
Green Human Resource Management practices: An Exploratory Study on Implementation and Stakeholder Influence

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Influence**

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List of abbreviations / Glossary

B2B = Business to Business

B2C = Business to Consumer

CPO = Chief People Officer

CSR = Corporate Social Responsibility

EM = Environmental Management

EMS = Environmental Management System

EP = Environmental Performance

ESG = Environmental, Social and Governance

GHRM = Green Human Resource Management

GMPs = Green Management Practices

HR = Human Resources

HRM = Human Resource Management

OM = Organisational Motives

RBV = Resource-Based View

SD = Sustainable Development

SDG = Sustainable Development Goals

SME = Small Medium Enterprise

SPW = Service Public de Wallonie

TCO = Total Cost of Ownership

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1. Introduction

Human activities have left a profound impact on the environment, leading to resource depletion and pollution, which in turn have aggravated environmental problems. The swift changes in manufacturing industries and the emergence of the fourth industrial revolution, known as industry 4.0, have given rise to numerous environmental issues. Consequently, organisations have grown increasingly concerned about addressing these pressing problems and challenges (Malik et al., 2020).

In recognition of the growing importance of sustainability, the United Nations introduces, in its 1987 report titled "Our Common Future" or the Brundtland Report, the concept of sustainable development (SD). SD was defined as "development that meets the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Malik et al., 2020; Benevene et al., 2020). This implies that the objective is to improve current living conditions while ensuring the preservation of natural resources and ecosystems for the benefit of future generations.

With the escalating concerns surrounding climate change, global warming, and mounting pressures from various stakeholders, sustainability has emerged as a focal point for organisations. In particular, top management recognises the significance of fostering sustainability within their respective organisations. Legal rulings, government appeals, UN initiatives, as well as pressures from shareholders and customers, further underscore the importance of sustainability (Paulet et al., 2021).

In response to this mounting pressure, companies have begun adopting green practices, among which Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices play a pivotal role. GHRM integrates environmental considerations into the management of human resources. In this thesis, our focus centres on the analysis of five key GHRM practices: green analysis and job description, green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance management and appraisal, and green rewards and compensations. These practices are instrumental in cultivating a green workforce that not only appreciates and understands green initiatives but also exhibits pro-environmental attitudes in both personal and professional domains.

Despite the significance of GHRM practices, empirical research in this relatively new field remains limited. Moreover, the connection between stakeholder theory and the implementation of these practices has not been comprehensively examined. Thus, this thesis aims to contribute to the existing understanding of GHRM practices by exploring whether companies presently adopt these practices and whether stakeholders exert an influence on their implementation. Thus, the following research question emerged:

“Do companies implement Green Human Resource Management practices, and what influence can stakeholders have on their implementation?”

Consequently, this master’s thesis endeavours to enhance the comprehension of GHRM practices by providing a comprehensive analysis. By shedding light on how companies implement these practices and identifying potential obstacles that prevent them from doing so, the thesis will offer practical conclusions to businesses and HR managers. Additionally, the study will emphasise the importance of stakeholders in driving the adoption of GHRM practices, helping organisations respond effectively to their stakeholders' greening pressures.

To answer the aforementioned research questions, this research commences with a thorough review of the concept of sustainability. Subsequently, the study introduces the topic of GHRM, explores its various practices, and analyses each practice in detail. Additionally, the thesis examines the pivotal role of stakeholders and institutions in influencing companies' ecological initiatives, thus concluding the literature review.

Furthermore, to investigate the adoption of GHRM practices, this research comprises 14 interviews with different companies. These interviews aim to explore the extent to which companies have implemented GHRM practices and to identify issues hindering the adoption. Additionally, the study explores the stakeholders mentioned by the interviewees and their significance concerning sustainability and examines their potential influence on GHRM practices' implementation.

In conclusion, this research strives to contribute valuable insights to the understanding of GHRM practices and the role of stakeholders in their implementation. By analysing practical findings, discussing possible limitations, and suggesting future research paths, this study seeks to provide actionable conclusions for businesses and HR managers to effectively embrace sustainability through GHRM practices, in response to their stakeholders' greening pressures.

2. Literature review

2.1. The emergence of sustainability

2.1.1. The concept of sustainable development

The concept of sustainability is based on the triple bottom line principle, which encompasses three dimensions: natural, social, and economic aspects. The economic aspect focuses on financial matters, while the environmental aspect aims to reduce harm to the environment and minimise resource exploitation. The social aspect involves the well-being of stakeholders, such as the society, customers, and employees. These three pillars of sustainability are mutually supportive and the notion of sustainability refers to the ability to sustain them over time. Sustainability extends therefore beyond financial considerations, such as return on assets, equity, earnings per share, and investments. Consequently, organisations are now prioritising people-oriented, green activities. Ecological concerns and social responsibilities need to be integrated into economic activities. Organisations should focus on their day-to-day operations and make sure that they are doing as little damage to the environment as possible. This entails the implementation of environmental management systems and green activities in order to control pollution (Malik et al. 2020; Benevene et al. 2020). Environmental Management (EM) needs to be integrated into companies' business models (Ren et al., 2018). Furthermore, these sustainability concerns encompass complex interactions among social, economic, and environmental factors, and are often perceived differently by various stakeholders. In corporate sustainability management, organisations try to take their stakeholders' interests into consideration and create a harmonious relationship with them (Bombiak et al., 2018).

2.1.2. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

As a result, the requirement to achieve a harmonious relationship among companies, society, and the environment leads organisations to be guided by the principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR) when making decisions. Adopting a socially and environmentally responsible approach to business entails strategic and long-term thinking, driven by principles of social dialogue and the pursuit of solutions that benefit all stakeholders. It involves conducting business activities in a manner that balances profitability with the needs of various stakeholder groups. CSR focuses on the organisation, but it is inherently linked to SD. The connection between CSR and SD is emphasised in the definition put forth by the World Bank, which states that CSR involves a business's commitment to contribute to SD through collaboration with its employees, local communities, and the society as a whole. This commitment aims to improve quality of life, benefiting both the business and social development. CSR is an organisation's responsibility for the impact of its decisions and activities on society and the environment. This strategy is based on principles of accountability for the organisation's social, economic, and environmental impact, transparency in decision-making and actions, ethical behaviour rooted in integrity and fairness, respect for human rights, and compliance with laws and international standards. Implementing the concept of SD at the company level involves a comprehensive approach to operating processes, encompassing ecological considerations, while striving to meet the expectations of all stakeholders. This includes addressing the financial expectations of owners and shareholders, as well as the need for security and stability among employees and other groups involved with the company (Bombiak et al., 2018).

2.1.3. Green practices

Implementing green practices within an organisation has a significant impact on various areas, including the supply chain, production process, waste management, organisational culture, values, strategies, choices, and employee behaviour. These are just a few examples of the areas influenced by greening efforts. Over the past two decades, sustainability and environmental awareness have become mainstream issues, prompting both professionals and academics to focus on HRM as a strategic tool for fostering environmental responsibility within organisations. By doing so, not only do companies contribute to a greener environment, but they also have an impact on the overall

economy and society (Benevene et al., 2020). It has been widely acknowledged that the employees of companies have an essential role in the achievement of corporate greening by engaging in a broad range of pro-environmental behaviours (Saeed et al., 2019).

2.2. The origins of GHRM

During the last two decades, there has been a shift in corporate attitudes towards environmental issues that extends beyond simply preventing pollution and reducing harm to the environment. This contemporary approach involves the integration of environmental objectives into companies' goals. Organisations now face the need to improve ecological and social sustainability while enhancing their EP (Saeed et al., 2019). This performance depends on several criteria, including the organisation's ability to effectively manage pollution, minimise waste discharge into the environment, and implement recycling and reuse practices (Gupta, 2018). The concept of EP encompasses the integration of a company's external and internal management efforts to enhance its overall economic performance. This includes activities such as expanding market share, improving brand image, and enhancing the performance of strategic partners, all achieved through environmentally friendly practices that mitigate environmental risks (Kuo et al., 2022). The direct involvement of the human resources (HR) department is essential in the achievement of all these goals. The effectiveness of pro-environment strategies can only be guaranteed when they are harmonised with the organisation's human resource management (HRM) practices (Gupta, 2018).

This gave rise to the concept of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM). GHRM has often been seen as part of the broader concept of sustainable HRM, which focuses on the triple bottom line with profit, planet, and people, and at times has been interchangeably used with it. However, in this thesis GHRM will only centre on the ecological aspect. However, we recognise the interconnectedness of environmental and social sustainability, understanding that both aspects are essential for overall organisational sustainability (Ren et al., 2018). GHRM exists both inside the broader field of sustainable HRM as well as a stand-alone field (Paulet et al., 2021). Strategically focused HRM can have a crucial impact on meeting a company's aspirations towards CSR (Paulet et al., 2021) and GHRM can be seen as a more visible aspect of CSR measures (Kuo et al., 2022). The management of environmental concerns is closely tied to the management of human resources, as the employees are essential to the organisation and play a crucial role in the success of environmental integration (Saeed et al., 2019). To be even more specific, they are the key to the success or failure of the adoption of an environmentally friendly approach to the company's activities. This means, that to make a company environmentally friendly, they have to make their employees environmentally friendly (Ren et al., 2018).

Due to the growing global concern for the environment, organisations are compelled to adopt GHRM practices. This entails incorporating EM aspects into HRM to encourage environmentally responsible behaviour among employees in the workplace. GHRM, as defined by Renwick et al. (2013), involves HRM activities that contribute to positive environmental outcomes. It leverages the potential of HR to drive innovation, achieve EP, reduce waste, fulfil social responsibilities, and gain a competitive advantage through continuous learning and development. It entails embracing environmental goals and strategies that are fully aligned with the organisation's overall goals and strategies (Saeed et al., 2019). As organisations progress from reactive or preventive stages of EM to proactive stages, GHRM gains strategic significance and leads to a higher level of integration between organisational and employee-centred human resource practices. The recognition of GHRM as a crucial factor in effectively implementing green strategies and EM practices has been growing. GHRM is a concept that is continually developing alongside the broader subject of SD and has emerged as a distinct area of study in the past decade. Organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the strategic significance of EM in establishing sustainable businesses. Strategic HRM stands out in part due to its consideration of a diverse set of stakeholders with varying concerns who can impact GHRM within the context of EM (Ren et al., 2018).

The positive effect of human resources in the transition to sustainability and their contribution towards sustainable performance can be explained by the resource-based view (RBV) theory. According to the RBV theory, an organisation can be seen as a combination of human, physical, and organisational resources. These resources are valuable, rare, non-repeatable, and exclusive, which makes them serve as the primary source of sustainable competitive advantage and long-term superior performance. Assets play a significant role for organisations as they enable survival and competitiveness in the market (Malik et al. 2020). These resources are valuable if they allow companies to conceive and implement strategies that improve their efficiency and effectiveness (Kuo et al. 2022). Assets can be categorised into tangible and intangible types. Tangible assets include buildings, machinery, products, and goods, while intangible assets encompass goodwill and trademarks. Without these resources, organisations cannot attain a competitive advantage. Various studies have emphasised the significance of HR as the most valuable resource for firms. The importance of HR has been underscored in research on human resource practices, productivity, and the role of skilled employees as sources of competitive advantage. HR are crucial for maximising the benefits derived from developed and implemented strategies aimed at achieving sustainability through green objectives. Green human capital includes employees' assets such as knowledge, skills, commitment, and creativity towards environmental protection. They are intangible assets that can help the company to become greener and more knowledgeable. This green human capital helps companies to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and increases EP. Companies should therefore try to retain such capital (Malik et al., 2020).

GHRM does not have a clear definition (Benevene et al., 2020). However, in this thesis we will use Wagner's definition from 2011 of GHRM as "those parts of sustainable HR management dealing with the needs that relate to environmental sustainability" because even though at times GHRM is also used for social aspects of sustainability, this thesis only concentrates on its ecological aspects (Paulet et al., 2021). It relies on a multidisciplinary approach that encompasses theories and methods from the fields of management, sociology, economics, and psychology. GHRM refers to everything that relates to awareness, adoption, and implementation of HR practices and policies which have an impact on sustainability. It is also about communicating values and creating corporate culture (Benevene et al., 2020). HRM possesses the capacity to measure and influence employee behaviour, attitudes, knowledge, and motivation regarding the environment. Thus, organisations can effectively utilise HRM to implement environmentally friendly policies and practices. The EM principles and theories will be applied in the processes, practices, and management of HR (Saeed et al., 2019). The organisation's goals will be matched with the human resource goals. The purpose of this is to align HRM practices with the environment and reduce the misuse of natural resources, which is only possible if the employees gain awareness of the importance of environmental issues. This change might be difficult for employees to accept (Malik et al., 2020). Moreover, the process of designing and implementing GHRM practices requires significant investments in organisational resources, which may prompt managers to question the value and worthiness of these investments (Benevene et al., 2020).

