A Qualitative Analysis of Generation Z's Motivation in Choosing Green Jobs and the Contribution of GHRM Practices in Sulawesi

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the nuanced motivations driving Generation Z in Sulawesi towards green jobs and examines how Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices contribute to fostering this critical alignment. Faced with direct environmental challenges and a strong sense of purpose, Gen Z in Sulawesi increasingly seeks careers that offer tangible positive environmental and societal impact beyond financial remuneration. Employing a phenomenological approach, the research gathered in-depth insights through semi-structured interviews with Gen Z individuals engaged in or aspiring to green jobs, and HR practitioners involved in GHRM initiatives across Sulawesi. Findings reveal that Gen Z's motivation is deeply rooted in personal values aligning with ecological stewardship and a desire for meaningful contribution, enhancing their attitude towards green jobs as conceptualized by the Theory of Planned Behavior. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that authentic GHRM practices, including transparent green employer branding and supportive internal environmental initiatives, significantly enhance the attractiveness and perceived behavioral control of green jobs for this demographic. These insights underscore the imperative for organizations in Sulawesi to integrate genuine sustainability efforts into their core HR strategies to effectively attract, engage, and retain the vital green talent essential for the region's sustainable development.

Keywords: Green Jobs; Generation Z; Motivation; Green Human Resource Management; Sulawesi; Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The global landscape is currently undergoing a profound transformation, driven by an escalating awareness of environmental degradation and the urgent need for sustainable practices across all sectors. Indonesia, as an archipelagic nation blessed with immense biodiversity and rich natural resources, directly experiences the palpable impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, evident in the increasing frequency of hydro-meteorological disasters and burgeoning water crises (BNPB, 2024). This critical juncture has catalyzed the emergence of "green jobs," broadly defined as employment that directly contributes to preserving or restoring the environment, whether within established traditional sectors or in pioneering new eco-centric industries. In Indonesia, and particularly in regions like Sulawesi with its diverse natural resources and emerging industries (e.g., nickel mining, marine tourism, agriculture), these roles are far more than a niche market; they represent a fundamental reorientation of the national and regional economy towards a more sustainable future. This encompasses diverse fields from renewable energy development in remote areas to sustainable aquaculture along the coasts, and responsible resource management in the island's interior. The escalating prevalence of extreme weather events, the undeniable strain on natural resources, and growing public pressure have compelled businesses worldwide, including those expanding in Sulawesi, to embed environmental considerations deeply within their core strategies, thereby fueling a rapidly expanding demand for a workforce equipped with specialized green skills and a genuine commitment to sustainability. Indeed, the International Labour Organization (ILO) projects that the global transition to a greener

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economy could generate a remarkable 18 million new jobs worldwide by 2030, even as some existing roles evolve or diminish (ILO, 2024).

This pervasive paradigm shift towards sustainability inherently necessitates a parallel evolution in human resource management practices. Traditional HR functions, historically optimized for profit maximization and operational efficiency, are now undergoing a crucial re-evaluation to integrate environmental responsibility seamlessly. This vital evolution has given rise to the concept of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), which meticulously weaves environmental management principles into every facet of HR, from initial recruitment and ongoing training to performance appraisal and compensation structures (Renwick et al., 2016). In the Indonesian context, and specifically in Sulawesi where industries are rapidly developing while also facing environmental challenges, the application of GHRM becomes particularly relevant. It aligns with both national sustainable development goals and local efforts to balance economic growth with ecological preservation. GHRM aims not only to significantly reduce the environmental footprint of HR operations themselves but, more importantly, to cultivate a pervasive culture of environmental stewardship among employees, thereby robustly supporting the organization's overarching sustainability goals. The enduring success of any green initiative fundamentally hinges on the active participation and unwavering commitment of the workforce, firmly establishing GHRM as a critical enabler of a genuine and lasting sustainable transition. From a Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective, GHRM holds the unique potential to cultivate human resources that are distinctive and difficult to replicate – employees who are both deeply motivated and highly skilled in green practices, thereby affording organizations a compelling competitive advantage (Hart, 1995).

