# Green Human Resource Management Practices and Performance: Testing the Moderating Role of Firm Size Using Evidence from Firms Listed on the Nairobi Securities Exchange, Kenya.

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## ABSTRACT

The study aimed to establish the moderating effect of firm size on the relationship between green human resource management (HRM) practices and the performance of firms listed on the Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE). It employed a positivist research philosophy and a cross-sectional research design and was guided by universalistic and contingency theories. A pilot study was conducted in 12 firms not listed on the NSE. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's coefficient yielding a value of 0.95. Validity was ascertained through peer review by HR experts. A census of the 62 firms listed on the NSE was taken. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using both descriptive statistics and regression. The results revealed that firm size has a positive and statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship (regression coefficient, 0.386,p-value 0.000<0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis that firm size has no statistically significant relationship with the performance of the NSE-listed firms, was rejected concluding, that firm size positively moderates this relationship. The results further validate the contingency theory revealing its applicability to green HRM studies. The study recommends further studies to; explore the effect of firm size on the implementation of green HRM and assess the moderating role of firm size on cross-listed firms. The study contributes to green HRM theory and practice and offers insights to HR practitioners and policymakers as they institute green HRM practices.

**Keywords:** Green HRM practices, firm size, NSE and firm performance.

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, organisations have been grappling with poor performance as a result of natural resources depletion by firms and individuals as raw materials of production (Owino & Kwasira, 2016). Climate change, globalisation, competition, changes in technology, changing customer and investor demands, and an environmentally unprepared human resource have aggravated the situation (Waiganjo, Mukulu & Kahiri, 2012). These challenges have threatened the traditional sources of competitive advantage, though these sources remain relevant, they are not sufficient for success today as organisations shift towards exploring green economic facets of business (Sánchez, Marín & Morales, 2015). However, the wide acknowledgement that human resources are among the key assets and the new source of wealth in the new world market due to their knowledge, skills, and competencies the green shift has thrust green human resource (HRM) management as a key business strategy for going green at the office (Poloski & Vidovic, 2007).

There is global acknowledgement of firm characteristics such as size as an essential variable in the link between HRM practices and firms' performance (Cincalova & Hedija, 2020). Mgeni and Nayak (2016) identified firm size as part of firm characteristics influencing the linear link between green HRM practices and a firm's performance. In Malaysia, Al-Qudah et al. (2014) identified firm size as a factor contributing to a firm's success.

Several firms listed on the NSE in the recent past have been recording dismal performance at times some being deregistered, penalized by the regulator, and requesting a bailout from shareholders or the government (Gakweli, 2019). Nevertheless, Sabiu et al. (2019) and Aburahma et al. (2020) have identified both empirical and theoretical evidence strongly linking HRM practices and firm performance.

In this study, green HRM practices were viewed through the lens of green training and development and green socialisation and hypothesized to influence firm performance. On one hand, Obaid and Alias (2015) defined green training and development as the process of incorporating in the employee's green knowledge and skills needed to achieve organisational goals and objectives. On the other hand, Sachita and Ruchi (2015) postulate green socialisation as the process wherein a new entrant secures relevant green job skills, accumulates a functional level of organisational understanding, attains supportive social interactions with co-workers and generally accepts the established ways of any organisation. Firm size was conceptualised in terms of the number of employees. According to Mgeni and Nayak (2016) firm size reflects how large an enterprise is in infrastructure and employment terms. Sagwa (2015) avers that firm performance relates to the accomplishment of a firm's human resource objectives over a given period of time. The study hypothesized firm size to enhance (moderate) the relationship between green HRM and firms listed on the NSE. From the extant literature, firm performance was conceptualised in non-financial terms and measured in terms of employee retention and green employee behaviour.

**Study Hypothesis**

$H_0$: Firm size has no statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between green human resource management practices and the performance of firms listed at the Nairobi Securities Exchange.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section covers theoretical and empirical review and conceptual framework.

