.832	
	CES 3	0.916	
Corporate social sustainability	CSS 1	0.732	0
	CSS 2	0.794	
	CSS 3	0.646	
	CSS 4	0.796	
	CSS 5	0.727	
	CSS 6	0.726	
	CSS 7	0.725	
	CSS 8	0.663	
	CSS 9	0.660	
	CSS 10	0.649	
	CSS 11	0.779	
	CSS 12	0.813	
	CSS 13	0.739	
	CSS 14	0.627	
	CSS 15	0.797	
Employer branding	EB 1	-	1
	EB 2	0.782	
	EB 3	0.818	
	EB 4	0.727	
	EB 5	0.779	
	EB 6	0.612	
	EB 7	0.630	
	EB 8	0.720	
	EB 9	0.678	
	EB 10	0.682	
	EB 11	0.707	
	EB 12	0.657	
	EB 13	0.712	
	EB 14	0.663	

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Discriminant validity of the measurement model is assessed through heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT), HTMT value less than 0.9 is acceptable (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in **Table 4**, the values of HTMT were all lower than the 0.90. It can be concluded that measurement model's convergent and discriminant validity is confirmed in this study (**Table 5**).

TABLE 4 Composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE)

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Green HRM	0.873	0.906	0.623
Corporate environmental sustainability	0.705	0.828	0.624
Corporate social sustainability	0.936	0.944	0.529
Employer branding	0.919	0.928	0.501

TABLE 5 Discriminant validity Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) criterion

Constructs	Corporate social sustainability	Corporate environmental sustainability	Employer branding	Green HRM
Corporate social sustainability				
Corporate environmental sustainability	0.764			
Employer branding	0.802	0.697		
Green HRM	0.875	0.736	0.742	

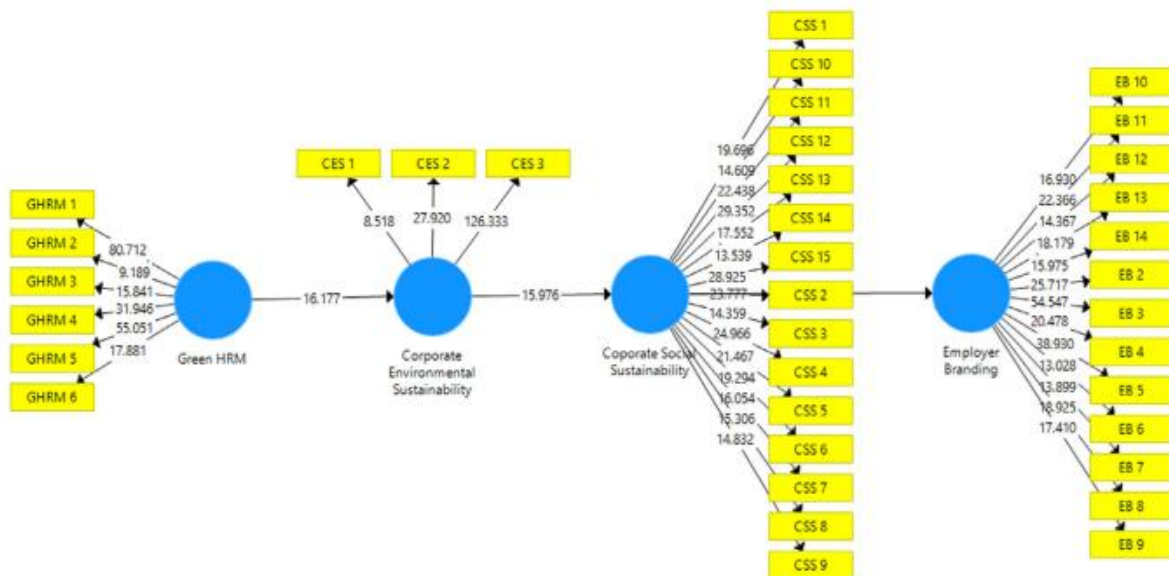


FIGURE 3 The structural model of the study [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

5.2 | Assessment of the structural model

The direct and indirect effects of all the hypotheses were tested using partial least squares-structural equational modeling (PLS-SEM) (**Figure 3**).

6 | RESULTS

Analysis of the direct effect results confirms that GHRM is significantly positively related to CES ($\beta = 0.650, p < 0.005$), therefore, H1 is accepted as shown in **Table 6**. The GHRM approach is involved in modifying HRM culture, structure, strategies, and organizational policies toward protecting the environment, thus improving organizational environmental efficiency (Amjad et al., **2021**). This result confirms the findings of Amjad et al. (**2021**). CES is significantly positively related to CSS ($\beta = 0.671, p < 0.005$); thus, H2 is supported as shown in **Table 6**. When the organization is careful regarding environmental issues, it shows that it cares for society. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study that tests this relationship. CSS has a significant positive relationship with employer branding ($\beta = 0.807, p < 0.005$). Thus, hypothesis H3 is accepted as shown in **Table 6**. Caring for society creates good will for an organization and thus serves as a source of organization branding. This relationship was not explored before.