A particularly crucial demographic within this dynamically evolving employment landscape is Generation Z (Gen Z). Born roughly from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, Gen Z is now increasingly entering the workforce, including in Sulawesi, bringing with them a distinctive set of values and deeply held expectations that often diverge from previous generations. Compared to millennials, Gen Z is typically characterized by an even greater digital native fluency, a strong sense of social justice, an inherent desire for authenticity, and a pronounced concern for environmental and ethical issues (PwC, 2024; Twenge, 2017). They are increasingly driven to seek employment that profoundly aligns with their personal values, extends far beyond mere financial gain, and contributes demonstrably and positively to both society and the planet. This powerful intrinsic motivation positions them as an exceptionally receptive audience for green jobs, strongly suggesting that their collective career choices possess the capacity to significantly accelerate the shift towards a genuinely greener economy, particularly in regions like Sulawesi that are undergoing rapid development.

Despite the escalating emphasis on green jobs and the intrinsic environmental consciousness that often defines Gen Z, a clear and comprehensive understanding of the specific motivations truly driving their pursuit of these roles remains somewhat elusive, especially in the localized context of Sulawesi. While global and national surveys suggest a strong inclination towards purpose-driven work, the precise factors that compel Gen Z in Sulawesi to actively seek and wholeheartedly commit to green employment, and crucially, how organizational GHRM practices contribute to nurturing this profound motivation, warrant a much deeper, more nuanced investigation. For instance, a recent and illuminating 2024 survey from Deloitte Global revealed that a significant 75% of global millennials and Gen Zs feel an undeniable pressure to take action on climate change, with an impressive

62% feeling compelled to influence their workplaces to become more sustainable (Deloitte Global, 2024). In Sulawesi, this phenomenon is further amplified by the direct exposure to environmental changes and the local emphasis on community well-being, potentially driving Gen Z to seek employment that has a tangible positive societal and environmental impact. This compelling data unequivocally indicates a robust alignment of values between Gen Z and green employment, yet the precise mechanisms through which GHRM effectively bridges this value alignment with concrete career choices have not been fully elucidated in this specific regional context. This discernible gap in our current understanding critically limits the ability of organizations in Sulawesi to effectively attract, strategically develop, and successfully retain the vital green talent absolutely essential for truly sustainable growth.

Therefore, this research aims to conduct a qualitative analysis, meticulously exploring the diverse motivations of Generation Z in Sulawesi in choosing green jobs and deeply understanding how Green Human Resource Management practices profoundly contribute to fostering and sustaining this crucial motivation. By delving into the lived experiences and nuanced perceptions of Gen Z, this study will critically employ the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) as a robust theoretical framework to comprehend their intentions in selecting green employment. This framework will meticulously consider their attitudes towards green jobs, the influence of subjective norms, and their perceived behavioral control, alongside a thorough examination of how GHRM influences each of these critical elements. The anticipated findings are expected to offer invaluable insights for policymakers, educators, and organizations alike, all striving to build a truly sustainable workforce and cultivate a flourishing, greener future for Sulawesi and beyond.

METHOD

This qualitative study was meticulously designed to deeply explore the nuanced motivations of Generation Z in Sulawesi when choosing green jobs and to understand the specific contributions of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices in fostering this motivation within a distinct regional context. Adopting a phenomenological approach, the research sought to uncover the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals, rather than merely quantifying data. This methodology was deemed particularly suitable for capturing the rich, subjective insights necessary to comprehend complex human motivations and the intricate interplay between individual values and organizational practices in a region undergoing dynamic environmental and economic shifts. By delving into how Gen Z in Sulawesi perceives and interacts with green jobs and GHRM, this approach allowed for an inductive discovery of themes and patterns that might not be evident through more quantitative means, building a holistic understanding of their career aspirations.

