



Green Human Resource Management and Green Supply Chain Management: linking two emerging agendas



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ABSTRACT

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) and Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM) are popular subjects in the areas of human resource management (HRM) and operations management (OM), respectively. Although scholars in each of these areas are advancing the roles of GSCM and GHRM in building more sustainable organizations, there has been a significant delay in the integration of these two contemporary subjects, based on a greater gap in the integration of HRM and supply chain management (SCM). Thus, the aims of this study are to propose a synergistic and integrative framework for the GHRM–GSCM relationship and to propose a research agenda for this integration. After reaching these goals, this article emphasizes the implications of GHRM–GSCM integration for scholars, managers, and practitioners in the areas of organizational sustainability and truly sustainable supply chains.

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1. Introduction

The subject of environmental sustainability and greening organizations is increasingly present in managerial agendas (González-Benito and González-Benito, 2006), causing a green revolution in traditional, established disciplines (Marcus and Fremeth, 2009), such as human resources (Jackson et al., 2014; Renwick et al., 2013; Jabbour et al., 2010) and operations management (Govindan et al., 2014a; Gunasekaran and Ngai, 2012; Gunasekaran and Spalanzani, 2012; Sarkis, 2001). In the field of human resources, the theme of “Green Human Resource Management” (GHRM) has emerged (Jackson et al., 2011; Renwick et al., 2013, 2008), establishing itself as a new line of research (Jackson and Seo, 2010; Ones and Dilchert, 2012; Jackson et al., 2014; Jabbour, 2013). In the field of operations management, sustainability also has gained attention (Govindan et al., 2014a; Gunasekaran and Spalanzani, 2012) and is becoming a new competitive dimension (Thürer et al., 2013), and topics such

as “Green Supply Chain Management” (GSCM) are becoming increasingly important, mobilizing the scientific community (Sarkis, 2012; Govindan and Cheng, 2011; Seuring and Müller, 2008). Thus, GHRM and GSCM are impacting the agendas of scholars and practitioners in HRM and operations management, respectively.

However, these two popular subjects are emerging and gaining force in a disconnected manner. Furthermore, to advance organizational sustainability, the innovative fusion of organizational theories (Sarkis et al., 2011) and the elaboration of synergistic frameworks are needed (Seuring and Müller, 2008) to elaborate on “how” organizations can become more sustainable (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014). GHRM and GSCM must be analyzed in a connected manner because organizations, and consequently operations management, are people intensive (i.e., they involve senior management, managers, employees, and suppliers) (Croson et al., 2013; Bendoly et al., 2006; Boudreau et al., 2003; Santos, 2000). When multiple organizations are combined, coordinated, and structured in supply chains, more people are involved, human relations are more complex, and behavioral issues are therefore highlighted (Santos, 2000). As affirmed by Gowen and Tallon (2003), HRM can indeed have a positive influence on SCM. Lengnick-Hall et al. (2013) consider the integration of HRM and

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SCM to be a neglected area of research, and in the same manner, Ellinger and Ellinger (2014) affirm that HRM can contribute to the success of SCM practices. Based on these broader arguments on the positive – and scarce – relationship between HRM and SCM in the literature, it is also possible to presume that GHRM can be positive for GSCM, but the literature on this topic is equally scarce.

Thus, if the operations and supply chain tend to become greener (Sarkis, 2012) and to move toward more advanced GSCM, GHRM will also be relevant because behavioral aspects are important for environmental management (Graves et al., 2013; Wagner, 2013; Teixeira et al., 2012; Unnikrishnam and Hedge, 2007). Consequently, GHRM-GSCM integration has grown in importance.

However, the current state of the art developments in organizational sustainability lack of a framework and a research agenda that integrate these two emerging, profitable fields of knowledge and that create synergy in the GHRM-GSCM relationship. In contrast, this type of multidisciplinary integration is necessary to advance in the field of sustainable supply chains (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014). For example, searches conducted using the ISI Web of Science and Scopus databases prior to July 2014 revealed that, to date, there are no published articles joining “Green Human Resource Management” and “Green Supply Chain Management” in a proper manner. There are works emphasizing the relevance of the integration between HRM and SCM (Ellinger and Ellinger, 2014; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2013; Gowen and Tallon, 2003; McAfee et al., 2002) more broadly, without considering “green” issues. Thus, each of the GHRM and GSCM fields of knowledge appears to be evolving in isolation, although they need each other. Building a bridge between GSCM and GHRM is important because GHRM is essential for the effective greening of organizations (Aragón-Correa et al., 2013; Cantor et al., 2012; Brío et al., 2008, 2007; Bohdanowicz, 2006), and GSCM is part of the concept of SSCM that is so relevant when organizations are pursuing sustainability (Beske and Seuring, 2014).

