



Promoting Sustainable Workplaces through Green Office Initiatives: Insight from Public Sector

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ABSTRACT

Environmental sustainability has become a critical mandate for global organizations. Public sector institutions increasingly implement green office initiatives to reduce environmental impact, improve operational efficiency, and promote responsible workplace behavior. This study explores the implementation of green office initiatives across public sector organizations in Melaka, Malaysia. Data were collected through interviews and field observations conducted in eight selected institutions. The findings indicate that organizations deploy sustainability initiatives, including digital documentation, recycling programs, energy conservation practices, and workplace organization strategies. Leadership support and employee engagement emerged as important factors influencing the successful implementation of green initiatives. However, several challenges were also identified, including awareness gaps, resistance to change, and financial constraints. Overall, the study highlights the importance of green office practices in promoting sustainable workplaces within the public sector.

Keywords: Green office practices; Environmental sustainability; Public sector organizations; Employee engagement; Sustainable workplace management

INTRODUCTION

Environmental sustainability has become an important priority for organizations due to increasing environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, and rising carbon emissions. Governments, businesses, and public institutions are encouraged to adopt sustainable practices that reduce environmental impacts while supporting long-term economic and social development. As a result, many organizations are integrating sustainability into their policies, strategies, and daily operations to support the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national sustainability agendas (United Nations, 2023; Yang et al., 2025).

One important approach to achieving organizational sustainability is the implementation of green office practices, which encompass environmentally responsible practices within office environments designed to reduce resource consumption, minimize waste, improve energy efficiency, and encourage environmentally responsible workplace behaviours. Green office practices include paperless documentation, recycling programmes, energy conservation, sustainable procurement, digitalization of administrative processes, and responsible resource management. These practices can help reduce organizations' environmental impact while improving resource efficiency and supporting long-term organizational sustainability (Starc et al., 2026; Shetty & Koodamara, 2026).

Public sector organizations play a crucial role in promoting environmental sustainability because they influence environmental governance, develop public policies, and can serve as role models for sustainable organizational practices. As major users of public resources, government agencies are expected to demonstrate leadership in adopting environmentally responsible practices and integrating sustainability into their daily



operations. Recent research indicates that public sector organizations are increasingly incorporating sustainability into areas such as green human resource management, sustainable procurement, digital practices, and resource management to support environmental and organizational sustainability (Naveed et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2025).

Recent research indicates that green workplace practices can contribute to environmental sustainability by promoting responsible resource use and encouraging employees to adopt environmentally responsible behaviours. Hadi (2026) further demonstrates that environmental transformational leadership can encourage employee green behaviour through psychological-needs fulfilment and autonomous environmental motivation. Therefore, the successful implementation of green office practices requires not only appropriate environmental practices but also strong leadership, employee participation, and organizational support.

This study therefore examines green office initiatives in public sector organizations in Melaka, focusing on sustainability practices, leadership support, employee engagement, and implementation challenges.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An environmentally sustainable workplace refers to a work environment in which organizational operations, practices, and resources are managed in ways that minimize environmental impacts while supporting long-term sustainability. Zacher et al. (2024) emphasize that environmental sustainability within organizations requires sustainability considerations to be integrated into different levels of organizational functioning, including the work context and organizational practices. From this perspective, a sustainable workplace extends beyond the adoption of individual environmental initiatives and involves embedding environmental considerations into routine workplace operations, resource management, organizational policies, and decision-making processes. Such practices may include reducing resource consumption, minimizing waste, conserving energy, and adopting environmentally responsible technologies and processes. Therefore, developing a sustainable workplace requires organizations to integrate environmental objectives into their everyday operations and create a work environment that supports the continuous pursuit of environmental sustainability (Wanto et al., 2025).

Green office practices encompass environmentally responsible actions and efficient resource management aimed at reducing the environmental impact of daily workplace activities. These practices commonly include energy conservation, waste reduction, recycling, and the use of digital technologies to reduce paper consumption (Benevene & Buonomo, 2020). As organizations increasingly prioritize sustainability, the green office concept has evolved beyond operational efficiency to incorporate environmental responsibility into everyday organizational practices. Embedding sustainability into routine operations can reduce environmental impacts, encourage responsible employee behaviour, and strengthen a workplace culture that supports sustainable development.