To achieve this desired depth of understanding, purposive sampling was carefully employed to select participants who could offer exceptionally rich insights into the research questions. Participants primarily included Generation Z individuals currently engaged in or actively aspiring towards green jobs within various sectors in Sulawesi (e.g., renewable energy, sustainable tourism, responsible agriculture, or environmental services), alongside HR practitioners involved in implementing or developing GHRM initiatives within companies operating across the island. The selection criteria focused on ensuring a diverse representation of experiences across different industries and geographical areas within Sulawesi, aiming for theoretical saturation where no new significant themes emerged from additional interviews. Primary data collection relied heavily on semi-structured interviews, allowing for both a consistent exploration of pre-defined themes and the crucial flexibility

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to delve into unexpected but highly relevant insights shared by participants. In addition, observations (where feasible) of green practices within Sulawesi-based organizations and analysis of pertinent organizational documents, such as local sustainability reports or HR policies related to GHRM, were conducted to triangulate data and significantly enhance the credibility and robustness of the findings.

The qualitative data gathered from interviews, observations, and document analysis were then subjected to rigorous thematic analysis. This systematic process involved several iterative stages: familiarizing ourselves intimately with the data, generating initial descriptive codes, searching for broader overarching themes, meticulously reviewing and refining these themes, defining and clearly naming the emergent themes, and finally, coherently presenting the findings in a comprehensive report. Throughout this analytical journey, common patterns, underlying motivations specific to Gen Z in Sulawesi, and the perceived influence of GHRM practices on their career choices were meticulously identified. The analytical framework was also thoughtfully informed by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which served as a guiding lens for exploring attitudes, subjective norms (including local social influences), and perceived behavioral control as key influencers of Gen Z's intentions toward green jobs, and critically, how GHRM might shape these elements within the Sulawesi context. The entire analytical process was meticulously documented to ensure utmost transparency and trustworthiness of the research outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative analysis revealed a compelling tapestry of motivations driving Generation Z in Sulawesi towards green jobs, intricately woven with the perceived contributions of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices. A central theme that emerged was the profound alignment of personal values with career aspirations. Participants consistently expressed a deep-seated desire for work that transcended mere financial gain, actively seeking roles that offered a clear sense of purpose and contributed positively to environmental and societal well-being. This resonates strongly with existing literature characterizing Gen Z as a cohort deeply concerned with social justice and ethical responsibility (Twenge, 2017). For many in Sulawesi, directly witnessing environmental shifts – from coastal erosion to challenges in managing natural resources – amplified this innate desire, transforming abstract global concerns into tangible local impetus. As one participant eloquently put it, "It's not just about a paycheck; it's about seeing my efforts actually make a difference here, where I live."

Delving deeper, the desire for tangible impact and meaningful contribution emerged as a powerful motivator, significantly influencing Gen Z's vocational choices. Unlike previous generations who might prioritize stability or conventional progression, the youth in Sulawesi expressed a strong inclination towards roles where they could directly see the fruits of their labor contributing to a more sustainable local economy or ecological restoration. This extended beyond a general interest in "doing good" to a specific yearning for demonstrable change, whether in renewable energy projects reducing reliance on fossil fuels, or in sustainable tourism initiatives protecting Sulawesi's unique marine biodiversity. This finding expands upon the "attitude" component of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), suggesting that for Gen Z, a highly positive attitude towards green jobs is fundamentally rooted in the perceived direct, local impact of such work. Organizations that effectively communicate this potential for tangible change are therefore more likely to attract this talent pool.

The influence of GHRM practices on attracting this environmentally conscious generation became evident through several key sub-themes, particularly concerning recruitment and employer branding. Participants highlighted that companies actively showcasing their commitment to sustainability through clear environmental policies, robust social responsibility initiatives, and a visible "green culture" were significantly more appealing. This extended beyond explicit job

descriptions to subtle cues in the recruitment process, such as discussions about environmental impact during interviews or the physical design of the workplace reflecting sustainable principles. This finding underscores the importance of a transparent and authentic green employer brand in shaping Gen Z's subjective norms – their perception that pursuing green jobs is socially desirable and supported by their peers and community (Renwick et al., 2016). Organizations in Sulawesi that leverage their GHRM efforts to build such a brand gain a distinct advantage in the competitive talent landscape.