GHRM-GSCM integration is based on the following assumptions:

- Truly sustainable supply chains will require more multidisciplinary research, such as the integration of GHRM and GSCM proposed in this work (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014);
- Human resources are key to excellent operations management (Croson et al., 2013; Bendoly et al., 2006; Boudreau et al., 2003), including aspects of SCM (Santos, 2000);
- HRM can have a positive influence on reducing the barriers to a successful SCM implementation (Gowen III and Tallon, 2003);
- If human resources are critical to SCM (Santos, 2000), they also tend to be critical to GSCM (Muduli et al., 2013), reducing the barriers associated with the adoption of GSCM practices;
- In the context of greener organizations, HRM tends to be transformed into GHRM (Jackson et al., 2011; Renwick et al., 2013); and
- GSCM, as an advanced, proactive approach to environmental management in organizations (Sarkis, 2012), tends to mobilize behavioral (Graves et al., 2013) and human (Muduli et al., 2013) aspects, making it intensive to GHRM.

Thus, the aims of this study are to: (a) present the main assumptions of GHRM; (b) present the main assumptions of GSCM; (c) argue in favor of integrating these two emerging fields of knowledge; (d) demonstrate how these two fields of knowledge are related, based on a synergistic and integrative framework; and (e) propose an agenda for future studies of GHRM-GSCM.

To meet these goals, Section 2 presents the methodological procedures used for the GHRM-GSCM integration, Section 3 presents the conceptual evolution of GHRM and its practices, Section 4

provides a plan for conceptual recovery of GSCM and its practices, Section 5 presents the synergistic framework for the GHRM-GSCM integration and an initial research agenda for the area, and Section 6, presents this study's final considerations and implications for scholars, managers, practitioners, and students in the areas of GHRM and GSCM.

2. Research procedures

This study is conceptual, and its main goal is to integrate two emerging subjects in organizational sustainability: GHRM and GSCM. Studies that integrate concepts/theories are important in establishing connections between areas that do not generally converse with each other (Sarkis, 2012; Boudreau et al., 2003; Daily and Huang, 2001). GHRM and GSCM are popular subjects in the areas of human resources (Jackson et al., 2011; Renwick et al., 2013; Jackson et al., 2014) and operations management (Gunasekaran and Ngain, 2012; Govindan et al., 2014a), respectively, but until now, an adequate conceptual link has not been established between these emerging research agendas. This type of integration is also being pursued in a broader scope, connecting HRM and SCM (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2013).

Until now (July 2014), searches conducted using the Scopus and ISI Web of Science (ISI-WoS), which were searched because they are considered the two main scientific databases used by scholars worldwide (Bartol et al., 2014), found no studies clearly proposing the integration of GHRM and GSCM (based on searches for “Green Human Resource Management” and “Green Supply Chain Management”, considering titles and abstracts with no restrictions or limitations to the field of knowledge). There are studies that have indirect implications for the link between these two areas (Muduli et al., 2013), but there has not yet been any proposal for clear integration, as we propose here.

Methodologically, this study is based on the following main assumptions:

- HRM is critical to the success of SCM (Gowen III and Tallon, 2003), and HRM concepts and practices can support the implementation of supply chain practices (Ellinger and Ellinger, 2014);
- New and multidisciplinary points of view are needed when pursuing more sustainable supply chains (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014);
- The GHRM field of study (definition and main practices) is based on the main works on the subject (e.g., Jackson et al., 2011; Renwick et al., 2013; Daily and Huang, 2001; Jabbour and Santos, 2008; Jabbour et al., 2010; Govindarajulu and Daily, 2004; Wagner, 2013);
- The GSCM field of study (definition and main practices) is based on the main practices of the topic (e.g., Diabat and Govindan, 2011; Govindan and Cheng, 2011; Sarkis et al., 2011; Srivastava, 2007; Vachon and Klassen, 2008, 2006; Zhu et al., 2008); and
- Guidelines exist for theory building in management (Wacker, 1998).

The methodological steps of this study are shown in Fig. 1.

The conceptual/theoretical approach of this study is justified by: the absence of similar studies clearly proposing the integration of these two popular subjects; the integration of these two emerging topics, which has motivated several calls for papers in prestigious journals (Govindan et al., 2014a; Linton et al., 2007; Ones and Dilchert, 2012; Renwick et al., 2012; Jackson et al., 2011); and the literature's findings on environmental sustainability, indicating that frameworks and conceptual studies are important for

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