Green Human Resource Management and Governance Performance: Empirical Evidence from Maritime Companies

[1]Jesusanlu, Oluwashegun Peter., [2]Ifeanyi, Christian Nworji

[1]University of Port Harcourt Business School

[2]Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1014MG0021

Received: 17 January 2026; Accepted: 26 January 2026; Published: 05 February 2026

ABSTRACT

Title: Green Human Resource Management and Governance Performance: Empirical Evidence from Maritime Companies.

Objectives: This study empirically investigated the relationship between three dimensions of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM)—Green Recruitment, Green Performance Management, and Green Reward—and the governance performance (accountability, transparency, ethical compliance) of maritime companies, addressing a significant gap in the ESG literature.

Methodology: Adopting a cross-sectional design, quantitative data was collected via a structured questionnaire administered to 360 seafarers across 24 maritime firms in Rivers State. The reliability of the instrument was validated (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.79). Data analysis employed descriptive statistics and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypothesized relationships.

Findings: The path analysis revealed statistically significant, positive relationships between all GHRM dimensions and governance performance. Green Performance Management demonstrated the strongest predictive effect ($\beta = 0.564$), followed by Green Reward ($\beta = 0.202$) and Green Recruitment ($\beta = 0.161$). Descriptive statistics indicated a moderate implementation level of these practices across the sector.

Implication: The findings provide novel empirical evidence that strategically implemented GHRM practices are a critical mechanism for enhancing corporate governance within the maritime industry. This establishes HR systems as a direct conduit for operationalizing governance principles, moving beyond compliance to embed ethical culture and accountability.

Recommendation: To strengthen governance outcomes, maritime companies should formally institutionalize GHRM. This requires integrating explicit governance metrics into performance appraisals, linking reward systems to ethical and compliance achievements, and ensuring recruitment processes prioritize sustainability values alongside technical competencies.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management, Green Recruitment, Green Performance Evaluation, Green Reward System, Governance Performance,

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the maritime sector plays a vital role as a platform for economic growth, given how much it facilitates the supply chain in the oil and gas industry as well as in distribution and export/ import (Lloyd et al., 2020). In Rivers State, for instance, maritime activities are pivotal. This is because of the strategic location of the State along the coast, as well as its rich oil and gas deposits that make it a hub for maritime activities.

The prosperity associated with maritime business is accompanied by growing concerns over governance performance. This is particularly pressing as global stakeholders increasingly demand more responsible and

sustainable business practices capable of enhancing corporate competitiveness (Aldowaish et al., 2022; Jeongmin et al., 2023; Linnenlueke, 2022). Consequently, the call for sustainability has become louder than ever before. Sustainability measures are broadly defined as activities that improve the earth's maintenance, protect living beings, extend the longevity of organizations, renew the biosphere, and enhance society's capacity to sustain itself while safeguarding present and future freedoms (Dyllick & Muff, 2016). In the same vein, Mandip (2012) emphasizes that sustainable development involves meeting the needs of the present without compromising those of future generations.

The maritime industry faces unique sustainability pressures because, while it serves as the backbone of global trade, it also contributes significantly to environmental challenges, including marine pollution, carbon emissions, and ecosystem degradation. Therefore, aligning operations with governance performance standards is no longer optional but a strategic necessity. However, achieving governance performance requires more than technical innovations or compliance systems; it also relies heavily on the human element. Seafarers, whose skills, attitudes, and behaviours shape operational outcomes, are central to governance performance success. This crucial human dimension creates a direct link between governance performance and human resource practices.

Building on this, Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) has emerged as a vital mechanism for translating ESG aspirations into operational outcomes. Green HRM integrates environmental, social, and ethical considerations into HR functions such as recruitment, training, appraisal, and employee engagement, ensuring that human resources actively drive sustainability objectives (Renwick, et al., 2016). In this way, HR systems become the bridge between corporate governance commitments and employee behaviours.

However, despite the importance of HR systems, available evidence indicates persistent shortcomings in the governance performance measure of sustainability. This is as, previous studies have only endeavored to provide empirical evidence on the relationship between green human resource management and environmental and social performance, leaving out the governance measure (Don-Baridam & Diri, 2021). Also, most of these previous studies were carried out in other clime and industries, thereby creating an additional contextual gap (Renwick et al., 2016; Karakasnaki, 2024). These gaps have implications not only for ecological sustainability but also for workforce welfare, corporate accountability, and long-term competitiveness.