Bashirun et al. (2025) emphasize that environmentally sustainable organizations depend on the integration of responsible environmental practices within the workplace, while organizational conditions also influence their successful implementation. In this context, green office practices provide a practical approach for organizations to incorporate sustainability into everyday operations and encourage employees to contribute to environmental goals.

Environmental sustainability within organizations relies heavily on driving employee engagement. A supportive work culture that educates staff on green practices directly increases participation in resource conservation, waste minimization, and recycling efforts (Shetty & Koodamara, 2026). Moreover, regular training programs cultivate employee accountability, facilitating the seamless integration of sustainable practices into daily business routines (Wu et al., 2025).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the contextual execution of green office initiatives across eight distinct public sector organizations in Melaka. This design is highly suited for investigating contemporary phenomena within real organizational settings in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are highly integrated.

Data Sources and Triangulation

To ensure analytical depth and credibility, data were generated through three interconnected sources. This is to achieve robust data source triangulation. The semi-structured interview was conducted with primary organizational informants to gather lived operational insights. The interview questions were open-ended to allow the informant to provide detailed information based on their organization's practices. The interview questions included:

1. What are the key green office initiatives implemented in your organization?
2. How does the organization ensure that employees comply with green office policies?
3. Does top management play an important role in implementing green practices in the organization?
4. What challenges does the organization face in maintaining green office standards?
5. What future sustainability goals does the organization have?

A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to recruit eight key informants ($N = 8$), consisting of senior administrative representatives from each participating organization. Purposive sampling was essential to ensure that each informant possessed specialized, first-hand knowledge regarding the institution's strategic and operational green policies.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes each. All interviews were audio-recorded with prior written informed consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Data saturation was monitored dynamically and was achieved by the sixth and seventh cases, as the final interviews yielded repetitive conceptual codes regarding institutional challenges, leadership patterns, and digital shifting, offering no novel thematic insights.

In addition to the interviews, workplace observations were carried out on-site using a structured observation protocol to physically verify active green infrastructure, including Reduce, Reuse and Recycle (3R) bins, solar layouts and LED (light-emitting diodes) fixtures. The third data source was gathered from organizational documents. The internal reports, digital system circulars, Human Resource Development System (*Sistem Pembangunan Sumber Manusia*; e-PSM) guidelines, and Public Sector Conducive Ecosystem (*Ekosistem Kondusif Sektor Awam*; EKSA) manuals were evaluated to complement and support the information provided by the informants. The organizational report and on-site observations were dynamically leveraged to cross-verify, complement, and ground the interview responses made by the informants during their interviews.

Data Analysis and Coding Procedure

Qualitative data from the interview transcripts, field notes and institutional reports were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis framework. The analysis focused on recurring practices and differences among the organizations and was organized into five thematic areas: green workplace initiatives, energy conservation, leadership commitment, employee engagement, and implementation challenges. Information from the different sources was triangulated to map commonalities and variations across the organizations. The findings were then synthesized and presented using anonymized identifiers, namely Organization A to Organization H. The following is the six-step process of the thematic analysis framework:



1. Familiarization: The transcript of the interview was read repeatedly alongside observation field notes to establish data immersion.
2. Initial Code Generation: To generate the codes, open coding was applied line-by-line to tag meaningful fragments.
3. Searching for Themes: Initial codes were organized into broader conceptual clusters across all eight organizations.
4. Reviewing Themes: Candidate themes were checked against the entire dataset to ensure they accurately represented organizational realities.
5. Defining and Naming Themes: Themes were formalized into five core thematic areas: green workplace initiatives, energy conservation, leadership commitment, employee engagement, and implementation challenges.
6. Producing the Report: The findings were synthesized across cases and contextualized against existing literature in the discussion.