TABLE 6 Results of structural model

Relationship	Original sample (O)	C.I	T statistics (O/STDEV)	p Values
Green HRM → corporate environmental sustainability	0.650	0.573, 0.730	16.177	0.000
Corporate environmental sustainability → corporate social sustainability	0.671	0.590, 0.755	15.976	0.000
Corporate social sustainability → employer branding	0.807	0.772, 0.844	43.770	0.000

Note: $p < 0.05$ (based on one-tailed test with 5000 bootstrapping).

TABLE 7 Results of structural model (mediating effect)

Relationship	Original sample (O)	C.I	T statistics (O/STDEV)	p Values
Green HRM → corporate environmental sustainability → corporate social sustainability	0.436	0.343, 0.543	8.476	0.000
Corporate environmental sustainability → corporate social sustainability → employer branding	0.542	0.475, 0.618	14.783	0.000
Green HRM → corporate environmental sustainability → corporate social sustainability → employer branding	0.352	0.276, 0.444	8.236	0.000

Note: $p < 0.05$ (based on two-tailed test with 5000 bootstrapping).

Using the bootstrapping option in PLS-SEM we tested the mediating effect. As suggested by Hayes (**2013**), a sample of 5000 bootstraps with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals was selected. The result of the analysis for the mediating effect shows that CES mediates the relationship between GHRM and CSS ($\beta = 0.436, p < 0.005$) as shown in **Table 7**. Thus, H4 is accepted. This confirms that when an organization adopts GHRM practices it will achieve CES, which is a source of CSS. The relationship between CES and employer branding mediated by CSS ($\beta = 0.542, p < 0.05$) is shown in **Table 7**. Hence, H5 is accepted. Thus, we conclude that CS is a source of CSS, which is a source of employer branding for an organization. Further CSS and CES mediate the relationship between GHRM and employer branding ($\beta = 0.352, p < 0.05$) as shown in **Table 7**. Hence, H6 is accepted.

7 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current study results analyzed GHRM significance from an employer branding perspective, CES and CSS perspectives and CSS significance from an employer branding perspective. Thus, the study enriches the literature on GHRM and its impacts on CES, CSS, and employer branding. The results confirmed that GHRM has a significant positive impact on CES. Further, GHRM also has a positive influence on CES suggesting that it helps organizations to maintain environmental sustainability. Previous studies regarding GHRM focus on employee's performance. However, GHRM effects on CES were unexplored in organizational behavior research. Ren-wick et al. (2013) confirmed GHRM influences environmental performance. Further, researchers recommend that GHRM enhances employee environmental knowledge, and this employee knowledge improves environmental performance (Longoni et al., 2014; Vidal-Salazar et al., 2012). Organizations concern toward a green environment inclines employees to work in an environmentally friendly way (Harvey et al., 2013) making the workplace environmentally sustainable.

TABLE 8 Variance explained in the indigenous variable latent constructs

Constructs	Variance explained R square
Corporate environmental sustainability	42.2%
Corporate social sustainability	45.1%
Employer branding	65.1%

TABLE 9 Assessment of the effect size, f^2

Relationship	f^2	Effect size
Green HRM-cooperate environmental sustainability	0.731	Substantial
Cooperate environmental sustainability-corporate social sustainability	0.820	Substantial
Corporate social sustainability-employer branding	1.868	Substantial

Jackson and Seo (2010) and Jabbour (2011) confirmed that HR plays a crucial role in achieving CES. However, the variance explained by CES ($R^2 = 42.2\%$) confirms a weak effect as shown in **Table 8**. The results confirmed that GHRM has a large effect on the CES, that is, $f^2 = 0.731$ as shown in **Table 9**. This effect size concludes that organization GHRM plays a vital role in achieving CES.

CES makes organization's environment clean and builds a safe climate within organizations. Therefore, organizations that focus on CES are more inclined toward a socially sustainable environment. This relationship was not explored in earlier studied. Regarding H2, this study's results confirmed a positive relationship between CES and CSS. This confirms that when an organization is concerned about the environment it also helps organization to create a safe working environment and reduces the chances of any hazards. The variance explained by CSS is $R^2 = 45.1\%$ which confirms a weak effect as shown in **Table 8**. Furthermore, the effect size $f^2 = 0.820$ is large as shown in **Table 9**.

CSS is one of the factors of employer branding. Regarding the H3, the results of this study confirmed a positive association between organizational safety climate and employer branding. When potential employees observe that an organization takes care of employees and society this builds, a positive organizational image and people take pride in being a part of that organization. The variance explained by employer branding $R^2 = 65.1\%$ confirms a moderate effect as shown in **Table 8**. Meanwhile, the effect size of CSS on employer branding is large $f^2 = 1.868$ as shown in **Table 9**. This confirms that CSS has a strong influence on employer branding and is one of the factors that attracts job aspirants.

Regarding H4, this study confirms the mediating role of CES in the relationship between GHRM and CSS. GHRM focuses on CES which leads to CSS. To achieve CES, organizations need to focus on GHRM (Jackson & Seo, **2010**; Renwick et al., **2013**). The mediating effect of CES has not been explored before.