**Theoretical review**

This study was guided by universalistic theory as postulated by Dewar and Werbel (1979). This theory holds that there exists a linear relationship between an independent and dependent variable that holds across organisations (Kiiru, 2015). Delery and Dorty (1996) aver that the universalistic theory has previously been used to explain the link between HRM and firm performance. According to Kiiru (2015), this argument is supported by Claus (2003), Brewster (1999), who assert that a specific set of human resource management "best practices" will always produce superior results, regardless of the situation. Following this theory, this study considers green HRM practices "best practices". Green HRM practices are environmentally friendly practices that have been consistently linked to higher firm performance, across various firms and sectors (Mohammed, 2019). Therefore, using this theory, it is implied that a linear relationship exists between green HRM practices (independent variable) and firm performance (dependent variable) (Lee, 2020)

A critique of the theory is that what works well for one company may not always lead to the same good results for another company as it may not align with strategy, technology, or how it operates. Another problem with this theory is that there is no single universally accepted best practice, as postulated by Pfeffer (1994). Further, Doty et al. (1993) argued that a set of practices could lead to the same robust outcome (equivalence).

Further, this study was also guided by the contingency theory as postulated by Delery & Dorty (1996). The theory advances that there are no "one size fits all" HR practices that lead to enhanced performance but rather a bundle of HR practices depending on the organisational context. The underlying assumptions of the theory are that; a non-linear relationship exists between human resource management practices and firm performance, the impact of human resource management practices on a firm's performance differs with

levels of the critical moderating variable, and the external fit (Katou & Budhwar, 2010). This contingency argument suggests that firm systems are open and exposed to internal and external organisational factors that influence strategy (Yu et al., 2020). This argument implies that firm size is a contextual element in the relationship between green HRM practices and firm performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

A critique of this theory is that it risks proposing a limited range of options that take issues as given, thereby narrowing the role of choice and the agency of HR in doing things differently (Katou & Budhwar, 2010). Through the lens of this theory, this study conceptualized firm size as an internal complementary capability to the implementation of corporate strategies including green HRM practices. The contingency argument suggests that firm size internally facilitates the organization to implement sustainable practices including green HRM practices, which leads to positive organisational outcomes. Thus, linking this study to this theory helps to explain the role of firm size as a contextual factor that moderates the relationship between green human resource management practices and firm performance. Riaz (2016), and Zhang and Morris (2014) have previously used this theory to expound on the link between human resource management and performance.

**Empirical Review**

Globally, several studies have identified a direct link between various conceptualisations of green human resource management practices and firm performance. Aburahma et al. (2020) in a case study of Gaza University employees in Palestine investigated the relationship between green human resource management practices and organisational performance. The study identified a statistically significant relationship between green HRM practices and organisational performance. However, they noted that green training and development were unclear at Gaza University since job advertisements did not elaborate on the green roles and employee training did not depend on the environmental dimension. In Bangladesh, Hosain and Rahman (2016) used a systematic review design to investigate the impact of electronic-HRM on firm performance. The study established that firms should develop training or learning content that increases staff environmental skills and competencies through topics such as safety, waste management, energy efficiency, and recycling. Ahakwa et al. (2021) investigated green human resource management practices and the performance of manufacturing firms in the Greater Accra Region in Ghana using an online survey design. The study revealed that green training and development directly and significantly influenced firm performance.

Further green socialisation a green HRM has been linked to enhanced firm performance. Hussain (2018), in a desk study on green human resource management practices in organisations in India, established that all new employees need to be inducted and socialised to ensure that they understand and approach their corporate environmental culture seriously. They proposed that firms should ensure that recruits comprehend their green duties and responsibilities, are familiarised with health and safety arrangements, appreciate the organisational environmental culture, adopt the corporate environmental policy and practices and know relevant contact persons within the organisation.

Abdulghaffar (2017) in Saudi Arabia, identified environmental awareness as a precursor to employee-green behaviour that can contribute to increased responsibility and responsiveness. The study linked green socialisation to reduced turnover, newcomer loyalty, and increased productivity. In a study in Bangladesh, Chowdhury et al. (2017) used a desk review design, targeting garment-making organisations. The study provides evidence linking green socialisation to every function of human resource management since green HRM practices aim to preserve and conserve natural resources and minimise wastage. Similarly, Patel (2018) corroborated these findings in their desk study in India, which established that green induction programmes in India should introduce new workers to waste reduction and the benefits of green working conditions.