Therefore, based on this identified knowledge gap, the study on the examination of green human resource management on corporate governance of maritime companies in Rivers State deemed appropriate for the closure of the knowledge gap. To this end, dimensions of green human resource management which include; green recruitment, green performance management and green reward.

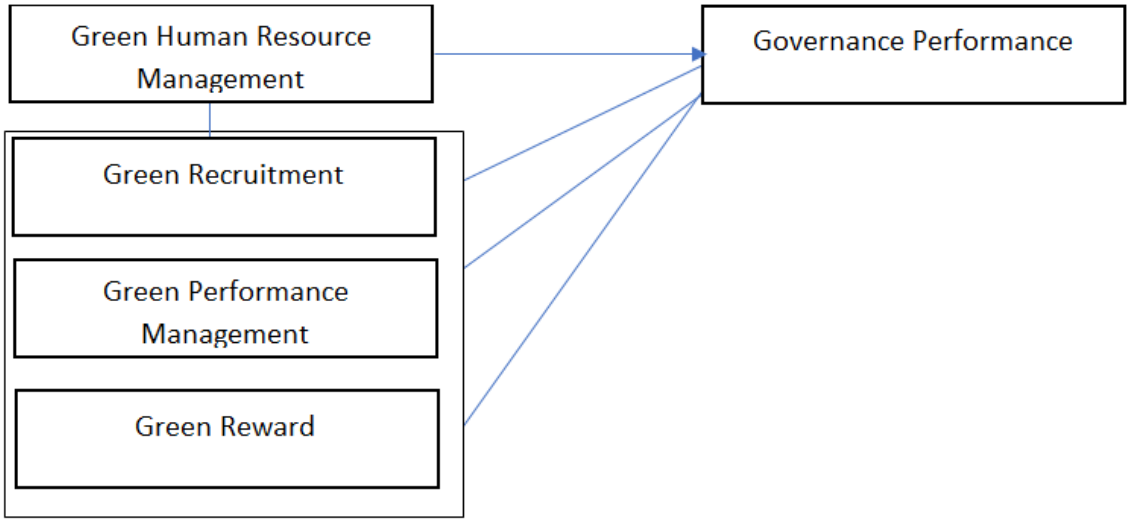

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on the relationship between green human resource management and governance performance.

Source: Researcher's desk

Objectives of the Study

i. Ascertain the relationship between Green Recruitment and Governance Performance.

ii. Examine the relationship between Green Performance Management and Governance Performance.

iii. Investigate the relationship between Green Reward and Governance Performance.

Research Questions

i. What is the relationship between Green Recruitment and Governance Performance?

ii. How does Green Performance Management relate with Governance Performance?

iii. What is the relationship between Green Reward and Governance Performance?

Research Hypotheses

Ho_7: There is no significant relationship between Green Recruitment and Governance Performance.

Ho_8: There is no significant relationship between Green Performance Management and Governance Performance.

Ho_9: There is no significant relationship between Green Reward and Governance Performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Stakeholder Theory, introduced by R. Edward Freeman in 1984, provides a framework for understanding how organisations create value beyond shareholders by addressing the interests of employees, customers, regulators, communities, and the natural environment. Long-term success, according to this perspective, depends on balancing diverse stakeholder demands through ethical and responsible practices. Within the maritime sector in Rivers State, the theory offers a useful lens for examining how Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) enhances governance performance. By embedding sustainability into recruitment, training, performance management, and reward systems, GHRM ensures that employees uphold environmental and ethical standards while meeting regulatory and community expectations. Top Management Commitment (TMC) is central to this process, as leaders allocate resources, enforce compliance with conventions such as MLC 2006 and MARPOL, and integrate sustainability into corporate strategy. When stakeholder demands are operationalised into measurable ESG outcomes, GHRM and TMC foster transparency, accountability, and ethical behaviour. Governance performance in maritime companies is therefore strengthened through sustainable HR practices and committed leadership, positioning GHRM as a bridge between workforce values and external stakeholder expectations.