The above paragraph mentioned employees' knowledge which will later also be called green knowledge. This concept refers to an employee's knowledge and awareness regarding environmental issues and potential solutions. The level of knowledge an employee possesses has been found to influence their decision-making and intentions. When individuals lack knowledge in certain areas, they tend to distance themselves from situations related to those areas. For example, consumers who are aware of environmental issues and possess knowledge about products and their impact on the environment are more likely to spend money on green products, opt for organic food, participate in environmental initiatives, and engage in recycling practices. Increased knowledge about environmental problems, processes, and solutions leads to a greater sense of concern and awareness, motivating individuals to take part in protecting the environment. Environmental knowledge and awareness are critical components of individual environmental consciousness. As an employee's knowledge grows regarding waste management, environmental management systems,

and corporate green policies, there is a higher likelihood of them engaging in voluntary pro-environmental behaviours in the workplace, such as turning off lights, using bicycles for commuting, and avoiding disposable cups. The level of an employee's environmental knowledge directly impacts their intention to adopt pro-environmental behaviours. Emotional involvement in environmental issues requires a certain degree of knowledge and awareness (Saeed et al., 2019).

To get a company to shift towards sustainability, it needs commitment by both the management and all the employees. Having only the people that are directly affected by the new GHRM practices committed is not enough. These activities can promote and sustain green behaviour among all members of an organisation. Besides, an effective organisational approach to sustainability requires not only compliance with formal rules but also employee acceptance of and engagement with voluntary green initiatives in the workplace, such as reducing electricity or paper consumption, and the use of stairs instead of elevators, just to mention a few. This will not only influence the employees' behaviour at work but also their personal lives in many different manners. It will change the employees' behaviour, values, and choices (Benevene et al., 2020).

While it is acknowledged that GHRM can positively impact EP, the reciprocal relationship, where good performance encourages the adoption of GHRM, has rarely been considered. Consequently, it is plausible that only organisations with significant experience and success in terms of environmental sustainability will embrace GHRM, which might cause it to become an elitist practice of only high-performing organisations. Moreover, GHRM practices should not only be adopted by highly committed companies, but should be a factor in any organisation's strategic decision-making process (Marrucci et al., 2023).

Over the last few years, there has been growing interest in GHRM (Gupta, 2018) with most studies conducted from 2018 onwards (Benevene et al., 2020). However, only limited empirical studies have been conducted in GHRM, with most studies done in a western context (Gupta, 2018). Further work is required, including empirical studies in developing countries (Paulet et al., 2021), as there are many national and regulatory differences between western countries and developing countries (Ren et al., 2018). Furthermore, GHRM research remains mostly devoid of theory (Ren et al., 2018). Significant advancements in theory, methodology, and empirical research within this field are therefore still greatly needed (Benevene et al., 2020).

2.3. GHRM practices

The GHRM practices have been mentioned several times in this literature review up until this point. GHRM practices aim to promote the environmentally friendly use of resources, which will strengthen the promotion of overall EP and enhance employees' awareness and commitment specifically towards EM concerns. These practices help to create a green workforce which is able to appreciate and understand green initiatives. The existing HRM behavioural research indicates that organisational performance is influenced by HRM through its impact on employees' attitudes and behaviours in the workplace. GHRM practices play a crucial role in fostering environmental awareness among employees and shaping their behaviour to cultivate pro-environmental attitudes both personally and professionally. Implementing GHRM practices leads to improved efficiencies, reduced costs, and fosters a positive employer-employee relationship, thereby enabling organisations to operate in an environmentally friendly manner (Saeed et al., 2019).

GHRM practices have a more direct impact on external stakeholders compared to general HRM practices, which primarily concentrate on enhancing organisational performance or profitability. GHRM plays a crucial role in promoting employees' commitment and engagement in environmental practices, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and pride, which in turn motivates them to exert greater effort in their work. By implementing these environmentally friendly practices, a company can build a positive reputation, reduce stakeholder pressures, and contribute to the well-being of future generations in the long term (Tang et al., 2018).

GHRM practices involve utilising HRM practices to strengthen environmental sustainability efforts and enhance employee dedication to environmental issues. It entails incorporating the concerns and values of EM into HR initiatives, resulting in improved efficiencies, and enhanced EP. This approach is crucial for reducing employees' carbon footprints (Gupta, 2018). In this thesis, five GHRM practices have been identified, which will be explained in the following sections: green analysis and job description, green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance management and appraisal, and green rewards and compensations (Malik et al., 2020). These practices are quickly summarised in table 1.

Table 1 – Summary of GHRM practices

Practices	Summary
Green analysis and job description	Green analysis and job description is a commitment for all employees to care for environmental issues besides the usual activities of the job.
Green recruitment and selection	<p>Green recruitment and selection are about attracting and choosing candidates that are skilled and motivated enough to bring change and commit to environmental issues.</p> <p>To ensure a person-organisation fit, it is important that the ecological values of the candidate are compatible with the values of the organisation. This will increase job acceptance behaviour, job pursuit behaviour and job satisfaction after organisational entry.</p> <p>Green recruitment and selection encompass three key elements: candidates' green awareness, green employer branding, and green criteria. Candidates' green awareness focuses on personality traits that facilitate the achievement of organisational environmental goals. Green employer branding refers to a company's reputation and image concerning EM. Companies that gain a green reputation, can more easily attract pro-environmental job seekers. Green criteria involve evaluating and selecting employees based on the candidates' knowledge, values, and beliefs regarding the environment. By incorporating these green criteria into the selection process, firms can identify candidates who are aligned with their environmental principles.</p> <p>Moreover, as part of the green recruitment and selection process, interviews can be held over the phone or via the internet to prevent the candidate from having to travel to the company for the interview.</p>
Green training and development	<p>Green trainings develop employees' skills to address environmental concerns and focus on environmental improvements, aligning with the organisation's objectives. This training can also be used to teach the workforce about the organisation's policies concerning the environment and to enable a positive change in the attitude of the employees.</p> <p>Green training and development can take place in the form of exclusive training programs, special workshops or training sessions on waste management and recycling, etc. Green training involves on-the-job training and continued education aimed at fulfilling corporate EM goals and objectives.</p> <p>Green training comprises three key aspects: awareness enhancement, knowledge management, and climate building. Firstly, green training serves to heighten employees' awareness of pro-environmental activities in the workplace. Secondly, green training facilitates knowledge management, equipping employees with the necessary skills to engage in environmental activities. Thirdly, green training fosters a climate that encourages all</p>

	<p>employees to actively participate in environmental initiatives.</p> <p>Green training and development can increase an employee's job satisfaction. Furthermore, green training and development can have positive spill-over effects on employees' personal lives.</p>
Green performance management and appraisal	<p>Green performance management encompasses the evaluation of employees' performance within the context of EM and can be summarised into four key aspects: setting green targets, creating green performance indicators, evaluating managers' green outcomes, and use disbenefits. Firstly, setting green targets for all members emphasises the translation of environmental objectives into action plans for the staff members. Secondly, creating green performance indicators involves establishing a set of criteria related to environmental incidents, responsibilities, carbon emissions reduction, and communication of environmental concerns and policies, which are incorporated into performance appraisals for all employees, which subsequently impacts rewards and compensation. Thirdly, evaluating managers' green outcomes highlights their role in EM, encouraging greater accountability for EP, including accountability for their team. Lastly, the utilisation of disbenefits serves as a negative measure to address instances where members fail to meet environmental indicators or comply with green goals.</p>
Green rewards and compensations	<p>Green rewards and compensations are a system that combines financial and non-financial incentives for employees to engage in pro-environmental behaviour. Continuous appreciation aims to keep the employees motivated, aligned with environmental practices and to actively contribute to environmental goals. A combination of monetary and non-monetary rewards is most effective to motivate employees.</p> <p>Non-financial rewards should be used alongside financial incentives, such as green travel benefits, green tax incentives, and green recognition. Firstly, green travel benefits encompass rewards related to employees' transport and travel, guiding them to reduce their carbon footprints. Secondly, green tax incentives involve exemptions aimed at promoting the use of bicycles and a less-polluting vehicle fleet, such as electric cars. Thirdly, green recognition involves a system of non-financial rewards, such as company-wide public recognition, paid vacations, flexible working hours and gift certificates. These green recognition rewards foster a sense of pride among colleagues and effectively encourage green initiatives.</p> <p>The green rewards are effective if environmental awareness is widespread in the company. Therefore, the company needs to build and cultivate a pro-environmental culture.</p>

Note. Own illustration.

2.3.1. Green analysis and job description

Due to the fact that this practice has limited research behind it, information on it is thus restricted. In short, the definition of green analysis and job description entails a commitment for all employees to care for environmental issues besides the usual activities of the job. Green analysis and job descriptions emphasise environmental knowledge, especially for those in the workforce who are directly involved in ecological performance and its enhancement. Nowadays, many organisations take

an interest in sustainability and therefore want to hire those employees that have green activities knowledge and awareness. The HR department plays a major role here since they should help to hire a skilled workforce with sufficient knowledge concerning sustainability. However, it is still very extremely rare to add environmental aspects in job analysis and description (Malik et al., 2020). Nevertheless, some companies have already included environmental responsibilities and qualifications as part of every job role such as the Rover Group carmaker (Pham et al., 2019).

2.3.2. Green recruitment and selection

There has been done more research for the practice of green recruitment and selection than for most other GHRM practices. Traditionally, organisations typically focused solely on finding individuals that meet job requirements and drive performance from a pool of candidates. However, in order to establish and sustain an environmentally friendly, or green workplace, it is necessary to carefully select and hire employees who not only possess the necessary skills but also have a genuine interest in and support for environmental matters. This entails implementing a recruitment and selection process that specifically emphasises the candidates' green abilities and knowledge, which is called green recruitment and selection (Gupta, 2018). The term green hiring has also been used interchangeably with the more recent terms of green recruitment and selection. GHRM practices foster a work environment that promotes and prioritises sustainability. Therefore, there is a direct correlation between green hiring practices and sustainability (Malik et al., 2020). Besides, if this practice is well done, it can facilitate the later stages of organisational entry, such as green training and development. Green recruitment and selection should play a major role regardless of economic growth or recession (Pham et al., 2019).

Nowadays, companies have a keen interest in attracting and retaining talented employees, especially those with environmental awareness. The hunt for these talents is complex and not always an easy task. Green recruitment and selection are about attracting and choosing those candidates that are skilled and motivated enough to bring change and commit to environmental issues (Malik et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2018). This motivation for environmental concerns is immensely important since it is the most important driver for the employees' commitment to EP. Employees should be motivated to do their job in a direction that is aligned with the organisation's objectives. The higher the degree of participation and commitment to natural conservation, the more probable it is to gain action-based competitive advantage. The drive to protect the environment can come from the individual's internal motivation, reflecting their pro-environmental attitudes and beliefs. Alternatively, it can be influenced indirectly by the management through various types of rewards, including intrinsic, extrinsic, and social incentives. An organisation should strive to achieve the right combination of individual traits and organisational characteristics. Green recruitment and selection play a crucial role in facilitating the achievement of EP by helping to find and hire suitable candidates who demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental values. It is important to ensure that the ecological values of the candidate are compatible with the values of the organisation. This will make sure to achieve a person-organisation fit, and therefore increase job acceptance behaviour, job pursuit behaviour and job satisfaction after organisational entry (Pham et al., 2019).

Green recruitment and selection encompass three key elements: candidates' green awareness, green employer branding, and green criteria aimed at attracting suitable candidates.

The first aspect, candidates' green awareness, forms the foundation of green recruitment and selection and focuses on personality traits that facilitate the achievement of organisational environmental goals. These traits include green consciousness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. It has been observed that employees who value the environment actively enhance their environmental knowledge during their work, thereby enhancing their firm's EP. Consequently, organisations should employ a series of tests to select candidates who demonstrate green awareness, ensuring a positive stance towards environmental issues among all employees (Tang et al., 2020).

The second aspect, green employer branding, refers to a company's reputation and image concerning EM, which can be cultivated through GHRM practices. Research by Willness and Jones (2013) suggests that jobseekers evaluate the compatibility between their personal values and an organisation's values through green employer branding (Tang et al., 2018). Companies that gain a green reputation, which is closely associated with green prestige, can more easily attract pro-environmental job seekers, since it is positively linked with the candidate's perception of organisational attractiveness. However, for this to succeed, the organisation's ecological values and green practices must be communicated to the pro-environmental job seekers. A company with a strong green image is recognised as environmentally responsible and therefore gains the trust of the community (Pham et al., 2019). Consequently, candidates may feel a sense of pride working for a company that possesses a positive environmental reputation (Tang et al., 2018). In addition, this will increase the employees' self-esteem, their identification with the company, and their self-concept¹. This concept is based on the social identity theory, which suggests that individuals derive part of their self-concept from the groups they belong to. As a result, people tend to categorise themselves into groups they perceive as similar to themselves. This explains why individuals have a strong inclination to join organisations that align with their self-image, as they seek compatibility between themselves and the organisation. Green jobseekers desire to join a company where they can have a significant impact through their work (Pham et al., 2019). Jobseekers use information regarding an organisation's EP, environmental goals, and its treatment of employees as criteria for judging the organisation (Tang et al., 2018). Therefore, it is important for the company to include this information in their recruitment messages or advertisements or to signal them on the company's website which helps candidates to perceive a green reputation. However, job seekers also acquire information from other sources than the company itself which might be seen as more trustworthy since information received from the company might be perceived as greenwashing, which will later be explained in more detail. Therefore, the interpretation of the information by the candidates is important. Green employers are also more successful in attracting and retaining talented people. Not only do these employers have a larger pool of candidates, but they also have a better pool of pro-environmental candidates from which they can choose the best individuals (Pham et al., 2019; Malik et al., 2020).