Firm size has been acknowledged worldwide as a key variable in the link between HRM practices and firm

performance (Cincalova & Hedija, 2020). In Tanzania, Mgeni and Nayak (2016) identified structural firm characteristics including firm size as a significant variable that influences the direct link between green HRM practices and firm performance. In Malaysia, Al-Qudah et al. (2014) using a survey design found that while the success of any organisation depends on the behaviour and decisions of its employees, other factors such as firm size contribute to that success.

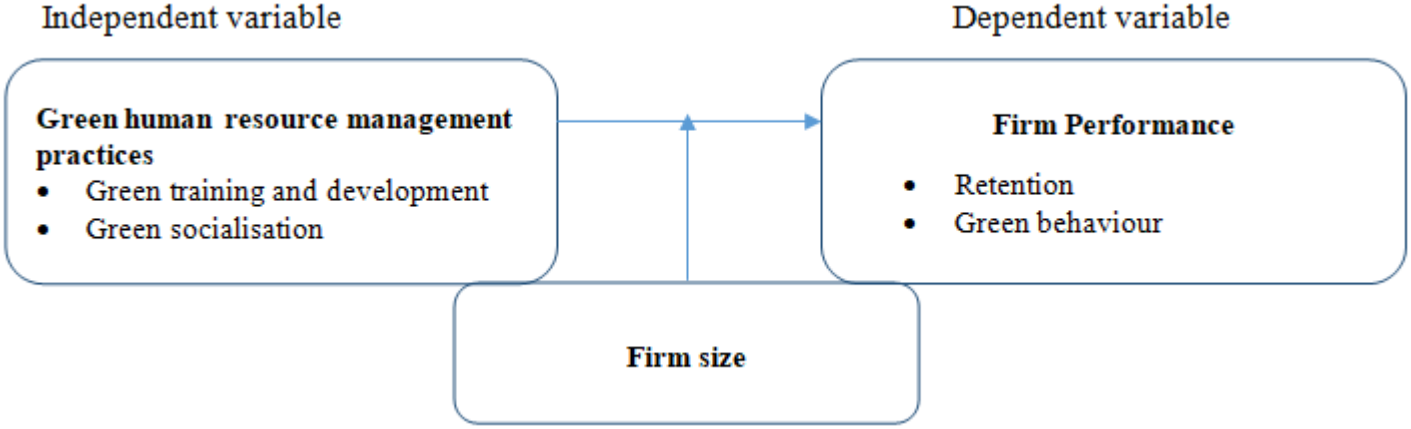
Onyali and Okafor (2018) examined firm attributes and firm performance of quoted industrial goods firms in Nigeria and found that firm size was positively and significantly linked to performance. The study used a post-hoc study design. Similarly, in Nigeria, Ilaboya and Ohiokha (2016) established a positive and significant link between firm size and performance using five years' historical data. In concurrence, Bayoud et al. (2018) reviewed the determinants of financial performance in Moroccan banks by reviewing 13 years' panel data. The study established a positive association between firm size and performance. Nonetheless, the above three studies focused on financial and barely considered non-financial measures of performance.

Other studies that focused on firm size include; Osunsan et al. (2015) in Uganda, and Kassi et al. (2019) in Morocco, which have as well identified a positive effect on firm size and performance. These findings corroborate other studies in Iran, Ghafoorifard et al. (2014) and Kenya; Nyamiobo et al. (2018), Odalo et al. (2016) and Mule et al. (2015). Kisengo (2014) investigated the effect of firm characteristics on the performance of the microfinance sector in Nakuru, Kenya. The study focused on structure, market and capital-related firm characteristics and revealed that firm characteristics have a significant influence on firm performance. However, the study excluded firm size.