Green HRM Practices

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) integrates sustainability principles into the management of human capital, extending conventional HRM by aligning recruitment, training, appraisal, and reward systems with organisational sustainability goals (Renwick et al., 2013; Jabbour, 2011). Its purpose is not only to optimise employee performance but also to cultivate behaviours and competencies that advance environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and governance accountability. Mandip (2012) describes GHRM as leveraging employee touchpoints to promote sustainable practices, while Jabbour (2015) defines it as the systematic alignment of HR functions with sustainability objectives. Aggarwal and Sharma (2015) further highlight its efficiency benefits, noting that practices such as e-recruitment, e-learning, and digital collaboration enhance resource use and support sustainability initiatives. Despite its growing recognition globally, most empirical work originates from Asia, Europe, and North America, with limited studies focusing on Africa or Nigeria, underscoring the need for contextual research in maritime organisations.

Dimensions of Green HRM Practices

Scholars have identified multiple dimensions of GHRM, including green recruitment and selection, learning and development, talent management, induction, performance management, employee relations, and reward systems (Khan & Faisal, 2023; Rani & Mishra, 2014). However, much of the literature emphasises three core practices—Green Recruitment, Green Performance Management, and Green Reward—as particularly influential (Renwick et al., 2013; Jabbour, 2011; Pham et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2018; Saeed et al., 2019; Dumont et al., 2017). These dimensions form the focus of this study.

Green Recruitment

Recruitment is the first step in workforce acquisition, involving the identification of staffing needs, job description development, and attraction of suitable candidates. Its goal is to secure individuals who contribute to organisational objectives. Cable and Yu (2007), citing Barber (1998) and Breaugh & Starke (2000), describe recruitment as organisational activities aimed at communicating company information and attracting new employees. For organisations pursuing sustainability, recruitment must embed environmental values at its core. Green Recruitment refers to hiring individuals with the knowledge, competencies, and attitudes aligned with environmental management systems (Jamil et al., 2023). Ullah (2017) defines it as recruiting talent familiar with sustainable processes and conservation principles. Despite its potential, research shows that Green Recruitment remains underexplored in African maritime contexts.

Green Performance Management

Green Performance Management (GPM) integrates sustainability into employee evaluation, monitoring, and development. Unlike conventional systems, GPM aligns appraisal and feedback with environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and governance compliance (Renwick et al., 2013; Jabbour, 2011). Empirical studies demonstrate its impact: Dumont et al. (2017) found that employees evaluated on sustainability were more likely to engage in pro-environmental actions, while Tang et al. (2018) showed that firms with green appraisal systems achieved higher environmental performance. Saeed et al. (2019) further revealed that linking sustainability criteria to performance management promoted accountability and transparency, thereby strengthening governance outcomes.

Green Reward

Green reward encompasses incentives, recognition, and compensation systems designed to motivate sustainability-oriented behaviours. By linking rewards to environmental and governance outcomes, organisations signal the strategic importance of sustainability and foster long-term employee commitment (Renwick et al., 2013; Jabbour, 2011). Saputra, Widarta, and Iswiyanto (2023) and Wang et al. (2022) show that rewarding sustainability performance motivates employees to integrate green values into their roles. Tirno et al. (2023) argue that green rewards are effective tools for supporting organisational environmental activities and embedding sustainability into corporate culture.

Governance Performance

Governance performance reflects how organisations uphold accountability, transparency, ethical leadership, compliance, and control systems that ensure responsible conduct. As one of the three ESG pillars, governance has gained increasing attention for its role in safeguarding organisational legitimacy and sustainability (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Linnenlueke, 2022). Effective governance extends beyond regulatory compliance to proactive leadership, ethical practices, and stakeholder engagement. In the maritime sector, governance-aligned HRM ensures compliance with global standards such as the MLC, covering rest hours, fair wages, and welfare. Transparent performance management and green reward systems cascade governance principles across the workforce, reinforcing accountability and ethical culture.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted cross-sectional research design. The population of the study is 3,986 seafarers who are staff of 24 companies operating in the maritime sector in Rivers State, Nigeria. The sample size for this study,

which was derived from Taro Yamene formula (1967), is 364. The data were gotten from administered questionnaire. The Cronbach alpha was used in the reliability of the instrument used for this study. Also, frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were utilize for the data presentation, while multiple regression analysis was used to examine the extent each dimensions of green human resource management predict governance performance. This analysis was done using SPSS version 20 software and SmartPLS 4.1.1.5.