The third aspect involves evaluating and selecting employees based on green criteria. This entails highlighting environmental aspects in job descriptions and employee specifications during the recruitment process. Interview questions can explore candidates' knowledge, values, and beliefs regarding the environment. By incorporating these green criteria into the selection process, firms can identify candidates who are aligned with environmental principles and have the potential to contribute to sustainable practices within the organisation. Until now, no standardised criteria for selecting pro-environmental candidates have been established. In those cases where green selection does occur, it typically involves evaluating a candidate's skills and experience related to the environment, with each employer following their own unique approach. Some practices that have already been implemented in companies to choose the right candidate are to look for candidates who are personally committed to environmental sustainability; to ask applicants to be environmentally responsible in the preparation of their application material; to include questions on the environment in the interview process to assess whether an applicant's values are in line with the company's mission; and to reflect the environmental issues raised during the interview to verify the candidate's sensitivity and compatibility with the company's view (Tang et al., 2018).

Green competencies, which include knowledge and skills, have been accumulated throughout a person's life through past experiences. Therefore, they are part of the underlying traits and personality of the individual since they reflect the person's attitude, norms, and beliefs towards environmental issues. For that reason, it is increasingly challenging to measure and evaluate a

¹ A self-concept refers to the collection of beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings that an individual holds about themselves.

candidate's green competencies. Since environmental competencies are influenced by personality traits, it could be advantageous to include environmental issues in a personality test to better evaluate sustainable behaviours. However, there is no evidence that this has ever been done in a company (Pham et al., 2019).

Moreover, as part of the green recruitment and selection process, interviews can be held over the phone or via the internet to prevent the candidate from having to travel to the company for the interview. This can also be a moment for educating the candidates about green corporation efforts such as lowering waste and environmental damage (Kuo et al., 2022).

2.3.3. Green training and development

The general development of employees' behavioural traits, attitudes, skills, and knowledge, plays a significant role in fostering a collective commitment to the environment. This development falls within the broader scope of training and development initiatives (Yafi et al., 2021). Kuo et al., (2022) define training as "the process of preparing multi-talented individuals for the improvement of instruction necessary for innovations". Organisations offer green training in response to environmental concerns. These green trainings motivate employees to develop specific skills to address environmental concerns and focus on environmental improvements, aligning with the organisation's objectives. Training plays a crucial part in achieving a company's environmental goals effectively (Gupta et al., 2018). Motivation is a major factor in inspiring or encouraging people towards being committed to ensure proper EM. Green training can foster green motivation which itself will have an effect on EP (Yafi et al., 2021).

According to a prior study, the implementation of green training helped equip employees with diverse skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary for innovation, consequently enhancing organisational performance. Additionally, the performance of an organisation is significantly influenced by the level of training of the workforce. Training plays a crucial role in imparting knowledge and skills to employees, which are vital for the achievement various organisational goals and objectives, ultimately leading to improved performance (Yafi et al., 2021). Green training is the most implemented GHRM practice in organisations and is also recognised as a crucial practice for the successful implementation of EM (Pinzone et al., 2019). According to Yafi et al. (2021), it is even among the most effective GHRM practices for contributing to the ongoing development of green management in the majority of organisations. Pinzone et al. (2019) explain that green training serves to raise managers' and employees' awareness of how working activities and daily decisions affect the environment. Moreover, it provides employees with the ability to recognise environmental issues. It also helps them understand and manage the complexity of environmental issues. Furthermore, training helps them to fulfil their environmental responsibilities. Overall, green training gives employees the capabilities to undertake appropriate actions in mitigating environmental impacts within the workplace. Green training and development can take place in the form of exclusive training programs on EM for employees, special workshops or training sessions on waste management and recycling, etc. (Gupte, 2018).

Companies opt for green training as an economically sustainable and environmentally friendly strategy in their pursuit of sustainability (Yafi et al., 2021). However, employers have to invest time and money to train their employees (Malik et al., 2020). Within the realm of GHRM practices, green training involves on-the-job training and continued education aimed at fulfilling corporate EM goals and objectives. Green training is recognised as crucial in tackling individual barriers to pro-environmental behaviours and fostering their integration within the workplace. This practice yields positive outcomes both for organisations, such as the implementation of best practices and enhanced EP, and for employees, including individual recognition that motivates pro-environmental behaviours (Pinzone et al., 2019). This training can also be used to teach the workforce about the organisation's policies concerning the environment and to enable a positive change in the attitude of the employees. Moreover, it trains employees in conserving energy, minimising the use of natural

resources, and obtaining maximum output. Training adds value to skilled workers and is a way of both motivating and retaining those workers (Malik et al., 2020). It is essential for green training to be accessible to all members of the company, and not be limited to only those directly associated with environmental tasks. Moreover, it should be conducted on a regular basis (Tang et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2020).

Green training encompasses a range of activities designed to motivate employees to acquire environmental protection skills and foster their awareness of environmental issues. Training programs can effectively enhance employees' awareness, knowledge, and skills in environmental practices. Green training comprises three key aspects: awareness enhancement, knowledge management, and climate building. Firstly, green training serves to heighten employees' awareness of pro-environmental activities in the workplace. By participating in green training programs, employees gain a deeper understanding of the significance of environmental protection, making them more sensitive to environmental control and prevention processes (Tang et al., 2018).

Secondly, green training facilitates knowledge management, equipping employees with the necessary skills to engage in environmental activities. Through effective green knowledge management, employees receive comprehensive training that enhances their environmental protection knowledge and skills. This enables them to tackle complex EM challenges. For instance, training programs provide employees with the expertise to collect waste data and enhance their overall environmental competence (Tang et al., 2018).

Thirdly, green training fosters a climate that encourages all employees to actively participate in environmental initiatives. Integrated training approaches do not only encompass comprehensive training programs but also establish connections with performance appraisals and management systems, which will be discussed in the next chapter. This integrated approach helps create an environmental work climate where environmental engagement is encouraged and valued (Tang et al., 2018).

The RBV theory establishes a direct connection between green training and development and EP. In this context, the primary objective of GHRM is to offer training and development opportunities, as well as to foster and provide new chances for showcasing superior job behaviour. By doing so, organisations can maintain a competitive advantage and achieve superior performance compared to their rivals. According to the RBV, the survival and success of an organisation depends on the availability of human, physical, and organisational resources. In order to achieve sustainability and gain a competitive advantage, organisations must possess highly competent human resources capable of fulfilling various roles and responsibilities that contribute to both business success and environmental sustainability. Key factors such as green awareness, green skills, green behaviours, green attitude, green knowledge, and green abilities are crucial in fostering a culture of environmental consciousness. Through green training, the green awareness, green skills, green behaviour, green attitude, green knowledge, and green abilities of employees can be enhanced, leading to improved performance within the organisation (Yafi et al., 2021).

There is a notable and meaningful correlation between green training and the development of green competencies. Adequate green training effectively nurtures green competencies by fostering employee awareness and sensitivity towards environmental protection and SD. In addition, green training plays a pivotal role in cultivating organisational citizenship behaviour towards the environment within the workplace (Yafi et al., 2021). Organisational citizenship behaviour is the voluntary behaviour which is not directly or explicitly recognised by a formal reward system. This means that it is not specified in the job description. However, it promotes the more effective functioning of an organisation. This behaviour can either be directly beneficial to the broader organisation, e.g., working overtime, or beneficial to specific organisational members, e.g., helping a colleague in need (Pinzone et al., 2019).

Green training and development can increase an employee's job satisfaction, where job satisfaction is defined as a positive response proportionate to the degree to which an individual enjoys their job. An organisation that invests in training for the development of its workers' competencies helps the employee's perception of an adequate fit between their competencies and the work requirements, which develops a more satisfying view of their work. Furthermore, green training and development can have positive spill-over effects on employees' personal lives, leading them to become more conscious of the significance of their personal behaviours beyond the workplace. Hence, we anticipate that employees who participate in green training perceive the organisation as providing them with green personal resources that prove beneficial not only during work but also in their personal lives. Green training and development also increase the perceived organisational support. This is the degree to which employees believe that the organisation values their contribution and demonstrates concern for their well-being at work. Training opportunities communicate that the employer invests in their employees by spending time and effort in teaching them something new, hence the employees are aware of the support that the employer gives them. In an environmental context, this means that the employer values the employee's contribution towards sustainability and how the organisation shows concern for their environmental values. Here, green training and development is seen as the employer's investment in their employees' knowledge and skills for environmental protection. Employees who perceive organisational support for their environmental efforts are inclined to experience higher job satisfaction (Pinzone et al., 2019).

However, green training does not only have positive effects on employees' well-being. Due to green training, there might be a potential trade-off between environmental outcomes and social outcomes. These negative effects are that the employees perceive an increasing work overload, time pressure, and stress, which decrease the internal social sustainability of the organisation. Training can increase the performance expectations of an employee which they can experience as stressful (Pinzone et al., 2019). Moreover, it might be that green training is not always successful. The effectiveness of green training could be influenced by the trainee's readiness or the employee's cynicism (Tang et al., 2018).

In conclusion, incorporating green training and development as a mandatory component for job requirements and ensuring its accessibility and enjoyability are essential to encourage employees' engagement in EP. Equally important is the effective communication of policies, procedures, and practices within organisations in a manner that captures employees' interest and fosters a positive attitude towards them. It is crucial for organisations not only to formulate policies but also to provide resources and incentives to employees as a means of support and recognition (Yafi et al., 2021).

2.3.4. Green performance management and appraisal

Traditional performance management systems neglected the topic of sustainability in organisations, prioritising profit maximisation without considering future needs. In contrast to that, green performance management focuses specifically on the ability of organisations and employees to achieve green and sustainable objectives, acknowledging the importance of environmental considerations. By employing a green work rating as a measure, organisations can assess employees' job performance in relation to the environment. This approach helps in monitoring and evaluating employees' behaviour and performance, contributing to the promotion of environmental objectives within the organisation (Gupta et al., 2018). Moreover, performance management involves a process that motivates employees to enhance their professional skills with the aim of better achieving organisational goals, in this case green goals (Martins et al., 2021).

Existing research has focused on various aspects of green performance management, including feedback delivery and metric balancing (Saeed et al. 2019). Measurement techniques within performance management play a crucial role, as they provide individuals with prompt feedback on their environmental practices. This enables employees to assess their effectiveness in achieving the desired EP. By providing timely feedback on their EP, employees are more likely to pay attention and actively strive for the desired outcomes. Therefore, green performance management has a positive

influence on EP. Research suggests that individuals are more inclined to modify their behaviours when they are evaluated based on critical success factors established through green performance management (Kuo et al., 2022). However, there is a concern that these measurement methods may not be effective, as different firms possess unique structural attributes and resources, rendering uniform standards arbitrary. Consequently, it becomes crucial for firms to establish a systematic approach to implementing green performance management, with the adoption of a common green performance management standard being a priority for many organisations (Saeed et al., 2019).

Green performance management encompasses the evaluation of employees' performance within the context of EM (Saeed et al., 2019). Green performance management and appraisal can be summarised into four key aspects: setting green targets, creating green performance indicators, evaluating managers' green outcomes, and use disbenefits. Firstly, setting green targets for all members emphasises the translation of company's environmental objectives into action plans for the staff members. Secondly, creating green performance indicators involves establishing a set of criteria related to environmental incidents, responsibilities, carbon emissions reduction, and communication of environmental concerns and policies, which are incorporated into performance appraisals for all employees. Performance appraisal is considered the most crucial aspect of green performance management for both managers and employees as they impact the subsequent rewards and compensation. Thirdly, evaluating managers' green outcomes highlights their role in EM, encouraging greater accountability for EP, including accountability for their team. Lastly, the utilisation of disbenefits serves as a negative measure to address instances where members fail to meet environmental indicators or comply with green goals. Strategic application of such negative measures can motivate employees to adopt more environmentally friendly behaviours and strive for green objectives in their future work. However, if the negative warning is too harsh, they might discourage employees. Likewise, weak rewards would not be able to motivate the employees enough to reach environmental goals (Tang et al., 2018).

To conclude, organisations assess the actual performance and target performance of their workforce, and based on these evaluations, assign grades to employees according to their contributions in addressing environmental issues. Green performance evaluation specifically focuses on assessing employees' environmentally conscious actions, providing valuable feedback to management regarding their career development. Efficient performance assessment methods do not only offer positive and regular feedback but also contribute to positive changes in employees' attitudes. Performance appraisal is a crucial aspect of performance management, wherein managers are responsible for evaluating both employee performance and the EP of their organisations (Malik et al., 2020).