Conversely, while using panel data analysis design Oyelade (2019) found that an increase in firm size was not always commensurate with the level of performance in Nigeria. The study further identified that bureaucracy in larger firms (in terms of employees) increased coordination requirements making managerial tasks difficult resulting in inefficiencies and lower profits. The study recommended the need for improved human resource management practices.

Finally, green HRM and performance studies in Kenya including Kiplangat et al (2022), Jeruto et al. (2017), Langat (2017) and Owino and Kwasira (2016) have focused on parastatal, universities and manufacturing firms while investigating the direct link between the two variables. They were all case studies limiting the generalisation of their findings across dissimilar sectors. From the reviewed literature, a direct relationship between green HRM practices and firm performance has previously been established. Contradictory findings have also been established regarding the role of firm size. Further, the moderation effect of firm size on the relationship between green HRM practices and firm performance remains unclear. Therefore, it is against this background that this study attempted to address the identified contextual, theoretical and conceptual gaps.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework




Source: Researcher

## METHODOLOGY

The study was guided by a positivist research philosophy and adopted a cross-sectional research design to assess the moderation effect of firm size on the relationship between green HRM practices and the performance of NSE-listed firms. Piloting was conducted in 12 firms not listed on the NSE. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's coefficient yielding a value of 0.95 which is>0.7, which is recommended. Validity was ascertained through peer review by HR experts. A census of all the 62 NSE- listed was taken. The study data was quantitative and was collected using a structured questionnaire directly administered to the respondents through the drop-and-pick method or emailed by the researcher. Using SPSS software data was analysed and presented in the form of tables. Pearson's correlation and multilinear regressions were used to test the hypothesis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to establish the moderating effect of firm size on the relationship between green HRM practices and the performance of firms listed on the NSE. A total of forty-nine of the administered were filled and returned and found appropriate for analysis representing a response rate of 79%. The study established that firm size has a moderating effect and therefore the null hypothesis that firm size has no statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between green HRM and the performance of firms listed on the NSE was rejected. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Moderation Results of Firm Size on Green Human Resource Management and Firm Performance

- Goodness of Fit Models

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1[a] | .805 | .648 | .641 | .26838 |
| 2[b] | .841 | .707 | .694 | .24777 |
| 3[c] | .883 | .780 | .765 | .21687 |

- Overall Significance of the Models

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Regression | 6.239 | 1 | 6.239 | 86.615 | .000 |
| | Residual | 3.385 | 47 | .072 | | |
| | Total | 9.624 | 48 | | | |
| 2 | Regression | 6.800 | 2 | 3.400 | 55.384 | .000 |
| | Residual | 2.824 | 46 | .061 | | |
| | Total | 9.624 | 48 | | | |
| 3 | Regression | 7.507 | 3 | 2.502 | 53.206 | .000 |
| | Residual | 2.116 | 45 | .047 | | |
| | Total | 9.624 | 48 | | | |

- Individual Significance of the Models

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .050 | .432 | | .116 | .909 |
| | GHRMP | 1.019 | .110 | .805 | 9.307 | .000 |
| 2 | (Constant) | -.176 | .406 | | -.435 | .666 |
| | GHRMP | .913 | .107 | .721 | 8.535 | .000 |
| | FIRMSIZE | .169 | .056 | .256 | 3.024 | .004 |
| 3 | (Constant) | 4.700 | 1.307 | | 3.597 | .001 |
| | GHRMP | -.489 | .374 | -.387 | -1.310 | .197 |
| | Firm Size | -1.187 | .353 | -1.793 | -3.362 | .002 |
| | FZ*GHRMP | .386 | .099 | 2.643 | 3.878 | .000 |

1. Predictors: (Constant), GHRMP
2. Predictors: (Constant), GHRMP, Firm Size
3. Predictors: (Constant), GHRMP, Firm Size, FZ*GHRMP
4. Dependent Variable: Firm Performance

Source: Primary data (2023)

The results on the goodness of fit models presented in Table 1 (a) show a positive correlation between green HRM practices and firm size and a drastic positive change in $R^2$ when interaction items of GHRMP and firm size and interaction terms (FZ*GHRMP) were introduced (0.648,0.707,0.780) in model two and three.