Furthermore, internal GHRM practices played a crucial role in fostering deeper engagement and commitment among Gen Z once they were employed in green roles. Themes related to "green training and development," "performance metrics tied to sustainability goals," and "a supportive green organizational culture" frequently surfaced. Participants valued opportunities to continuously learn about sustainable practices and to have their contributions to environmental objectives formally recognized. This not only enhanced their skills but also reinforced their sense of purpose and belonging within the organization. Such practices directly contributed to Gen Z's perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991) – their belief in their ability to successfully perform green tasks and influence environmental outcomes within their roles. For companies in Sulawesi, investing in comprehensive GHRM that integrates green values throughout the employee lifecycle appears to be a powerful strategy for retaining this ethically driven workforce.

In synthesizing these findings, it becomes clear that Gen Z's motivation for choosing green jobs in Sulawesi is a multifaceted phenomenon, deeply rooted in their values and significantly influenced by the authenticity and comprehensiveness of organizational GHRM practices. While global trends indicate a general environmental consciousness among Gen Z (Deloitte Global, 2024), this study uniquely highlights how the specific environmental context and community values in Sulawesi further amplify their drive for impactful, purpose-driven work. The research extends the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior by demonstrating how GHRM acts as a critical mediator, shaping Gen Z's attitudes through clear organizational purpose, influencing subjective norms via authentic employer branding, and enhancing perceived behavioral control through supportive internal practices. These insights offer valuable implications for organizations, particularly those operating in resource-rich and environmentally sensitive regions like Sulawesi, on how to effectively cultivate a sustainable workforce by aligning their HR strategies with the core motivations of the emerging generation.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study has illuminated the profound motivations driving Generation Z in Sulawesi towards green jobs, revealing a compelling narrative rooted in their values and aspirations for meaningful impact. The findings unequivocally demonstrate that Gen Z's vocational choices are deeply influenced by a desire for purpose-driven work that extends beyond traditional financial incentives, with a strong inclination to contribute positively to environmental and societal well-being, particularly in the unique local context of Sulawesi. Their decision to pursue green jobs is not merely a trend but a reflection of a core belief in the urgency of environmental stewardship and social justice, shaped by their direct observation of ecological challenges in their region. This study confirms that for Gen Z, a robust positive attitude towards green jobs is fundamentally linked to the perceived tangible local impact of such roles, affirming and expanding the "attitude" component of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Furthermore, this research clearly articulates the critical contribution of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices in attracting and engaging this environmentally conscious generation. GHRM strategies, particularly those visible through authentic green employer branding and transparent sustainable policies during recruitment, significantly enhance the attractiveness of organizations for Gen Z. Internally, comprehensive GHRM practices, such as dedicated green training and development programs, performance metrics tied to sustainability goals, and the cultivation of a truly green organizational culture, are instrumental in fostering deeper engagement and bolstering Gen Z's perceived behavioral control within their green roles. These insights demonstrate how GHRM acts as a vital bridge, translating Gen Z's inherent values and the increasing

local environmental awareness in Sulawesi into concrete career decisions and sustained commitment within the workforce (Renwick et al., 2016).

In sum, this study offers novel insights into the specific drivers of Gen Z's green job motivation within an Indonesian regional context, extending existing theoretical frameworks by demonstrating how GHRM mediates the link between values and career choices. For organizations in Sulawesi, the findings underscore the imperative of embedding genuine sustainability efforts throughout their operations and visibly integrating them into their HR strategies to effectively attract and retain this ethically driven talent pool. Policymakers and educators should also leverage these insights to develop targeted programs that nurture green skills and raise awareness of green career pathways relevant to the region's unique environmental and economic landscape. Future research could explore quantitative measurements of these motivations or conduct comparative studies across different regions in Indonesia to further generalize these findings and deepen our understanding of the evolving green workforce.

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