2.3.5. Green rewards and compensations

The topic of green reward and compensation has rarely been explored and poses a major research gap in the environmental literature (Paillé et al., 2020). This practice encompasses a strategic approach to reward management, where green reward and compensation is a comprehensive system that combines financial and non-financial incentives for employees to engage in pro-environmental behaviour (Tang et al. 2018). The goal of this practice is to prevent talents from leaving the company and attract new employees that would bring knowledge on green practices. Moreover, continuous appreciation aims to keep the employees motivated, aligned with environmental practices and to actively contribute to environmental goals (Tang et al., 2018; Gupta et al., 2018). It is a way to link the company's objectives with those of the individuals working in the company (Malik et al., 2020). There is a viewpoint suggesting that non-financial rewards offered in a public manner, such as recognition and praise, can be more motivating for employees than financial rewards. It is proposed that incentives and rewards have a greater impact on aligning employee performance with the organisation's goals compared to other GHRM practices. However, it is widely recognised by researchers that a combination of monetary and non-monetary rewards is more effective in motivating employees (Tang et al., 2018; Paillé et al., 2020). By giving green rewards and

compensations, employees' motivation and job satisfaction increases, which has a positive effect on the EP (Kuo et al., 2022).

Non-financial rewards should be used alongside financial incentives, such as green travel benefits, green tax incentives, and green recognition. Firstly, green travel benefits encompass rewards related to employees' transport and travel, guiding them to reduce their carbon footprints and develop a heightened awareness of environmental protection. Secondly, green tax incentives involve exemptions aimed at promoting the use of bicycles and a less-polluting vehicle fleet, such as electric cars. These financial incentives, already implemented by companies in the UK, significantly influence employees' willingness to contribute to environmental protection. Thirdly, green recognition involves a system of non-financial rewards, such as company-wide public recognition, paid vacations, flexible working hours and gift certificates. These green recognition rewards foster a sense of pride among colleagues and effectively encourage eco-initiatives (Tang et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2020). There can also be such things as rewards for innovative environmental suggestions or awards for teams with extraordinary EP (Gupta, 2018). Furthermore, loyalty towards environmental sustainability programs can also be increased through the opportunity for employees to decide in which environmental-responsible activities the company invests money (Kuo et al., 2022).

In summary, a strategic green reward and compensation approach combines both financial and non-financial rewards to motivate employees, with non-financial rewards playing a crucial role in shaping environmentally responsible behaviour and fostering a sense of pride and motivation among colleagues (Tang et al., 2018). Moreover, companies need consistent information and a highly ordered system of communication, otherwise the employees tend to be sceptical of green rewards (Paillé et al., 2020).

Green rewards and compensation can also be analysed using the social exchange theory. This theory is based on a win-win relationship in a particular context. In this context, the different parties "are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do, in fact, bring from others". This means that the parties are motivated to give something to another party because they will receive something in return. The relationship between the parties is shaped either through negotiated exchange or reciprocal exchange. In negotiated exchange, the terms of the agreement are bargained and known beforehand. In reciprocal exchange, there is no agreement. It consists of an act that benefits the other party without knowing if or when the other party will reciprocate. In the case of EM, the employer is not obligated to give their employees something in return for their participation. However, it is recommended that a consistent reward system explained by economic exchange should be made formal to create a workplace social exchange relationship between employer and employees for environmental sustainability. Employers want their employees to engage in extra efforts and in return they will be treated and compensated fairly (Paillé et al. 2020).

Paillé et al. (2020) provide empirical support that shows that there is an indirect effect that green rewards have on the employees' EP through the perceived environmental support of the employer. When an employee gets rewarded, it increases their perceived organisational support for the environment, which in turn enhances employees' perception of their contribution to EP. The effect of the reward is even greater, the higher the perceived organisational support for the environment is. The employer needs to show that they are committed to environmental issues. This is an important signal. This means that the effect is strengthened by a high level of internal environmental orientation. The green rewards are effective if environmental awareness is widespread in the company. Therefore, the company needs to build and cultivate a pro-environmental culture.

2.3.6. Ranking of the GHRM practices

Gupta (2018) conducted a ranking of the GHRM practices in their paper. They asked five experts from five different organisations to rank the practices using the Delphi method. This method involves several rounds of discussion with among the experts until a final consensus is reached. The six practices that were ranked in the study were green recruitment and selection, green training and

development, green performance management system, which we call green performance management and appraisal in this study, green pay and reward system, which is called green rewards and compensations in this thesis, green employee empowerment and involvement, and green management of organisational culture. These last two practices are not treated in this thesis and will therefore be omitted. Moreover, this thesis also works on green analysis and job description. However, Gupta did not mention this practice in their paper. In the end, they ranked green training and development first, considering it to be by far the most important variable for EM in organisations. Next were green rewards and compensations, with the important conclusion that rewards and compensations are essential to employees performing well on green activities along with green training. Then, there were green recruitment and selection, which were closely followed by green performance management and appraisal, which were considered to be the least important practice.

2.4. Stakeholder pressure for sustainability

Research done on the relationship between stakeholder pressure and GHRM practices is rare, which is unexpected considering the importance of stakeholder pressure in pro-environmental corporate decisions (Vázquez-Brust et al., 2022). Stakeholders as well as institutions play a major role in the current transition of companies to a more pro-environmental stance since they deploy external pressure on companies to have voluntary environmental initiatives that go beyond the requirements of environmental laws. Indeed, sustainability can be facilitated by external forces such as institutional and stakeholder pressure (Marrucci et al., 2023). According to scholars, organisations find it challenging to incorporate sustainable practices unless they encounter pressure from stakeholders who are concerned about improving environmental and financial results. External and internal stakeholders force companies to avoid negative consequences and maximise favourable ones (Shahzad et al., 2023).

Stakeholders are defined as “individuals or groups who can affect, or are affected by, the actions and results of an organisation”. This definition is quite broad and therefore we will narrow it down to only the main and legitimate individuals and groups in the stakeholder theory (Marrucci et al., 2023). There are two groups of stakeholders: the primary stakeholder, such as employees, customers, shareholders, regulators or government, and secondary stakeholders such as NGOs and media (Shahzad et al., 2023). Institutions, who can also be considered as stakeholders, are defined as “regulative, normative, and cognitive structures and activities that provide stability and meaning for social behaviour”. These can be laws, regulations, customs, social and professional norms, culture, and ethics. In the stakeholder theory, it is suggested that organisations should take a broader set of interests into consideration than only their shareholders’. Moreover, it is also important for them to take into account both financial and social performance (Marrucci et al., 2023).

The stakeholder theory perceives organisations as interconnected networks of formal and informal agreements involving stakeholders (Vázquez-Brust et al., 2022). Stakeholder can have an influence on organisations through stakeholder pressure, which is “the ability and capacity of stakeholders to affect an organisation by influencing its organisational decisions”. Nowadays, stakeholders’ awareness and knowledge regarding environmental issues has increased which in turn increases their concerns regarding the matter (Shahzad et al., 2023). When stakeholders exhibit a strong pro-environment stance, it is in the company’s best interest to go beyond external regulations and willingly dedicate resources to fully implement corporate practices that foster environmental protection (Vázquez-Brust et al., 2022). The growing concerns and involvement of diverse stakeholders in ecological disputes and issues have significantly expanded. Companies are now facing increasing environmental pressure from various stakeholders to develop policies, strategies, and activities that align with the organisation’s environmental goals. Stakeholder theory proposes that when an organisation faces pressure from different stakeholders, it encourages the adoption of specific environmental practices to promote sustainable and environmentally friendly growth, which in turn increases the company’s EP (Shahzad et al., 2023; Marrucci et al., 2023). Stakeholder greening pressures encompass the consolidation of demands from various stakeholders, urging companies to enhance their EP. When

multiple stakeholders align their pressures, it amplifies the significance of the advocated issues and the probability of a managerial response. The higher the level of stakeholder greening pressure is, the more urgent it is for the company to respond to these pressures to avoid retaliation. Companies that fail to address stakeholder greening pressures not only jeopardise stakeholder goodwill and resources but also expose themselves to potential consequences such as customer boycotts, fines, and damage to their reputation. Hence, according to stakeholder theory, it is in the best interest of companies to be responsive to greening pressures (Vázquez-Brust et al., 2022).

Within institutional theory, organisations and management practices are perceived as being shaped by social pressure rather than solely driven by economic pressures. The objective of institutional theory is to explain why organisations within a particular industry tend to exhibit similar behaviours and characteristics. Institutional pressures contribute to the homogenisation of organisational structures within an institutional environment, leading to similarities in how organisations look and operate. Institutions exert a constraining influence over organisations which causes populations within the same environmental conditions to resemble each other. These organisations embrace similar structures as a result of coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures. Coercive pressure stems from legal obligations or dependence on other organisations. Mimetic pressure involves imitating successful structures, particularly in times of uncertainty. Normative pressure to conform arises from the shared attitudes and approaches of professional groups and associations brought into the organisation through hiring. According to institutional theorists, the institutional environment can significantly shape the development of formal structures within an organisation, often surpassing the influence of other stakeholders. Consequently, organisational performance can be influenced by these institutional pressures. Furthermore, it has been shown that coercive and mimetic pressures have more effect in the implementation of sustainable practices than normative pressure. Moreover, the role of the HRM has been recognised in the relationship between institutional pressure and corporate responses to it (Marrucci et al., 2023).

2.4.1. Organisational motives

Stakeholders can also have a considerable influence on the implementation of green management practices, including GHRM practices, through organisational motives. OM is defined as “something (such as a need or desire) that causes a person to act”. This can be an internal or external motivator. If an organisation has the will or rather motive to change its current state, it needs the commitment of its top management. Moreover, decisions being made have significant implications for the interests of all stakeholders involved. There are three different types of organisation motives: instrumental motives, relational motives, and moral motives. Instrumental motives are governed by self-interests. Firms usually comply with stakeholders’ expectations because of instrumental motives. Whether a company responds to environmental and social challenges depends on the advantages that it would gain by addressing these concerns. As per the stakeholder theory, when an organisation's value creation processes are aligned with the instrumental interests of generating long-term shareholder value, it increases the likelihood of the company engaging in responsible initiatives. These initiatives aim to prevent reputational damage and enhance the competitiveness and profitability of the firm, which, in turn, benefits managers in terms of their remuneration packages. Prior studies have suggested that if environmental practices do not yield financial benefits, their long-term viability is compromised and they are not sustainable, regardless of their positive ecological performance. Therefore, the implementation of green management practices (GMPs) depends on the benefits that it gives companies. Moreover, a positive result of GMPs will encourage the management to implement even more GMPs. However, it is not always the case that GMP yield benefits to the firm, but companies can still adopt GMPs with self-serving motives. Existing literature has recognised that GMPs promote increased investment from all stakeholders, leading to enhanced employee morale, the establishment of a positive reputation, and the fostering of harmony. In conclusion, it can be said that instrumental motives are important for sustainable growth (Shahzad et al., 2023).

Relational motives relate to social legitimacy. Here, a company voluntarily and philanthropically performs activities if they suppose that those activities were expected by its stakeholders and the community (Shahzad et al., 2023). Relational motives are an important factor in the implementation of GMPs. Relational motives prioritise the utmost benefits of all entities engaged in any business activity with the aim of promoting sustainability. Stakeholder theory emphasises that shareholders' interests necessitate corporations to address the safety and well-being of all individuals and groups connected to the company. In the stakeholder theory, the focus lies on the interests of the shareholders, and the well-being of all other entities affiliated with the company are evaluated. However, the company will only try to satisfy the demands of stakeholders that have an impact on its overall financial performance. Stakeholders' demands for the implementation of different green strategies can contribute to sustainable growth (Shahzad et al., 2023).

The last motives are the moral motives which are tied to ethical standards, integrity, and moral principles. These motives drive companies to adopt sustainable practices that go beyond compliance with environmental regulations. A company with moral motives is inclined to adopt, advocate, and maintain SD practices. The ethical responsibility of such enterprises compels them to make positive contributions to the environment and society, aiming to benefit future generations. It goes beyond the classic duty of maximising profits. Organisations with moral motives have the ethical duty to create positive financial, social, and ecological impact. They are more prone to pursue sustainable strategies and adopt sustainable practices in order to gain a competitive advantage. Moral motives have a significant impact on the adoption of green practices. Therefore, it can be concluded that moral motives are significantly associated with GMPs, since moral motives cause them to honestly consider environmental-related issues simply because it is "the right thing to do" (Shahzad et al., 2023).

Shahzad et al. (2023) empirically proved in their study the positive effect of primary and secondary stakeholder pressure on organisational motives which in turn positively affected the implementation of GMPs. Their findings uncovered that OM partially mediate the relationship between stakeholder pressure and GMPs. Further, their research demonstrated the substantial positive influence of instrumental motives on GMPs. Moreover, relational motives and moral motives also have a positive association with GMPs.

2.4.2. GHRM as a response to stakeholder greening pressures

However, the pressures exerted by stakeholders frequently fail to trigger the necessary level of action due to hindrances in firms' responsiveness caused by human agency problems. These can be problems such as a lack of skills in understanding how to respond to the demand, a lack of motivation to invest resources to solve the problem, or a lack of opportunities to share knowledge and bring forward an innovative response. Human agency problems hinder companies' reactions to stakeholder pressure. Therefore, the companies need to look for solutions to these human agency problems and reduce the lack of skills, motivation, and opportunities. Moreover, a successful response to stakeholder pressures requires the involvement and collaboration of individuals and departments across various sections and levels within the organisation. This approach ensures that all relevant parties are engaged and working together towards addressing stakeholders' concerns and meeting their expectations. The only department in a company that impacts all employees of the company regardless of their function is the HR department. Therefore, GHRM practices can be used to address increasing green stakeholder pressures. Hence, increasing pressures serve as an incentive for firms to establish GHRM systems that empower human agency, enabling them to effectively respond to these pressures (Vázquez-Brust et al., 2022). Both institutional and stakeholder pressure have been shown to have a positive effect on the implementation of GHRM practices (Marrucci et al., 2023).