Confidentiality

To protect the privacy of all involved, participating organizations were assigned anonymized identifiers ranging from Organization A to Organization H. Individual informants' identities were also not disclosed. This approach successfully minimized institutional risk and encouraged informants to speak openly about their green office initiatives and challenges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Findings of Green Office Practices Across Eight Selected Organizations

Organization*	Green Workplace Initiatives	Energy Conservation	Leadership Commitment	Employee Engagement	Challenges
A	Digital HR systems (e-PSM), online documents, paper reduction and EKSA.	Switching off lights, computers, air-conditioning when not in use.	Formal directives, management meetings, EKSA awards.	Recognition, Employee of the Month, workshops, team-building.	Sustaining green behaviour, adapting to digital systems and continuous monitoring.
B	Green Policy, digital systems, electronic documents, 3R, Green Corners, waste separation.	LED/Smart LED lighting, solar facilities, air-conditioning timers, energy-saving systems and audits.	Top-management commitment, budget allocation, policies, audits and role modelling.	Surveys, feedback, collaboration, rewards, community programmes and awareness activities.	Limited finance, insufficient monitoring staff, low awareness, general policies and time constraints.
C	Paperless documentation, centralized printing, EKSA and solar initiatives.	Solar energy, energy-saving practices and responsible electricity use.	Supervisors lead by example and monitor resource use.	Monthly memos and EKSA reminders.	Late working hours, appliances not switched off, and manual monitoring.
D	Rainwater harvesting, natural lighting/ventilation, 3R bins, green	Solar, LED lighting, switch-off campaigns, automatic sleep	Green Technology Committee, department	Awareness activities, Green Information Corners,	Sustaining implementation, insufficient monitoring and



	house, reuse, digital communication	modes and electricity monitoring.	heads, structured monitoring and audits.	campaigns, recycling and recognition.	high electricity consumption.
E	Centralized workflow, digital documentation, reduced physical files and paper processes.	Switching off lights, air-conditioning and appliances; reminders and maintenance.	Structured supervision, continuous monitoring and management involvement.	Training, staff development, monthly meetings, communication, feedback and knowledge sharing.	Centralized approvals, inconsistent energy-saving behaviour and high paper usage.
F	Recycling centres, 3R, electronic document distribution, reusable cups and eco-friendly containers.	Energy-efficient air-conditioning, lighting and switch-off reminders.	Sustainability officer leadership and quarterly JIMAT meetings.	Recycling competitions, incentives, Green Champion recognition, training and campaigns.	Budget limitations and high costs of retrofitting/energy-efficient technologies.
G	5S, recycling/reuse, digital documentation, paper reduction, furniture reuse.	LED lighting, switching off equipment, energy-efficient and natural lighting.	Top-management policies, resources, training and supervisory support.	Training, workshops, team activities, campaigns, recognition and communication.	High initial costs, budget constraints and absence of smart-meter data.
H	Green information boards, Green Corners, manuals, sustainable procurement, audits and smart-city initiatives.	Energy management, LED/retrofit lamps, efficient appliances and reminders.	Smart & Sustainable City committees, meetings and top-management direction.	Information boards, Green Corners, EKSA audits, meetings, training and awareness.	Maintaining consistent participation across a large workforce and sustaining implementation.

*Participants codes are used for the organizations to maintain their anonymity in this study.

A comparison of the eight organizations shows that digital documentation, energy-saving practices, and employee awareness activities were among the most reported green office practices. However, the level of organizational support varied. Organizations B, D, F, G, and H reported more structured mechanisms such as committees, audits, recognition programmes, training, or dedicated sustainability personnel. In contrast, some organizations relied more heavily on informal reminders, meetings, or individual employee practices. The comparison also indicates differences in implementation challenges. Financial constraints and technology-related costs were more evident in Organizations F and G, while Organizations A, C, D, E, and H reported challenges related to monitoring, consistency, or employee behaviour. These differences suggest that the implementation of green office practices varies according to organizational resources, management structures, and monitoring capacity.