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha for each Variable

S/N	Independent and Dependant Variables	No. Of Items	Cronbach Alpha Value
1.	Green Recruitment	5	0.805
2.	Green Performance Appraisal	5	0.857
3.	Green Reward	5	0.792
4.	Governance Performance	5	0.838

Data Analyses and Results

Table 2: Questionnaire Administration

Detailed Response Rate	Distributed Copies	Retrieved Copies	Not Retrieved Copies	Used Copies
Total	364	360	4	360

Descriptive Analysis

This section of analysis is aimed at describing the basic feature of the data in a given study regarding green HRM and measures of governance performance.

Green Recruitment

Table 3: Green Recruitment Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Green Recruitment		**5**	**25**	**17.58**	**5.088**
My company looks for people who care about the environment.	360	1	5	3.30	1.079
Job adverts mention environmental or safety responsibilities.	360	1	5	3.42	1.112
New employees are told about company rules on protecting the sea and the environment.	360	1	5	3.84	.950
Hiring is mostly done online to reduce paper use.	360	1	5	3.80	.985
My company prefers workers who know how to handle waste safely.	360	1	5	3.22	.962
Valid N (listwise)	360				

Table 3 offers valuable insights into the Green Recruitment practices adopted by maritime companies in Rivers State, based on the feedback from 360 respondents. The average score for Green Recruitment stands at 17.58, accompanied by a standard deviation of 5.088. This indicates a moderate level of engagement with environmentally friendly recruitment practices among the firms surveyed. The moderate standard deviation suggests that there is some variation in the ways different organisations adopt these practices, highlighting the diverse priorities, policies, and resources that shape their approaches.

Table 4: Green Performance Management

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Green Performance Management		**5**	**25**	**15.69**	**5.152**
My job performance includes how well I follow safety and environmental rules.	360	1	5	3.17	1.011
Supervisors check if crew follow pollution prevention procedures.	360	1	5	3.43	.976
We are trained or reminded to work in environmentally friendly ways.	360	1	5	2.93	1.105
Good environmental behavior is mentioned in performance reviews.	360	1	5	2.90	1.124
Doing my job safely and cleanly helps you get promoted.	360	1	5	3.26	.936
Valid N (listwise)	360				

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2025

Governance Performance

Table 4 shows that maritime companies in Rivers State moderately adopt Green Performance Management, with a mean score of 15.69 and some variability across firms. Supervisory monitoring of pollution prevention and promotion incentives for safe, clean work are the strongest practices, motivating employees to embrace environmental responsibility. However, weaker areas include the limited mention of eco-friendly behaviour in performance reviews and inconsistent training on green practices, indicating gaps in formal appraisal systems. While environmental compliance is considered in evaluations, it is not yet a central component. Overall, the findings suggest that firms rely more on oversight and incentives than structured reviews, highlighting the need to formally integrate environmental metrics, feedback, and training to strengthen Green HRM and improve ESG outcomes.

Table 5: Green Reward

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Green Reward		**5**	**25**	**16.51**	**5.319**
Crew are rewarded for saving fuel, reducing waste, or avoiding spills.	360	1	5	3.29	.953
The company gives awards or praise for keeping the environment clean.	360	1	5	3.10	.933
Green performance can help me get a salary increase.	360	1	5	3.65	1.199
My company encourages crew to take part in clean-up or recycling projects.	360	1	5	3.12	1.107
Teams that meet safety and environmental goals are recognized.	360	1	5	3.35	1.127
Valid N (listwise)	360				

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2025

Table 5 above shows that maritime companies in Rivers State moderately implement Green Reward practices, with an average score of 16.51 and notable variation across firms. Financial incentives, such as salary increases linked to green performance, and team recognition for meeting environmental goals are the strongest motivators, though inconsistently applied. Other practices like rewarding fuel savings, clean-up participation, or giving praise for eco-friendly actions receive only moderate ratings, suggesting limited prioritization. Overall, while companies acknowledge the importance of encouraging environmentally responsible behaviour,

reward systems are not yet fully formalized or consistently integrated. Strengthening recognition programs and linking rewards directly to environmental outcomes could enhance employee engagement and improve ESG performance.