Primary stakeholders and top management commitment are essential to motivate organisations to implement environmental conservation strategies and green practices. They have a significant influence on social and environmental responsibility. Secondary stakeholders such as NGOs and

media have pressured companies to express detailed information regarding their industrial process to guarantee transparency in their operations (Shahzad et al., 2023).

Moreover, Marrucci et al. (2023) have shown that different stakeholders have different effects on the implementation of GHRM practices. Market stakeholders such as customers, financial and insurance companies and trade organisations have less influence than societal stakeholders such as employees and suppliers. Moreover, they found that regulatory stakeholders are not significant in terms of organisational performance. This shows that companies might not be aware of any institutional pressure, being primarily aware of the laws and regulations that are enforced. These findings are in opposition to what had been proven prior, namely that customers and regulatory pressures substantially affect EP (Shahzad et al., 2023).

2.4.3. Greenwashing & Environmental management systems

However, stakeholder pressure does not have a solely positive effect on the implementation of sustainable practices. It can also cause greenwashing. Greenwashing is defined as “the intersection of two firm behaviours: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance”. This means that the company exhibits to the outside world a positive image of the firm which does not reflect its internal behaviours regarding environmental issues (Testa et al., 2018). It is a symbolic rather than substantial commitment to the environment done by companies as a response to their stakeholders’ demands without really changing their ways of working (Marrucci et al., 2023). This misleading appearance can cause confusion and a loss of confidence among the general public and make it difficult to identify truly responsible companies (Testa et al., 2018).

In response to this confusion and loss of confidence, companies try to provide signals to the market about their environmental commitment. They try to enhance their legitimacy in the eyes of their stakeholders. An example of these signals can be certifiable environmental management systems (EMSs). Institutional pressures from government bodies and agencies or pressure from other stakeholders are the main motivator behind the adoption of EMSs. Therefore, these certifications seem to prove to the outside world that the organisation willingly commits itself to environmental protection. According to mainstream literature, EMSs should improve a company’s EP. However, in reality this is not always the case. In many situations, certifiable EMSs are only symbolically adopted to increase the company’s legitimacy, without improving internal practices. It is more for marketing purposes than to really improve environmental practices. The adoption of certifiable EMSs in a superficial and misleading manner is an example of greenwashing, among other deceptive practices. Numerous studies have raised concerns about the credibility and reliability of environmental audits and certification processes. However, in the end, it depends on the company’s response to stakeholders’ and institutions’ demands whether they internalise new practices or not (Testa et al., 2018).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research objective

After reviewing the relevant scientific literature concerning GHRM practices, it was decided that the objective of this thesis would be to analyse whether companies currently implement the aforementioned GHRM practices and if so, how they utilise them. If a company does not adopt one or several of the practices, the aim is to explore what prevents them from doing so and how they plan to overcome these obstacles in the future. Moreover, the influence and pressure of stakeholders within and outside of the company regarding the implementation of said practices will be examined. Therefore, in this thesis we will try to answer the following research question:

“Do companies implement Green Human Resource Management practices, and what influence can stakeholders have on their implementation?”

3.2. Research design

The nature of this research will be exploratory since we do not yet know what the result of the research will be. The established phenomenon in this case is the companies' transition towards sustainability through the implementation of GHRM practices. We aim to explore the utilisation of these GHRM practices by companies and identify any obstacles that may hinder their adoption. Moreover, the stakeholder theory will be brought into the research to explore the influence that stakeholders can have on the implementation of said practices. We will try to formulate hypotheses from the results as to why companies do not implement these practices.

The research approach will be inductive as we seek to derive a theory from the collected data. This means that we will begin with the data we have gathered and then proceed to develop a theory, concepts, or principles based on that data. Therefore, we will start from the specific empirical observations that we made and try to discover what common patterns can be recognised to be able to generate a general conclusion. Our literature review has set the frame in which the research will be conducted through the identification of scientific gaps; the gaps in this research being what GRHM practices companies currently implement, what prevents them from implementing the practices, and the role that stakeholders play in this implementation. If possible, interpretative hypotheses will be suggested at the end to analyse the results of the research.

In this empirical research, we chose to collect primary qualitative information. This method was chosen as it has been assessed as being the most realisable within the timeframe and the scope of the thesis. Furthermore, as the thesis focuses on getting new insights on the adoption of GHRM practices and examining relationships between these practices and the variables that allow or prevent them, qualitative research appeared to be the best choice as it enabled us to understand companies' opinions and decisions in more detail. Moreover, a qualitative research design goes well with an exploratory research nature.

3.3. Collection method of empirical data

It was decided to collect the needed data through in-depth semi-structured interviews. In this way, our research remains focused on a comprehensive, qualitative approach. Our main objective was to provide a space where interviewees could express themselves freely.

This data collection method has been chosen as it is easier to gather information, which in this case comprise the interviewees' experience and interpretation of the phenomenon of GRHM practices. Moreover, it has been more convenient to find the right interview partners for qualitative research.

To conduct the interviews, an interview guide (see Appendix A) was created and sent to the interviewees previous to the interview. This guide contained the open questions to the main subjects which were to be discussed. All questions were based on the knowledge gained from the literature

review of this thesis, especially Gupta (2018) served as a source of inspiration for the questions. The interviews were approached as an open discussion with a checklist of topics. As the interviews were semi-structured, spontaneous additional questions not included in the interview guide were asked when appropriate, but in general, the order of the questions in the guide was followed during the interviews. Thanks to the open-ended questions, each participant could adapt their contribution to their expertise and experience, adding quality to the content of this analysis.

It was decided to only choose Belgian companies in the vicinity of Liège as a sample for the interviews in order to keep the context surrounding the company similar. In this way national differences between the companies could be excluded as a reason for the differences between the companies. To introduce diversity among the companies and achieve a saturation point, we conducted interviews with companies from various sectors and of different sizes. This approach aimed to construct the participant sample in the most heterogeneous manner possible. The exhaustiveness of the result regarding the phenomenon is important in qualitative research in order to have saturated results.

Over 40 companies or individuals were contacted, of which 14 agreed to participate in the interview. These companies were found mainly with the help of the academic supervisor of this thesis, François Pichault. Thanks to his networking, direct email addresses to RH managers could be found and the likelihood of an answer was increased. Moreover, other companies were asked to participate during the Career Night at HEC and through personal networking. The only relevant criteria to select the companies, besides their location, were that they publicly announced their support for sustainable development. This increased the probability of them engaging in the GHRM practices.

The original plan was to interview individuals working in HR, as this thesis focuses on an HR-related question. However, it was found that they did not always possess all the required information to answer all questions. As a result, members of the companies' 'Sustainability Teams'² were also included in the interviews to provide additional insights. Moreover, some of the interviews were conducted without an HR manager present. In these instances, the interview was conducted with someone else who possessed extensive knowledge about the topic, such as a CEO or a member of the 'Sustainability Team'.

To gain a comprehensive range of insights, a mixed sample of 14 interviewees was assembled, allowing for coverage of various topics and obtaining diverse perspectives, sometimes resulting in contrasting answers. The decision not to contact more companies was made on the belief that a saturation point had been reached, ensuring a sufficient depth of information and understanding from the selected participants, e.g. it is claimed that an additional interview would not have provided any further answers to the research questions and brought forth new information.

Two out of the 14 interviews were conducted face to face at the companies. The remaining 12 interviews were held over Microsoft Teams since it was easier to plan and the travel to the company could be prevented. However, this has not been perceived as a constraint as technology allows good communication and real-life images. Moreover, since the pandemic, most people have good management of these tools as it was imperative at that time to use them. All interviewees had been sent the document containing the interview questions and the main topics at least a day before the interview, so that they had the opportunity to prepare if they wanted to. The interviews took between 16 to 60 minutes depending on how many practices the company had adopted, the previous knowledge about the company and the preparation of the interviewees. Depending on the knowledge about the company, fewer questions had to be asked and fewer explanations had to be given by the interviewees.

² A team responsible for the management of sustainable actions inside and outside the company. They can have different names (EcoTeam, Green Team, etc.) and at some companies even compile a separate department.

The interviews were conducted in French since it is the native language of all the interviewees. Despite the thesis being written in English and the questions being prepared in English, the decision to conduct the interviews in French was made in the hope that the interviewees would feel more at ease and be more willing to share information. The main objective was to gather as much information as possible and encourage open discussions. Additionally, as the English proficiency level of the interviewees was not known in advance, conducting the interviews in French proved to be a more straightforward approach.

3.4. Analysis of data

Each interview was recorded, solely for the purposes of later analysis. This approach ensured attentive listening during the conversation and provided the possibility for reflection on the discussed topics during the interview. While some notes were taken during the interviews, the primary analysis occurred afterward. This method enabled us to revisit the recordings, which proved to be beneficial in the analysis process.

The interviews were first partially transcribed via the software Happy Scribe to simplify the analysis. In this way, the recordings could be listened to while reading the transcriptions and highlighting particular answers on them at the same time. Moreover, on these transcriptions, the respondents' answers could be categorised. This study followed a thematic analysis aiming to gain information on people's views, opinions, or experiences and to find themes or patterns in the data. Coding the data was necessary to look for patterns. For each GHRM practice, data was coded according to a specific answer the interviewees gave. These responses will be presented in the following chapter.

We chose not to include the transcripts in the appendix as it was not deemed necessary. This work is based on a method that does not require the complete transcription of our interviews. Some striking statements that better show the thoughts of the interviewees have been included in the result section of this thesis. However, these sentences have then been marked as quotations.

4. Results

The information gathered during the interviews allows us to analyse how the companies could implement the GHRM practices. In this chapter, the topic of sustainability at companies, the potential implementation of the GHRM practices and the important stakeholders in terms of sustainability are presented. Overall, all the topics addressed in the literature review are covered. The information gained from the interviews was analysed thematically, following the structure of the literature review.

It should be noted that the statements made in this analysis are not to be generalised; instead, they relate to the 14 interviews for this thesis, whose information about the interviewed companies are presents in table 2 on the following page. However, the interview with Mrs. Fabienne Guaglianone will be excluded from the analysis of the practises for the reason that she has not been working at the discussed organisations for some time and therefore it might be that the information is no longer up to date. Moreover, one of the discussed companies is not located in Belgium and shall therefore not be compared with the Belgian companies. Nevertheless, some interesting information and comments gained through her interview will be included in this work. Moreover, given that all interviews were conducted in French, and this work is written in English, the citations have been translated in an attempt to get as close as possible to the original sentences of the interviewees.

4.1. Motivation to engage in sustainability

In this section, we will talk about what sustainability means to the different companies, providing valuable insights for the subsequent analysis of implementing GHRM practices. For most of the interviewed companies³, sustainability and respect for the environment are part of their core values. They advertise themselves as responsible companies and communicate this value to the outside as well as to their employees. Among some of these companies, the importance of the environment is linked to their core business or products. For instance, Citadelle, a public hospital, firmly believes in the close connection between sustainability and health. Their mobility manager claims that “it would be [...] paradoxical to say that [they] have nothing to do with the question of sustainability when, on the one hand, it has a significant impact on health” (*Interview Citadelle*, personal communication, June 15, 2023). They have integrated sustainability into their strategic plan, encompassing not only ecological aspects but also considering social factors, such as the well-being of their staff. Similarly, companies like Eloy go beyond mere ecological sustainability and adopt a broader approach to sustainability. Their HR Director states that “sustainable development, as far as [she understands] it from the UN's SDGs, is not at all about doing ecology on its own. It's about creating an ecology that is economically and humanely sustainable” (*Interview Eloy*, personal communication, June 21, 2023). Additionally, she emphasises the importance of sustainability, as it aligns with their core values, where environmental respect plays a significant role, and their business is in its essence green. Eloy's water processing business is inherently green and the integration of circular economy principles into their construction activities renders them more environmentally friendly. They have established an eco centre to minimise the ecological impact of construction. Instead of empty lorries making trips to collect concrete, they bring polluted soil and deconstruction waste to the centre for sorting and cleanup, then collect the concrete they came for and return to the construction sites. Once decontaminated, the soil is reused, and deconstruction waste becomes raw material for recycled concrete. Moreover, sustainability is a key component of their strategic plan '0, 30, 100,' focusing on zero accidents, neither for people nor for the environment, a 30% reduction in environmental impact, and achieving 100% performance.

Ecosteryl, a company specialised in the manufacturing of machines for the treatment and recycling of medical waste, upholds sustainability as one of its core values. Their business is dedicated to promoting SD and creating a cleaner world for future generations. The company's founders are deeply committed to this cause as well. Ortis, a company that specialises in producing herbal food

³ The companies who include sustainability or the environment in their value system are Citadelle, Ecosteryl, Eloy, Intysisfy, LaCar, NMC, Ortis, Prayon, SPW, and La Ville de Liège.