Green Workplace Initiatives

One of the most prominent themes identified in the analysis is the implementation of green workplace initiatives within organizational operations. The findings indicate that several public sector organizations have adopted environmentally responsible workplace initiatives aimed at reducing environmental impact. These initiatives include the use of digital documentation systems, recycling programs, and environmentally

responsible resource management strategies. Additionally, EKSA and 3R activities were identified as prevalent green office practices across the selected organizations. In this study, recycling programs are widely implemented in the office. Recycling bins are often placed in office areas to encourage employees to separate recyclable materials such as paper, plastic, and electronic waste. These practices support the principles of sustainable waste management and contribute to reducing environmental pollution.

The use of digital documentation is one of the most widely implemented sustainability practices. Organizations have increasingly adopted electronic communication systems and digital record management to reduce their reliance on paper-based processes. Pratiwi et al. (2025) found that implementing a paperless office system improved work-process efficiency, reduced operational costs, and decreased paper usage. These findings indicate that digital documentation could support both environmental sustainability and administrative efficiency.

Implementing these initiatives reflects broader literature demonstrating that green office practices boost organizational resource efficiency and environmental performance (Benevene & Buonomo, 2020). Although digital documentation and recycling programmes are now widely recognized as benchmark sustainability strategies within Malaysian public sector institutions, previous studies often centered strictly on staff perceptions. In contrast, this study shows that operational success requires institutional support, leadership, and active participation, underscoring the necessity of structured organizational management alongside general awareness.

Energy Conservation

Energy conservation emerged as another important theme identified in the analysis. The findings indicate that several public sector organizations encourage employees to adopt energy-saving practices as part of their workplace sustainability efforts. These practices include switching off electrical equipment when not in use, regulating air-conditioning systems, maximizing the use of natural lighting, and promoting responsible energy consumption in daily office operations. The findings reveal that LED lighting is among the commonly implemented energy efficient technologies across the selected public sector organizations. The adoption of LED lighting can contribute to energy conservation by reducing electricity consumption compared with conventional lighting systems (Palacios-Intriago et al., 2024).

The review further suggested that energy conservation practices contribute to reducing organizational energy consumption and operational costs. Encouraging employees to adopt simple energy-saving behaviors, such as turning off lights, computers, and other electrical equipment when they are not in use, helps minimize energy waste and improve resource efficiency. These practices not only reduce operating expenses but also support organizations in achieving their environmental sustainability goals. However, the present study did not include quantitative measurements of electricity consumption or cost savings, and therefore the actual environmental and financial effects of these practices cannot be determined from the findings.

Recent studies emphasize that energy efficiency is a fundamental component of sustainable workplace management. Organizations that adopt energy conservation strategies are better positioned to improve environmental performance, reduce carbon emissions, and optimize resource utilization (Cheng et al., 2023; Hafez et al., 2023). Integrating energy-efficient practices into daily operations also strengthens organizational resilience and supports long-term sustainability objectives. In addition, energy conservation practices enhance employees' environmental awareness and encourage the development of responsible workplace behaviors. Employees who actively participate in energy-saving activities become more conscious of their environmental responsibilities and are more likely to support other sustainability initiatives within the organization. As highlighted in recent literature, employee participation in environmental practices plays a pivotal role in strengthening organizational sustainability performance while cultivating a culture of continuous environmental improvement (Chen, 2025).

Leadership Commitment

Leadership commitment emerged as a key factor in the successful implementation of green office practices. The findings indicate that organizational leaders play an important role in promoting workplace sustainability

by developing environmental policies, allocating resources, monitoring green practices, and encouraging employees to participate in sustainability activities. These actions help integrate sustainability into daily organizational operations.

The review also found that several organizations have established green committees or assigned designated personnel to oversee environmental programs. These committees coordinate sustainability activities, monitor compliance with environmental policies, and ensure that green practices are consistently implemented across the organization.

Strong leadership is essential because leaders influence organizational priorities and shape employees' attitudes toward sustainability. Leaders who actively support environmental practices create a workplace culture that encourages employees to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors. This aligns with findings indicating that leadership commitment directly reinforces employee green behavior and drives the successful execution of organizational sustainability initiatives (Miah et al., 2024).