Regarding H5, this study confirms the mediating role of CSS in the relationship between CES and employer branding. Organizations concerned about CSS pay attention to society's welfare and focus on providing a safe working environment and equal opportunities which leads to employer branding. As a result, potential employees search for jobs in organizations that provides a safe working environment and growth opportunities and have good societal reputation. Our results confirm the finding of Clarke and Ward (**2006**) and DeJoy et al. (**2004**).

Regarding H6, this study confirms the mediating role of CES and CSS in the relationship between GHRM and employer branding. Organizations implementing GHRM practices confirmed that they are concerned about CES, which leads to CSS. CSS in turn leads to employer branding. Such GHRM practices differentiate the organization from others. This unique working practice is a source of branding to attract job aspirants.

7.1 | Societal implications

Organization that focus on providing a green work environment fulfill corporate social responsibilities, and their practices help the importance of a green environment in society. Moreover, these practices also provide a competitive advantage as job aspirants prefer to work in such organization.

7.2 | Theoretical implications

This research has several theoretical implications. First, it contributes to the GHRM field by establishing the fact that CSS is an important construct to attract potential employees. This study is different from the study of Amjad et al. (**2021**) as it emphasizes on CES and CSS and considers them sources of employer branding, whereas Amjad et al. (**2021**) studied impact of GHRM practices on CES. Second, this study confirms the mediating role of CES as it was not examined in previous studies. Third, this study contributes to the literature on CSS by confirming that CES is one of the factors that create a social sustainability for an organization.

Fourth, it contributes to the literature on employer branding by confirming that CSS is vital in attracting potential employees. Fifth, it also contributes to the literature on employer branding by studying the impact of GHRM on employer branding. Sixth, this study contributes to the competitive edge theory, by showing that organizations that implement GHRM gain a competitive edge over their competitors and GHRM becomes a source of attraction for the potential employees. Seventh, this study contributes to signaling theory by showing that when an organization implements GHRM and focuses on CES, it makes the working environment green and safe, giving positive signals to the existing employees and

potential employees and society. Last, this study contributes to social identity theory by highlighting that organizations concerned about CES will also give special consideration to their employees. Their identity is a source of attraction for potential employees.

7.3 | Practical implications

One important practical implication of this study is that employees need psychologically safe working conditions and a physically safe environment free from hazards and harm to their bodies and health. Employees of textile mills in Pakistan face many problems in this regard. However, one of the major issues earlier studies ignored was a hazard free working environment, which this study covered.

GHRM helps organizations to build a clean and pollution free environment proving an appealing atmosphere to employees. A green working environment makes the environment inside an organization natural and creates a safe workplace for employees. Every employee desires to work in an organization with less safety risk and an appealing atmosphere. Employees resist, express their discontent and even go on strikes when they feel their health is at risk in the workplace. This can cause serious financial loss. Focusing on GHRM, organizations provide an environment friendly and safe working atmosphere inside the organization increasing employee satisfaction and productivity. Furthermore, the results confirmed that GHRM plays an important role in attracting employees. Therefore, the study recommends that organizations focus on GHRM to attract and retain potential employees.

Organizational practice and its employees play a vital role in branding. Employees who are satisfied with the organizations' workplace practices, feel that their organization is different from others. When an organization has a positive image in society, employees take pride in being a part of that organization. When employees share positive feedback about their organization, they build a positive image and serve as a source of attraction for job aspirants.

This study indicates that GHRM builds a sustainable environment. Therefore, organizations need to focus on GHRM to develop CES in the organization. Additionally, considering the importance of a green environment, organization must focus on implementing GHRM. Second, organizations need to emphasize CSS. Third, organizations should design programs for the welfare of their employees and society. Finally, they should create a win- win situation by focusing on both environmental and social dimensions.

Additionally, organizations need to establish a safety department responsible for organizational safety. Employees of this department should be trained in firefighting, CPRC and other medical training so that losses can be minimized in case of any emergency or hazards.

8 | CONCLUSION

This study confirms that CSS is an important construct in organizational behavior by considering a competitive edge and signaling theories. By implementing GHRM, organization can gain a competitive edge which helps them to attract potential employees. Furthermore, GHRM helps in implementing CES. CES helps in building social sustainable environment within the organization which is a source of attraction for job aspirants and provides a competitive edge.

9 | LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study also has some limitations which provide scope for future studies. This research is limited to the textile sector. Future research can extend findings to other sectors for example, the chemical and petroleum industries. In this study, CSS was discussed as a factor of employer branding. Future studies can extend the findings by collecting data from employees at grass root level and can consider adding other variables like environmental leadership or other organizational factors. Further, this research was conducted in a developing country. Thus, its generalizability is limited. It is suggested that future studies to be conducted in developed countries to generalize the findings of this research, as developing economies are different from developed ones in terms of technology, labor force and institutional environment. Future studies may also include a cross-cultural research design or consider the effects of cultural factors in identifying to make our findings more generalizable.

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