Table 2 – Information about interviewed companies

Company	Sector	Privat or Public	Location	Small or big	Interviewee	Position
Citadelle	Hospital	public	Liège	Big	Frédéric D'hondt	Mobility Manager
Ecosteryl	Management of infectious medical waste	privat	Mons	SME	Olivier Dufrasne	President
Eloy	Construction and water management	privat	Sprimont	Big	Isabelle Marneffe	Director of Ressources Humaines Groupe
EVS Broadcasting Equipment	Live video technology	privat	Seraing	Big	Dounia Czorniak	Deputy CPO
Intysisfy	Sustainable Operational Consulting	privat	Bruxelles	SME	Karim Mebarki	Sustainability Consultant
Jean Del'Cour	Social enterprise	privat	Grâce-Hollogne	Big	Dany Drion Bernadette Marenn	Management advisor HR & Socio-Prof. Integration Director
John Cockerill Group	Machinery and Plant Engineering	privat	Seraing	Big	Cynthia Prodocimi Anne-Gaelle Defachelles	Talent Acquisition Manager Belgium ESG Project Manager
LaCar MDx	Genetic testing kits producer	privat	Liège	SME	Mathilde Hoferlin Beatrice Bonometti	HR & Admin Officer Project Leader
NMC	Synthetic foams	privat	Eynatten	Big	Sylvia Franckart	Vice president HR, Culture and Talent
Ortis	Herbal food supplements	privat	Elsenborn	SME	Elodie Leduc	HR Lead
Prayon	Phosphate chemistry	privat	Engis	Big	Vincent Quinet	Quality, Safety, Environment and sustainability Vice President
SPW	Public	public	Namur	Big	Isabelle Pirrete	Chief Inspector - HR
La Ville de Liège	Public	public	Liège	Big	Joelle Henrion Michèle Pichot Catherine Souka	Gestionnaire de projet Administrative Director Mens Sana
Privat person	/	/	/	/	Fabienne Guaglianone	Senior HR Consultant

Note. Own illustration.

supplements, is another example of a business deeply connected to sustainability. Their mission is to create products that harmonise with the nature. Intysify, a sustainability consultancy, emerged as a branch of Intys due to various factors. The founder, who shared a deep passion for sustainability, noticed increasing interest from job candidates in sustainability consulting. Inspired by their employees, the evolving clientele, and personal values, Intysify was established and received immediate positive response in the market.

LaCar MDx, a company producing kits for genetic testing, collectively decided to install sustainability as a core value. During a day-long deliberation on company values, the environment was a shared concern, including from the CEO. The president of the company's Green Team shared that "the support [they] get, from all the management also enables [them] to do things that affect everyone, all the departments, the company and the members in general, and also to have objectives that are for the longer term, even more so, and to take really important action" (*Interview LaCar MDx*, personal communication, May 30, 2023).

Prayon has been dedicated to sustainability long before it became a trend. They have been actively involved in circular economy practices since the 1970s. At the time, they recognised the environmental consequences of continued pollution and waste production, motivating them to invest in circular economy. Financially, it also made sense for them to find alternative uses for their byproducts, which would otherwise go to waste. Instead of disposing of them, they now sell the byproducts to other companies who still have use for them. This exemplifies their commitment to evaluating and integrating byproducts back into the economy. Furthermore, Prayon looks upstream for their raw materials, utilising byproducts from other companies. "[They]'re going to look for P2O5 wherever [they] can find it, so [they] don't have to go and dig up more in a phosphor⁴ mine" (*Interview Prayon*, personal communication, May 25, 2023). Since the raw material they require for production is not readily available close to their production sites, they find it more convenient to source it as byproducts from nearby companies. Currently, 83% of their byproducts are recycled and 27% of their raw materials come from the byproducts of other companies.

NMC has a longstanding commitment to sustainability, making it a core value well before it became a trend. They want to work for future generations and try to encourage their business partners, employees, and others to follow suit. They have implemented a sustainability program centred on the three P's: planet, people, and profit. Ambassadors for each P explain the expectations at each site. Additionally, they strive to commit to the UN Global Compact⁵, aiming to instil an ecological mindset across all sites. At their headquarters in Eynatten, the largest site situated in a forest in the countryside, they have successfully fostered this ecological mindset. Achieving this goal was made somewhat easier since the employees there were already environmentally conscious.

La Ville de Liège and SPW, as public services, aim to set an example in sustainability. For instance, the new administrative site of La Ville de Liège is a highly modern building with zero carbon emissions, serving as a model for sustainable practices. They conducted a public consultation, which highlighted people's strong interest in environmental protection. This led to the creation of a transversal strategic plan, encompassing all departments, committing to an ecological and climate transition. Furthermore, they established a commitment charter for zero waste, allowing their workers to voluntarily sign up either individually or as a team.

Other companies have a different perspective. They view the focus on sustainability and the environment as a shift in people's mindsets today. For them, this shift brings both opportunities and additional constraints that they must address. As the management advisor of Jean Del'Cour claimed, "it's true that attitudes have changed and [he thinks they]'ve unfortunately experienced two years of instability in terms of human resources, but [he doesn't] think [they] can avoid reflecting on this

⁴ Prayon's production relies primarily on phosphorus as its main raw material.

⁵ It is a voluntary initiative based on CEO commitments to implement universal sustainability principles and to take steps to support UN goals.

subject in the coming months because [...] [they] have to adapt to this change in mentality” (*Interview Jean Del’Cour*, personal communication, June 23, 2023). Due to the changing mentalities nowadays, Jean Del’Cour made a commitment to reduce the impact of their products, as evidenced by their signing of a charter. They initiated the ‘Colibri project’ for sustainability and pursued the ISO 14001 certification, incorporating environment related norms into all their procedures and processes. However, as he mentioned before, investing time and money in environmental projects and actions presents an additional challenge, especially considering the difficulties the HR department faced over the last two years due to factors like indexations, new car laws, and a challenging economy, leading to increased instability. The Talent Acquisition Manager at John Cockerill agreed, stating that companies would not prioritise sustainability at the moment, if they did not have to due to numerous other pressing issues they must address. However, “John Cockerill’s products are part of the energy and environmental transition, so [the situation] still [offers] an opportunity” (*Interview John Cockerill*, personal communication, June 1, 2023).

4.2. Organisation of sustainability

Companies employ various approaches to organise sustainability within their organisation. In some companies, a single person takes on the responsibility for sustainability and collaborates with relevant experts when needed. For example, at Ecosteryl, they have a Chief Impact Officer, and at Prayon, the Quality, Safety, Environment, and Sustainability President oversees the subject. Prayon even goes a step further by designating an individual responsible for environmental matters at each of their production sites.

In other companies, a dedicated team was formed to focus on sustainability. These teams were comprised of individuals who either volunteered their time alongside their primary roles at the company or were specifically assigned to spend their time solely on sustainability. In some cases, these teams even became whole new departments. The names of these teams differ, ranging from CSR Team, to ESG Team, to EcoTeam, to Sustainability Team and Green Team. When the team consists of employees holding other positions in the company, they usually join from various departments to gain a comprehensive overview and gather opinions from across the entire organisation, enabling a better understanding of the company’s sustainability initiatives. As one of the interviewees put it, “we have working groups that we genuinely try to make cross-functional to avoid silo policies⁶” (*Interview SPW*, personal communication, June 21, 2023).

For instance, LaCar MDx is a company that formed a team consisting of individuals holding other positions within the organisation. Their team consists of approximately 10 members, which is a considerable amount given the company’s workforce of only around 50 people. According to one of the interviewees, who also serves as the president of their Green Team, “the environmental and societal value is [...] really [...] part of the company. But to truly bring it to life within the company, there’s a small group responsible for organising workshops or putting things in place to push this value to the maximum” (*Interview LaCar MDx*, personal communication, May 30, 2023).

Eloy has a small department called the TEDD⁷ dedicated to ecological transition and SD. Initially, several individuals showed interest in sustainability and allocated some of their time to it. Eventually, Eloy decided to establish a fully-fledged department with dedicated staff for these projects. Similarly, John Cockerill recently formed a team of four members solely focusing on ESG and sustainability. This

⁶ In French, “La politique en silo” refers to an approach where each department or group within a company operates independently, without effective communication or coordination with other parts of the organisation. This approach can lead to excessive segmentation and a lack of cross-functional collaboration, which may hinder the achievement of the company’s overall objectives. In other words, the “silo” policy is characterised by compartmentalised management, where each operational unit primarily focuses on its own goals without considering the effects on the entire organisation.

⁷ In French, “Transition écologique et développement durable”

move was prompted by the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting directive, which compelled them to formalise reporting and structure procedures.

NMC has a sustainability team at the group level. Their sustainability program is centred on the three P's: people, planet, and profit, with each P having an ambassador. Additionally, their largest site and headquarters in Eynatten, Belgium, has a pre-existing Green Team responsible for environmental matters. When asked about whether many people want to be part of that team, the Vice president of HR replied that "everyone likes to take initiatives, but when it comes to really getting involved, the groups are pretty small" (*Interview NMC*, personal communication, June 19, 2023). Many people have ideas and ambitions, but when they have to sacrifice their free time for it, they are less inclined to participate.

La Ville de Liège is another organisation with two groups dedicated to environmental care. They have a service for the environment within the management of public space department, established after a public consultation revealed the public's desire for increased environmental efforts in the city. This service focuses on external matters. Additionally, they formed their EcoTeam, consisting of 15 members from different departments, working internally to take actions for their staff.

Within the SPW, sustainability is approached as a collaborative effort. Within the social secretariat is a division called strategy which among other things takes care of the management of SD. However, sustainability initiatives inside the organisation are collaborations, driven by the HR. As a result, all teams work together, forming workgroups for various sustainability topics.

Jean Del'Cour assigned the responsibility for sustainability to an existing service within the company. The quality service⁸ assumed this responsibility when the company committed to reducing the impact of their products and pursued the ISO 14001 certification.

Two companies, Intysify and Ortis, do not have specific teams, departments, or designated individuals responsible for sustainability. In the case of Intysify, such a setup is unnecessary as they are a sustainability consultancy, and all team members actively contribute to sustainability initiatives. The team is composed of approximately 30 people dedicated solely to sustainability. Similarly, Ortis also lacks a designated sustainability role. They prioritise environmental protection as an integral part of their business model, and the responsibility for sustainability is shared across the entire company. They once had a workgroup, created by the initiative of the employees, where people could come together and discuss different topics, especially environmental matters. However, this group has been creeping into oblivion and been abandoned. Nevertheless, the company would like to anew create such a group.

Several of the companies have also used the services of the Liège-based company Smart2Circle which helped them to calculate their carbon footprint or create a CRS or ESG strategy.

4.3. GHRM practices

All interviews started with a question regarding the interviewees' familiarity with the concept of GHRM and its practices. Out of the 14 interviews analysed here, only five participants were acquainted with it. For the remaining participants, the topic was entirely unfamiliar.

4.3.1. Green analysis and job description

Out of the 13 interviewed companies, four do not incorporate the concepts of environment or sustainability in their job descriptions. However, this does not imply that these organisations disregard the importance of the environment. For instance, Citadelle, one of these four companies, has not yet established a dedicated sustainability position. Instead, they have individuals who have tasks related to SD, such as an engineer specialised in energies. Nevertheless, the job descriptions do not explicitly include the label of sustainability. As for Ecosteryl, they refer to the mission and values

⁸ In French, "service de qualité".

of the company which contain environmental aspects. However, nothing more is said in their job description. The remaining two companies simply do not require people with environmental aspects in their job description at the company.

Out of the companies that answered yes to the question of green analysis and job description, some have positions whose job description is entirely dedicated to sustainability and the environment, some have job descriptions where only some aspects entail the notion of sustainability, and other companies have a combination of both.

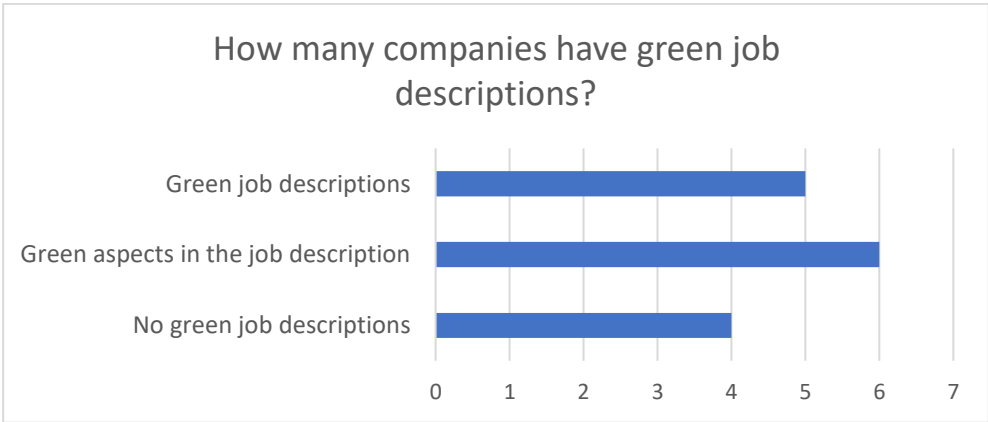
Intysify stands out as the only company where all employees’ job descriptions revolve around sustainability since they are a sustainability consultancy. Similarly, La Ville de Liège and SPW have some people that are experts on sustainable topics, whose job descriptions are entirely dedicated to environmental matters. Given their role as public services, it is natural for them to require such competencies to serve the interest of the general public. Moreover, John Cockerill has established a specialised ESG team of four individuals whose job descriptions focus solely on sustainability.