In addition, leaders influence employee behavior by acting as role models. Employees are more likely to imitate environmentally responsible behaviors when they observe their leaders consistently practicing and promoting sustainability (Zacher et al., 2024). Moreover, leadership also helps reduce resistance to organizational change by providing clear direction, increasing environmental awareness, and encouraging employee participation in green workplace activities.

Within the public sector, leadership commitment is essential because government organizations are expected to demonstrate accountability and contribute to national sustainability goals. Leaders who prioritize environmental sustainability strengthen organizational sustainability practices, promote environmentally responsible decision-making, and foster greater trust among stakeholders. This finding is consistent with recent research indicating that green leadership and a supportive organizational culture can encourage employees to adopt pro-environmental behaviours and strengthen the integration of sustainability into workplace practices (Gao et al., 2025). Furthermore, leaders who consistently articulate sustainability goals and model eco-friendly behaviors foster greater employee engagement in green workplace practices. This active modelling reinforces staff commitment, driving the successful execution of environmental strategies within public sector institutions.

Ultimately, the findings demonstrate that dedicated leadership is indispensable to building sustainable workplaces. Leaders who demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental responsibility can encourage employees to adopt green behaviours and participate more actively in workplace sustainability practices (Xiao et al., 2024).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement was identified as another key factor contributing to the successful implementation of green office practices. The findings indicate that employees play a vital role in supporting workplace sustainability through their participation in environmentally responsible behaviors. Their active involvement helps organizations achieve sustainability goals and strengthens the effectiveness of green office practices.

The review found that organizations encourage employee participation through environmental awareness programmes, sustainability activities, and training. These activities help employees understand their environmental responsibilities and provide practical knowledge for applying green practices in their daily work. Continuous environmental education is therefore important in preparing employees to participate actively in workplace sustainability.

Environmental knowledge can influence how employees respond to workplace sustainability practices.

Employees who understand the importance of responsible resource use may be more willing to reduce paper consumption, conserve energy, recycle, and minimize waste. Evidence from Malaysian public universities shows that employees' attitudes and perceived ability to act are important factors in encouraging green behaviour (Fawehinmi et al., 2024).

Employee engagement is also important in translating organizational sustainability goals into everyday workplace practices. When employees are actively involved in environmental activities, they are more likely to support and maintain green practices within the organization. Recent research indicates that a supportive green workplace environment and sustainable human resource practices can strengthen employee green engagement (Khan et al., 2025).

The findings suggest that employee participation is more likely to be sustained when organizations provide adequate support, guidance, and opportunities for involvement. Training, supportive workplace policies, and a positive environmental culture can help employees apply green practices consistently in their daily work. Therefore, employee engagement should be supported by organizational conditions that make sustainable behaviour easier to adopt and maintain. This suggests that the success of green office practices depends not only on employees' environmental knowledge but also on the organizational support provided to encourage and sustain their participation.

Implementation Challenges

Despite the progress made in implementing green office practices, the analysis identified several challenges faced by public sector organizations. One of the main challenges is employees' resistance to change. Some employees are reluctant to adopt new workplace practices, particularly when transitioning from traditional paper-based processes to digital documentation and other environmentally friendly systems. Such resistance may slow the adoption of sustainability practices and reduce the effectiveness of green office programs.

The review also indicates that limited environmental awareness among employees remains a significant challenge. Employees who lack sufficient knowledge of sustainability practices may be less likely to participate in environmental programmes or adopt environmentally responsible behaviours. This lack of awareness can hinder the effective implementation of green office practices. Continuous environmental education and training can help address this challenge by improving employees' understanding of green practices and encouraging more responsible workplace behaviour (Amrutha & Geetha, 2020).

Financial limitations were also identified as a barrier to implementing green office practices. Public sector organizations often operate under fixed budgets, making it difficult to invest in energy-efficient technologies, digital infrastructure, and other sustainability improvements. Budget constraints may delay the implementation of environmental programs, particularly when organizations must prioritize essential public services over long-term sustainability investments (Mohd Adnan et al., 2022).