Table 6: Governance Performance

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Governance Performance		**5**	**25**	**15.24**	**5.185**
My company operates with transparency in decision-making.	360	1	5	3.57	.908
Ethical practices are promoted in operations and HR processes.	360	1	5	3.09	1.007
The leadership of my company is accountable and fair.	360	1	5	2.83	1.084
Corruption and malpractice are discouraged and penalized.	360	1	5	2.82	1.086
Managers take responsibility when rules are broken.	360	1	5	2.93	1.100
Valid N (listwise)	360				

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2025

The information displayed in Table 6 offers an overview of the Governance Performance (GP) among maritime companies in Rivers State. The average score for Governance Performance stands at 15.24, accompanied by a standard deviation of 5.185. This indicates a moderate level of governance-related practices among the firms included in the sample. The moderate mean score suggests that while governance principles like transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct are acknowledged, they may not yet be completely integrated into the organisational systems. The standard deviation indicates a degree of variability in governance performance, which is likely shaped by varying management cultures, ownership structures, and levels of compliance across different firms.

Inferential Analysis

In this segment the structural path coefficient from the study SEM model is used to test weather green HRM influences measures of governance performance, therefore, the output of the analysis which detailed the path relationships, path coefficients, standard errors and *t*-statistics are presented in table 7 below:

Table 7: Result of Hypothesis Testing

Null Hypothesis	**Path (Relationship)**	**Path Coefficient (β)**	**Standard Error**	**t-Statistics**	**Decision**
H_{O1}:	GRNT -> GP	0.161	0.060	2.691	Not supported
H_{O2}:	GRPE -> GP	0.564	0.052	10.839	Not supported
H_{O3}:	GRRD -> GP	0.202	0.046	4.366	Not supported

The third set of hypotheses comprises:

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between green recruitment and governance performance of maritime firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between green performance management and governance performance of maritime firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

$H0_3$: There is no significant relationship between green rewards and governance performance of maritime firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Figure 2 shows the path model on the relationship between green human resource management (explained by green recruitment, green performance management, and green rewards) and governance performance.