In other companies, some job descriptions encompass specific aspects of sustainability. For instance, Ortis employs several people with sustainability-related responsibilities. Similarly, Prayon has individuals, including the Quality, Safety, Environment, and Sustainability President and the personnel responsible for sustainability at its production sites, whose job descriptions involve sustainability. However, none of these positions are entirely dedicated to the environment and sustainability. At Jean Del'Cour, the responsibility for sustainability falls under their quality service, with individuals who have sustainability-related elements in their job descriptions. Additionally, they have a prevention advisor who also incorporates sustainable elements into their job description.

Two of the interviewed companies have a combination of both; individuals with some environmental elements in their job description and individuals whose job description is entirely dedicated to it. Eloy, for instance, has several employees whose job description encompasses specific environmental responsibilities, as well as the members of the TEDD⁹ department whose job descriptions solely focus on the environment. In addition, NCM has an environmental advisor¹⁰ whose job description exclusively focuses on environmental matters. This position is a legal requirement for the company’s environmental permit. The environmental advisor collaborates extensively with the company’s quality service, which includes individuals whose job description incorporates environmental considerations.

The number of companies that adopted green job description can be see in figure 1. The details about which companies exactly engage in it can be found on in table 3 in Appendix B.

Figure 1 – How many companies have green job descriptions?



Note. Own illustration.

⁹ As a reminder: This is the environmental department of Eloy.

¹⁰ In French, “conseiller en environnement”.

4.3.2. Green recruitment and selection

In this section we will go through the different means that companies can use to implement green recruitment and selection. Companies can do so by using environmental criteria to analyse the candidates' green behaviour and competencies in order to select which person should work at the company. Another way is for a company to work on their green employer image. Companies can also decide to conduct their interviews online in order to avoid carbon emissions produced through the candidate traveling to the company for the interview.

4.3.2.1. Environmental criteria for selection

More than half of the interviewed companies do not include any environmental criteria in their recruitment process. Some companies explained that they refrain from adding this criterion due to the already challenging job market and the difficulty in finding suitable candidates, given the shortage of skilled workers. Finding individuals with the right credentials is already a difficult task without introducing additional environmental criteria. This difficulty of finding good personnel is not only a problem in Belgium but everywhere, and it is not only a problem for a few companies but for many in all kinds of sectors, whichever position they are trying to fill. If a candidate wants to talk about the subject, they will gladly discuss it, but they "on the other hand, [...] don't necessarily ask for anything in this area. Recruitment is extremely difficult at the moment, so if [they] had to put more weight on that, it would be impossible" (*Interview Ortis*, personal communication, June 19, 2023) claims the HR Lead of Ortis. However, their values, which include sustainability, are well perceived, and their production of herbal food supplements attract candidates that are interested in nature. Therefore, the topic of sustainability is often addressed by the candidates. Citadelle is another organisation that refrains from using ecological criteria due to significant challenges within the hospital sector with regard to finding skilled workers. Prayon also faces this issue. The interviewee for Prayon remarks that "the icing on the cake is if [the candidate is] environmentally aware, but that's not one of the basic criteria, because it's already complicated to find the right person for the job" (*Interview Prayon*, personal communication, May 25, 2023). These companies only add green criteria to the selection if the function they are trying to fill requires these competencies. These companies claim that it is rather expected of them to demonstrate that they are responsible employers than that they expect their employees to prove themselves.

At EVS, discussions about the environment are entirely absent during interviews simply because the recruitment team of the company does not consider it a priority. They have yet to grasp the significance of this subject. While it is important for the leadership team, the integration of environmental considerations has not been implemented across the entire company.

At John Cockerill, they do not necessarily address the subject of sustainability during interviews except when the position requires it. However, they think that "by definition, [...] [due to their] sector of activity, the people who apply for jobs are bound to have an affinity with, or at least be attentive to, environmental issues" (*Interview John Cockerill*, personal communication, June 1, 2023). They discuss the values of the company in general. However, respect for the environment is not a decisive factor for selection at their company.

Moreover, at Jean Del'Cour, no environmental criteria are used for selection, except in the case of the recently hired prevention advisor. This is due to them being a protected workshop employing workers with physical, mental, or social handicaps. "It's not the same thing to recruit this kind of person as it is to recruit a worker for a bank, for the pharmaceutical sector or for the food industry. It's a very specific population" (*Interview Jean Del'Cour*, personal communication, June 23, 2023). For non-handicapped employees, they inquire about any prior knowledge of the ISO 9001¹¹, ISO 14001¹² and

¹¹ This certification is about quality management.

¹² This certification is about environmental management.

ISO 45001¹³ certifications. While familiarity with these certifications is considered beneficial, it is not a selection criterion.

La Ville de Liège and SPW do not include environmental criteria in their selection process. However, candidates who apply to these organisations generally share the values of serving the public and at the present time the environment is a top priority for the public. Therefore, people who apply at their organisations are likely to agree with the big principles of public services which include SD. They ask their candidates to respect and take care of the environment, but they do not ask any specific questions during the interview.

The remaining companies interviewed do not have green selection criteria in the sense that the candidates need to have green knowledge and competencies, but in the sense that they need to share the company's green values and show an interest in sustainability. For organisations like Ecosteryl and Intysify, whose missions are linked to the environment, hiring individuals whose values align and who have a genuine interest in the environment is crucial. As the president of Ecosteryl said: "Soft skills¹⁴ come before knowledge¹⁵" (*Interview Ecosteryl*, personal communication, June 7, 2023). At Intysify, the candidates are required to have an interest in sustainability and a strong motivation to work in the field. However, prior experience in sustainability is not necessary. They only need to have experience as consultants. Once hired, they undergo intensive training to become sustainability consultants. At Eloy, one of the core values is respect, encompassing respect for oneself, colleagues, authority, clients, and the environment. During interviews, the company will emphasise their values, including the importance of respect, and it is decisive for the selection that the candidates share these values. As the director of their HR department stated: "Behaviour is not negotiable" (*Interview Eloy*, personal communication, June 21, 2023). She goes even further by claiming that "[they] prefer to take someone who is less experienced, less competent, but who really has the same values as [they] do, rather than hiring or keeping someone in-house who is very competent, but who [they] clearly feel will not be aligned in terms of values" (*Interview Eloy*, personal communication, June 21, 2023). However, thanks to their actions and values, people with a green mindset are naturally drawn to the company. At LaCar MDx, sustainability is one of their core values. During interviews, they extensively discuss environmental topics, and a candidate's alignment with their passion for the environment becomes a crucial factor in the selection process. However, this applies not only to sustainability but to all their values, as is the case with most companies.

The Vice-president of the HR department at NMC believes that asking questions about candidates' environmental conduct may not be particularly useful, given the possibility of individuals not being entirely truthful in their responses. Moreover, for her it was questionable whether the recruiter could assess if one person is more environmentally friendly than another. However, they do try to see if the values of a person are compatible with the company's values. They do not ask specific questions during the interview but analyse the person during it to deem whether they are a good fit. However, she believes that people who want to join the company already have a certain green awareness. Such individuals are drawn to NMC due to the company's identity, actions, location, and other green factors.

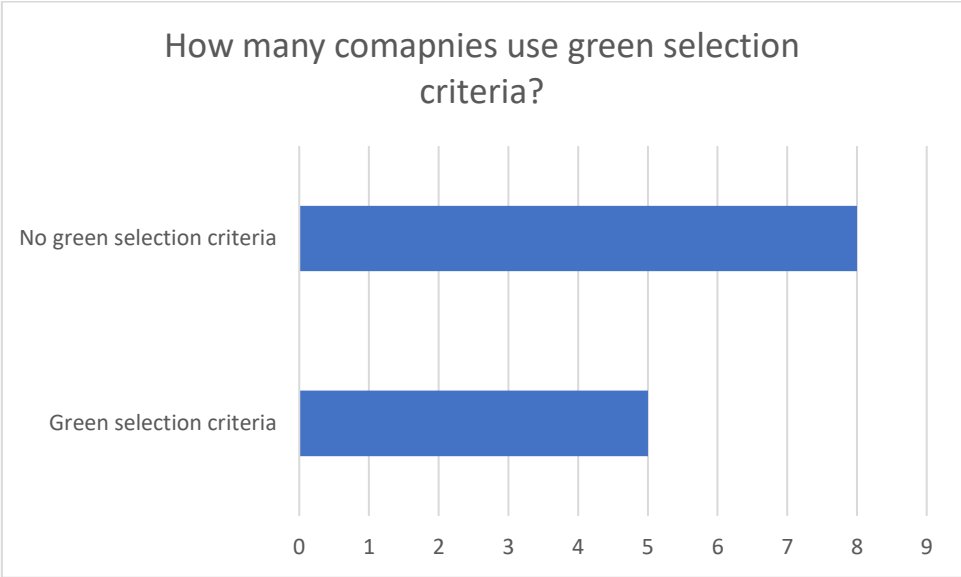
The number of companies using green selection criteria can be found on figure 2. For more detailed information on which of the interviewed companies use them, see table 4 in Appendix B.

¹³ This certification is about occupational health and safety management.

¹⁴ In French, "savoir-être".

¹⁵ In French, "savoir-faire".

Figure 2 – How many companies use green selection criteria?



Note. Own illustration.

4.3.2.2. Green employer branding

Most of the companies interviewed demonstrated themselves as green employers and actively worked on their green employer branding. However, not all of them needed to invest significant efforts into it. Companies like Ecosteryl, Ortis, etc. do not actively work on their employer branding because their sector of activity and mission inherently create an image as a green employer. For instance, Ortis, a company producing eco-friendly herbal food supplements, maintains a nature-respecting approach in their products and production processes, automatically creating a green employer image. Similarly, Intysify, through their sustainable projects for clients, naturally establishes a green image that attracts potential employees.

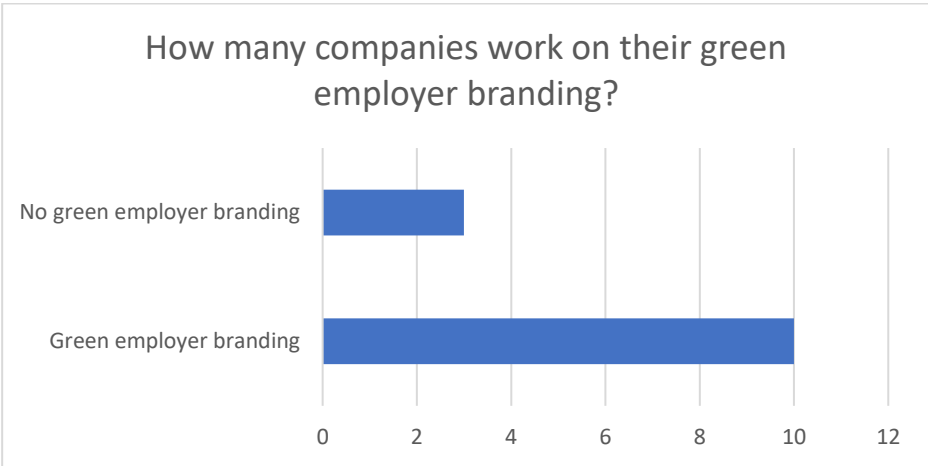
Other companies, such as Citadelle and Prayon, actively work on their image to attract new employees due to them currently suffering from a shortage of skilled workers. Demonstrating their commitment to being responsible employers is essential in appealing to environmentally conscious individuals. Moreover, the younger generations entering the job market put much greater importance on a company's actions compared to previous generations. During interviews, these candidates may inquire about the company's environmental actions and commitment, which candidates 20 years ago may not have done. As these younger generations are more sensitive to environmental issues, companies must establish themselves as responsible and green employers to attract these young workers.

Some companies take numerous environmental actions but refrain from excessively communicating about them to avoid the risk of being perceived as engaging in greenwashing. They approach the subject with caution and prefer not to overly showcase their actions. For instance, Eloy plants many trees to compensate for the carbon emissions from their frequent lorry journeys. However, they have not actively published or communicated about these efforts. They prioritise carrying out these actions for the sake of doing a good thing rather than seeking external recognition for them. NMC follows a similar approach, where being green is an integral part of their employer branding, yet they do not extensively publicise themselves in this regard. Instead, it is a mindset and culture that naturally attracts new workers to the company. They have an image as a green and responsible employer "to live it, not to show it" (Interview NMC, personal communication, June 19, 2023). Despite this, they are starting to become more open about their actions and showing what they do.

To some companies, their image as a green employer is not that important, and they do not put much effort into it. Jean Del’Cour, for instance, does not place a significant importance on their green employer branding. While they have an environmental policy and include the logo of their 'Colibri project' (see figure 11 in Appendix C) on all outgoing messages, they do not actively focus on their image as a green company. According to the interviewee, candidates applying to their company do not come because of its green image and do not typically inquire about environmental matters during interviews. Instead, applicants are more attracted to Jean Del’Cour thanks to its social values. Similarly, EVS does not truly have an image as a green employer. While they work a bit on it, it is not yet a priority for them. Likewise, a green employer branding is not a priority for La Ville de Liège. However, according to them, providing an image as a green employer might hold more significance for private companies, as they tend to receive greater return from it, compared to public organisations.