Another challenge relates to organizational culture and administrative procedures. Established work routines and traditional administrative practices may reduce employees' willingness to adopt new sustainability policies and technologies. Recent research suggests that organizations with supportive leadership, effective communication, and a positive organizational culture are better able to manage change and encourage employees to embrace sustainable workplace practices (Gao et al., 2025).

In addition, insufficient training and limited organizational support may reduce employees' confidence in implementing green office practices. Without adequate guidance and opportunities to develop environmental knowledge, employees may find it difficult to incorporate sustainability into their daily work. Recent research indicates that a supportive green workplace environment and sustainable human resource practices can strengthen employee green engagement by creating conditions that encourage environmentally responsible behaviour (Khan et al., 2025).

The findings further suggest that these challenges can be addressed through strong leadership, employee involvement, and supportive organizational practices. Recent research shows that green transformational leadership can encourage employees to adopt environmentally responsible behaviours through increased motivation and organizational support (Kaya & Atsan, 2025). Therefore, providing appropriate organizational support and leadership can help organizations overcome implementation barriers and sustain green workplace practices.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study reviewed green office practices implemented in eight selected public sector organizations in Melaka. The findings indicate that the organizations have adopted various green workplace initiatives, including digital documentation, paper reduction, recycling and 3R activities, energy conservation, resource management, and EKSA-related practices. Energy-saving measures such as switching off electrical equipment, using LED lighting, managing air-conditioning, and promoting responsible electricity use were also commonly reported.

The findings further indicate that leadership commitment and employee engagement are important organizational factors supporting the implementation of green office practices. Leadership support was reflected through management directives, resource allocation, supervision, committees, monitoring, and role modelling, while employee engagement was supported through training, awareness programmes, campaigns, recognition, feedback, and team activities. However, the organizations also reported several implementation challenges, including financial constraints, limited monitoring, low environmental awareness, inconsistent participation, resistance to change, and difficulties in sustaining green practices.

Although these practices are intended to support environmental sustainability and resource efficiency, the study did not examine quantitative environmental performance indicators. Therefore, the actual effects of the initiatives on electricity consumption, paper use, waste reduction, recycling rates, or operational costs cannot be conclusively established. The findings should therefore be understood primarily as an assessment of the green office practices and organizational conditions reported and observed across the selected organizations, rather than as evidence of measured environmental outcomes.

To strengthen the implementation of green office practices, public sector organizations should integrate sustainability into organizational planning, provide continuous environmental training and awareness programmes, strengthen employee participation, and provide appropriate management support. Organizations should also consider investing in digital systems and energy-efficient technologies where resources permit. In addition, establishing clear and measurable environmental performance indicators, such as paper consumption, electricity use, waste generation, recycling rates, and related cost savings, would enable organizations to monitor progress and assess the effectiveness of their green office initiatives more systematically.

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the findings are based on eight selected public sector organizations in Melaka and one informant from each organization, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other public sector or organizational settings. Second, the study relied on interviews, workplace observations, and organizational reports rather than objective environmental performance data. Third, the study provides a comparative overview of reported and observed practices but does not establish causal relationships between green office initiatives and environmental or operational outcomes.

Future research could therefore involve a larger number of organizations and informants and employ surveys or mixed-methods approaches to obtain broader perspectives. Future studies should also incorporate quantitative environmental indicators, including electricity consumption, paper usage, waste generation, recycling rates, and operational costs, to provide stronger evidence of the outcomes associated with green office initiatives. Comparative studies across different public sector organizations and other organizational settings could further enhance understanding of the factors that support the successful and sustained implementation of green workplace practices.

Overall, this study provides practical insights into the green office practices, organizational support, employee involvement, and implementation challenges experienced by selected public sector organizations in Melaka. The findings highlight the importance of combining management commitment, employee participation, appropriate organizational support, and systematic monitoring to strengthen the implementation of sustainable workplace practices.

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