The results in Table 1 (b) show that the three models were significant (p=0.000<0.05). The F change for green HRM was significant (F=86.615,p=0.000<0.05). Adding firm size as a predictor to the model containing green HRM practices, the F change reduced drastically but was still significant (55.384,p=0.000<0.05). With the introduction of the interaction term (FZ*GHRMP) F change deteriorated (F=53.206,p=0.000<0.05) but was still significant.

Results presented in 1 (c) show that the regression coefficient for green HRM practices in model one was 1.019 (β=1.019,p=0.000) implying that green HRM practices alone contributed 1.019 to firm performance. When firm size was combined with green HRM practices in model two the regression coefficient reduced from (1.019,p=0.00 to 0.169,p =0.000<0.05) and hence, statistically significant.

The regression coefficient of firm size was 0.913 (β = 0.913,p=0.000) thus, positive and significant. In model three, when the interaction term of green HRM practices and firm size (FZ*GHRMP) was introduced, there was a drastic reduction in the regression coefficient of green HRM practices (from 0.169 to -1.187,0.002<0.05). This was found to be negative and significant. Nonetheless, the interaction term showed some positive but statistically significant effect represented by (regression coefficient 0.386,p= 0.000<0.05). This implies that the null hypothesis **H0** firm size has no statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between green HRM practices and the performance of firms listed on the NSE was rejected.

Based on these results on moderation, firm performance was modelled as shown in equation 1.

Y=4.700-1.187 X1-0.489 X2+0.386 FZ* GHRMP…..(1)

Where;

Y = Firm performance

4.700= y-intercept (constant term)

1.187= Estimate of the expected increase in firm performance corresponding to an increase in green HRM practices

X1 = Green HRM practices

0.489= Estimate of the expected increase in firm performance corresponding to an increase in firm size.

X2 = Firm size.

0.386= Estimate of the expected increase in firm performance resulting from the interaction of green HRM practices and firm size.

FZ*GHRMP = Interaction term between green HRM practices and firm size.

The conclusion arrived at in this hypothesis can be explained on various grounds. Firstly, regarding the concerns for this study, the results shed some light on the moderating effect of firm size. The results (regression coefficient,0.386,p-value 0.000<0.05) show that firm size has a statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between green HRM practices and firm performance.

Secondly, the results can be explained in theoretical literature using the contingency theory by Delery and Doty (1996) which holds that there is no fit-all human resource practices approach since firm contexts are different. This has been affirmed by the results demonstrating that firm size moderates the relationship between green HRM practices and firm performance.

Finally, these findings agree with Mwangangi (2018), Mgeni and Nayak (2016) and Al-Qudah et al. (2014) who established that firm size significantly moderates the relationship between human resource management practices and firm's performance. Further, the findings contradict Ali et al. (2016) and Onditi (2021) who identified that firm size had no significant moderation effect on the relationship between human resource management practices and firm performance.

## CONCLUSION, CONTRIBUTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study sought to establish the moderating effect of firm size on the relationship between green HRM practices and the performance of firms listed on the Nairobi Securities Exchange. To determine this, the study tested the following null hypothesis, firm size has no statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between green HRM practices and the performance of firms listed on the NSE. The results reveal that firm size has a positive and statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between green HRM practices and the performance of firms listed on the NSE at a 5% level of significance (regression coefficient, 0.386,p-value 0.000<0.05 ). The null hypothesis was, therefore, rejected.

The study validates the use of contingency theory explaining the relationship between green HRM practices and firm performance. The study provides a platform for further studies by human resource management students, academicians, and researchers. The study contributes to green HRM theory and practice locally and internationally. Further, the study offers insights to human resource practitioners and policymakers as they institute green HRM practices in their organisations. Finally, the study recommends further studies to explore the effect of firm size on the implementation of green HRM and a study to assess the moderating role of firm size on the performance of cross-listed firms.

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