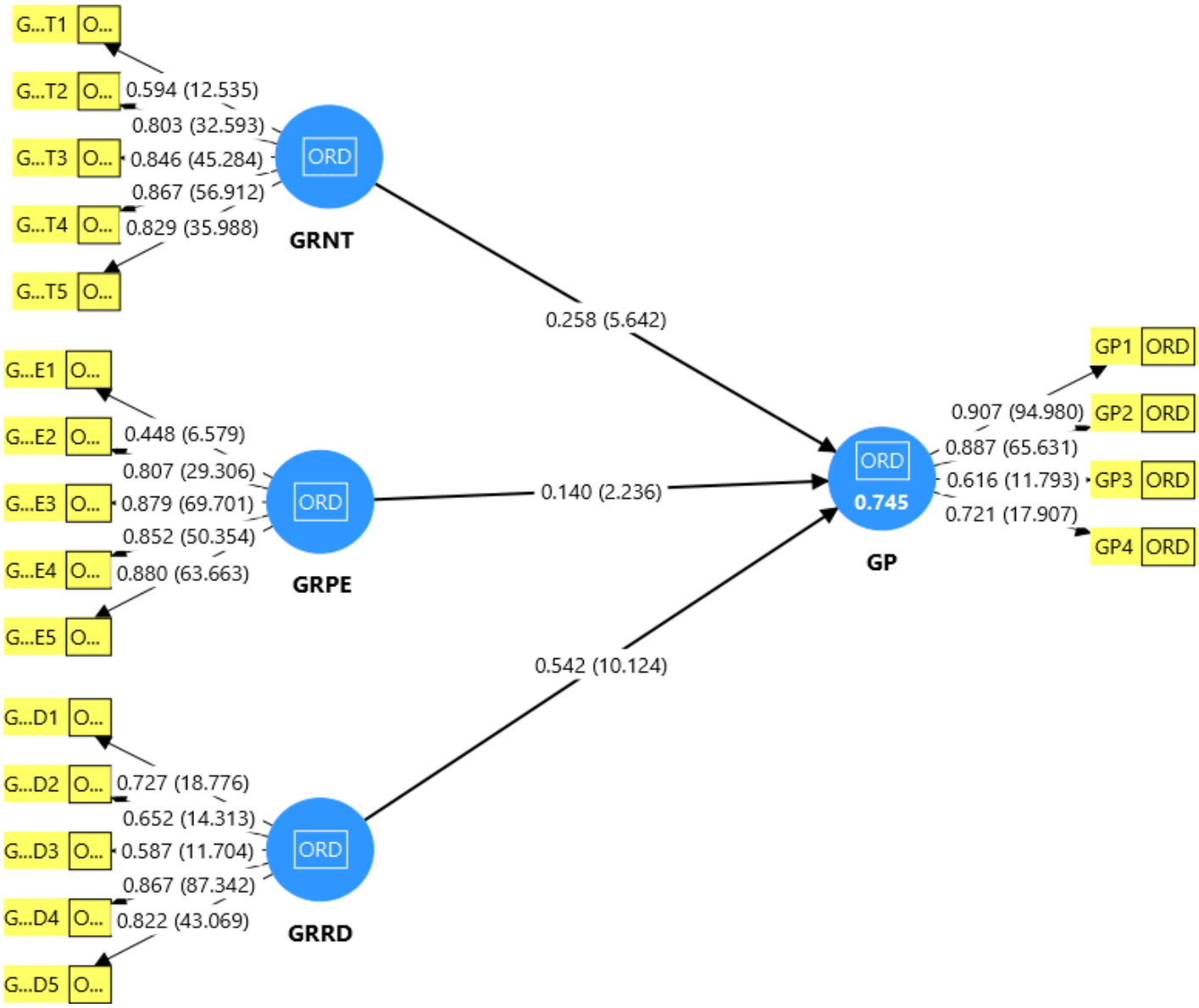

Figure 2: Smart PLS 4.1.1.5 Output for Path Coefficients of Indicators

The path relationship analysis presented in table 7 and figure 2 indicate that there is a positive, weak and significant path between green recruitment and governance performance (β = 0.258, t-statistics = 5.642), positive, weak and significant path between green performance management and governance performance (β = 0.140, t-statistics = 2.236), and positive, strong and significant path between green rewards and governance performance (β = 0.542, t-statistics = 10.124). Therefore, H_{O4} to H_{O6} were not supported.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The analysis demonstrates that green HRM practices—recruitment, performance management, and rewards—are strongly and positively linked to governance performance in maritime companies in Rivers State. Green recruitment ensures that employees with ethical values and environmental awareness enter the workforce, embedding transparency and accountability from the start. Green performance management reinforces governance by integrating compliance and environmental standards into appraisal systems, thereby creating audit trails, enhancing oversight, and motivating employees to align with organisational goals. Green rewards further strengthen governance by incentivising responsible behaviour, discouraging malpractice, and visibly linking compliance to tangible benefits. Together, these practices show that HR functions are not just administrative but strategic drivers of governance, shaping culture, reducing risks, and improving adherence to

international conventions and stakeholder expectations. The findings highlight that embedding sustainability into HR systems creates a workforce naturally inclined toward ethical conduct, thereby enhancing both corporate governance and governance performance outcomes in the maritime sector.

Limitations of the Study

This study adopted a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to draw causal inferences between Green Human Resource Management practices and governance performance. The observed relationships should therefore be interpreted as associations rather than definitive cause-and-effect linkages. In addition, the geographic concentration of the sample within maritime companies in Rivers State may limit the generalizability of findings to other industries or regions with different institutional and cultural contexts. While the results provide valuable insights into the maritime sector, replication in diverse settings and longitudinal designs would strengthen external validity and provide deeper understanding of causal mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

This study presents noteworthy and impactful findings concerning the connections between Green Human Resource Management, specifically Green Recruitment, Green Performance Management, and Green Reward, on Governance performance as it provides insights, providing, valuable theoretical and practical implications for maritime companies in Rivers State. The results of this study add valuable insights to the current body of knowledge on sustainable human resource management and the integration of environmental, social, and governance factors. Additionally, they offer practical recommendations for managers who are looking to improve sustainability and governance within their organisations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were put forth;

i. Recruitment practices should be transparent and merit-based, ensuring equal opportunity and compliance with governance standards. HR departments must document recruitment decisions and communicate selection criteria clearly to reduce bias and enhance accountability. Transparent recruitment processes will strengthen governance integrity and support adherence to codes such as the ISM Code and MLC 2006.

ii. Governance-focused performance management should emphasize compliance, ethical conduct, and accountability. Supervisors must regularly evaluate adherence to company policies, international conventions, and anti-corruption measures. Integrating governance indicators into appraisals enhances ethical discipline, decision transparency, and regulatory compliance across maritime organizations.

iii. Reward systems should be linked to governance achievements such as ethical leadership, compliance with reporting obligations, and internal control efficiency. Recognizing ethical behaviour and integrity reinforces governance accountability and minimizes malpractice. Such governance-oriented incentives will cultivate a culture of transparency and moral responsibility within maritime institutions.

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