The number of companies working on their green employer branding can be taken from figure 3. For more detailed information on which of the interviewed companies work on it, see table 5 in Appendix B.

Figure 3 – How many companies work on their green employer branding?



Note. Own illustration.

4.3.2.3. Conduct of interviews

Interviews can be conducted in various formats, including entirely in person, fully online, a combination of in-person and online (where some parts are virtual and others are face-to-face), or it can be determined based on the position being filled and the availability of the parties involved. Figure 4 shows how many of the companies conduct their interviews in the aforementioned formats (see table 6 in Appendix B for more details). Eloy is one of the companies that primarily conduct their interviews in person at the company, with only a few exceptions. Despite the potential environmental impact from candidates traveling to the company, Eloy deems it necessary to conduct in-person interviews. As the director of their HR department stated, “I don't think that the SDGs or SD in general say that we have to stop everything. You have to choose the right energy expenditure or the right pollution. Everything pollutes. You have to choose the right battles, and for me, recruitment has to be face-to-face” (Interview Eloy, personal communication, June 21, 2023). Several companies agreed that certain aspects cannot be fully perceived through a screen and require in-person interaction. From the recruiter’s perspective, certain soft skills¹⁶ can only properly be assessed in person. Similarly, candidates find it important to visit the company to get a grasp of the atmosphere at the company and the work environment firsthand.

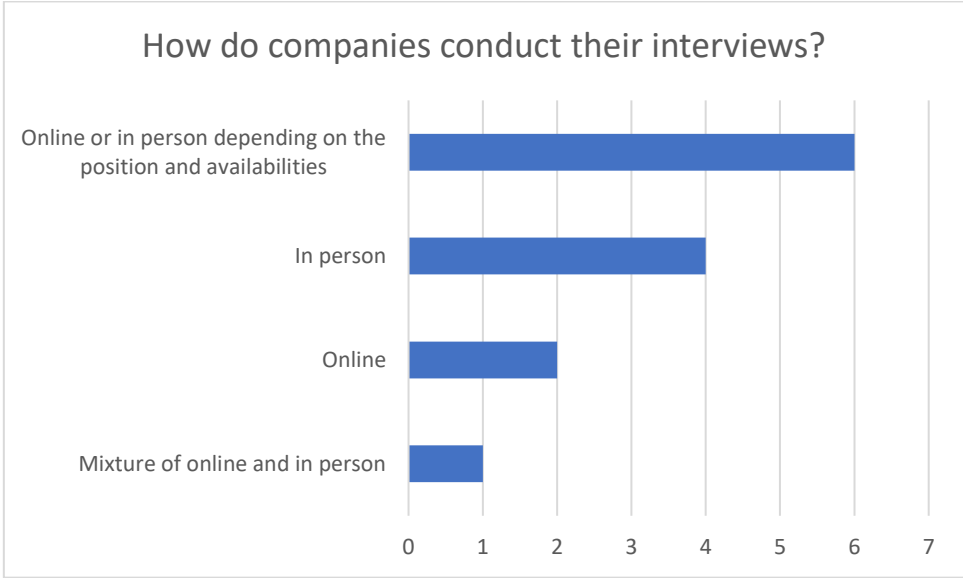
¹⁶ In French, “savoir-être”.

On the contrary, some companies opt to conduct as much of their interviews online as possible. For example, NMC conducts all their job interviews via the internet to avoid the candidates' journeys to the company. Therefore, they hold these virtual interviews entirely for environmental reasons. On the other hand, Ortis conducts most of their interviews online, not necessarily for environmental reasons, but due to the convenience in timing and availability. However, in certain exceptional cases, there might be a final interview in person.

Ecosteryl is the only company with specific rules for conducting interviews; the initial interview will be held online, and if the candidate advances to the second round, it will take place in person.

All other companies do not have specific rules for how the interviews take place. It often depends on the position they are looking for whether they want to meet the person at the company or if an online interview is sufficient. It also depends on the availability and the location of the candidate whether it is even possible for the person to come to the company. For instance, Jean Del'Cour normally carries out their interviews in person. However, because they have an extremely diverse staff, with differences between their disabled workers, employees, and management, there is no common rule. For some positions, they even utilise the service of a recruitment agency. Furthermore, LaCar MDx mostly insists that the candidates come to the office to show them the work environment there. However, they also handle the recruitment for Italy from the headquarters in Belgium, making online interviews necessary. In addition, John Cockerill does not have strict guidelines for recruitment, but they often prefer to conduct at least one interview in person to show the candidate the company. Moreover, Prayon carries out their pre-recruitment entirely over Teams to eliminate the need for the candidates to travel to the company. Afterward, if the person lives abroad, the rest of the recruitment process will also be conducted online. However, if the person lives close to the company, it is expected that there will be a meeting in person at some point during the process.

Figure 4 – How do companies conduct their interviews?



Note. Own illustration.

4.3.3. Green training and development

Most of the companies provide opportunities for their staff to develop their knowledge on sustainable topics through various means such as seminars, campaigns, messages, training, or workshops. Some companies offer specific training for staff members whose roles involve ecological aspects, while others provide training opportunities for all employees or those interested in sustainability. However, Ortis is an exception as they do not offer any environmental training or workshops. They explained that their training program is already burdened with heavy government-

imposed training related to the production of their products, making it challenging to organise additional training. In this section, we will go through the different means that companies can offer to their staff to educate them.

4.3.3.1. Messages and information

All interviewed companies utilise communication strategies, internal messages, or campaigns to educate their staff and encourage behavioural change. Regular communications may include reminders that 'good behaviours' are appreciated, such as turning off lights when leaving a room or setting the air conditioning at a certain temperature. Companies also conduct campaigns to highlight specific environmental actions or projects they are involved in. For instance, Citadelle, which has beehives at the hospital, regularly conducts campaigns to raise awareness about bees, beekeeping, and biodiversity. Moreover, at most companies, employees can also access information about their company's environmental initiatives on their intranet. The primary goal of these efforts is to raise awareness among employees about current environmental issues and how they, together with their company, can contribute to solutions. Companies aim not only to change employees' mindsets at work but also to encourage them to adopt these environmentally responsible behaviours at home.

However, companies have to pay attention regarding the information they provide. "The idea is to give people information to increase their knowledge. But here's the thing: it mustn't be politicised or biased. It's so that everyone can make up their own mind" (*Interview John Cockerill*, personal communication, June 1, 2023). Hence, companies should be cautious of greenwashing because employees, especially younger employees, are sensitive to it. However, while younger individuals tend to be more attentive to greenwashing, older people are also beginning to pay more attention to it. Organisations should avoid exaggerating their efforts or embellishing the situation.

Furthermore, companies need to be mindful and adapt the messages to their population. For instance, La Ville de Liège has a significant number of workers who do not speak French, so their messages must be more visual. Additionally, some employees lack internet access, making intranet-based communication ineffective for reaching them. To address this, efforts are underway to install internet access at locations where many workers are based, ensuring they can access information during working hours.

Some companies also hold conferences or seminars on sustainability with guest speakers giving presentations. These presentations may cover topics such as climate change, circular economy, mobility, energy transition etc. On the other hand, John Cockerill takes a different approach by hosting ESG lunches where employees can discuss sustainability-related topics in a more informal setting. However, they have observed that those who attend these lunches are already aware of and sensitive to the topic of sustainability.

4.3.3.2. Trainings

Some companies require newcomers to complete mandatory trainings upon joining. For instance, EVS provides an online training on ESG that they developed themselves. Every new employee is expected to complete this training, but they have the flexibility to choose when to do it. Prayon also has an initial training program for people who have just been hired. This training program contains information regarding security, the environment and specific information concerning their position. The training informs newcomers about competencies and attitudes that are expected of them. The training includes specific environmental rules that must be followed to comply with their environmental permit. It also covers procedures related to Prayon and the environment, as well as general information about the company. The training has different levels, with the level depending on their position within the organisation. Additionally, Jean Del'Cour began training their staff when they pursued the ISO 14001 certification. The trainings covered general good practices associated with the certification. All managers underwent external training on the ISO 14001 certification requirements since the company's procedures and processes needed to be modified to meet the certification

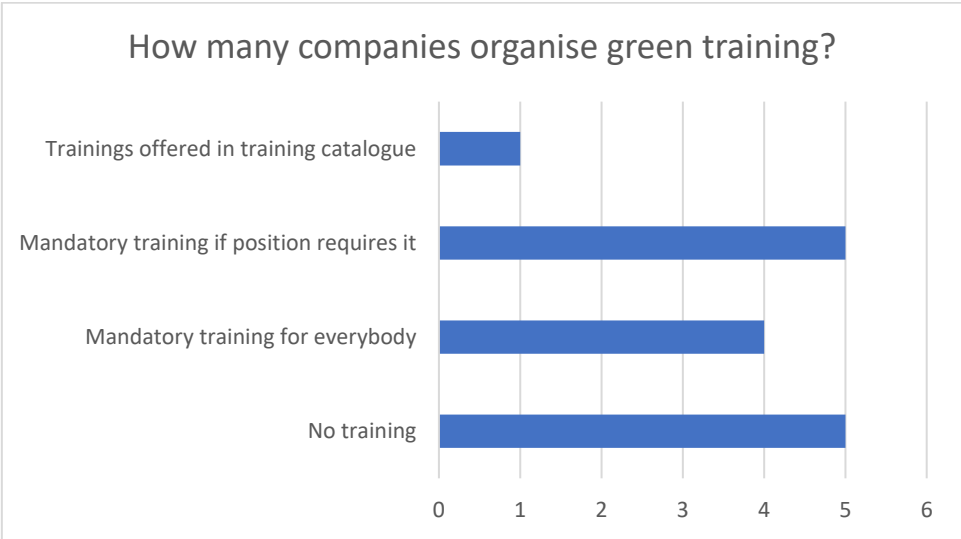
criteria. Once the managers completed their training, they shared the newly acquired knowledge with their respective teams.

In addition, some companies offer specific trainings for individuals holding positions related to environmental matters. For example, in March this year, John Cockerill conducted function-oriented training sessions. These sessions covered topics such as responsible innovation for employees working in innovation. They intend to hold these trainings regularly twice a year. At La Ville de Liège, people from the EcoTeam can attend special trainings outside the company and will then relay the newly learned information to the rest of the team. Intysify also provides mandatory trainings. As mentioned before, people who come to work at their branch do not necessarily have any experience in green strategies. For example, they may have worked as a consultant in procurement until then and will now learn to become a consultant in sustainable procurement. Therefore, once hired, they will undergo intensive training to become consultants in sustainability. For these trainings, they have 80 tokens that they can use for the courses in the training catalogue (See figure 12 in Appendix D). Some of the courses are mandatory for the type of consultant they will be specialised in. They can use the rest of the tokens however they want.

Most of the companies do not have mandatory trainings for their employees. However, some still offer trainings in their training catalogue that employees can freely choose. John Cockerill, for example, offers trainings concerning the climate and circular economy in its training catalogue, but they also intend to implement mandatory training on ESG in the future. Eloy also currently does not have any mandatory sustainability training, but they have plans to put such training in place in the future. They intend to introduce a Human Resource Information System, a platform for HRM to manage trainings and provide information to their employees for transmitting their culture. However, they have not started working on it yet due to their preoccupation with multiple other projects which have priority. Some companies mentioned that they do not currently offer specific environmental trainings; however, if an employee were to request such training with a valid reason, the company would consider providing it. Similarly, managers might recommend environmental training to employees if they see the need for it in their roles.

Figure 5 illustrates how many of the interviewed companies organise the different kinds of green training. For more detail, see table 7 in Appendix B.

Figure 5 – How many companies organise green training?



Note. Own illustration.

4.3.3.3. Workshops

In addition to these campaigns, communications and trainings, several companies also organise workshops, for example on the World Environment Day or during the rest of the year. For instance, Citadelle had several workshops in the week leading up to the World Environment Day. Some of these workshops were given by external organisations, such as workshops on how to reuse food waste for cooking or how to limit waste in general. They also had a workshop on how to create lip balm and beeswax bars. Moreover, someone came to teach about beekeeping, and this year, thanks to their beehives, they were able to create three new bee colonies that were given to some of their workers who had been trained in beekeeping. Therefore, as their mobility manager claimed, “it goes beyond theoretical principles, we’re really getting up to realisation” (*Interview Citadelle*, personal communication, June 15, 2023). It is not just theory and awareness; they want to empower people to take real actions. They also had some technicians from the electromechanical service of the hospital give workshops on how people could repair their own coffee machine for example, instead of buying a new one. They plan to keep doing these workshops during sustainability or mobility week with the help of specialists from the Walloon Business Union¹⁷.

The majority of other companies that conduct workshops also offer sessions on waste prevention, waste reduction, energy saving and other ways to minimise one’s environmental impact. For example, Eloy holds small workshops in their offices on how to reach zero waste. Moreover, they also organise workshops at their construction sites on how the workers there could carry out their work in the least polluting way possible. The workshops organised by these companies aim to encourage people to reflect on their actions. For example, at NMC, people already have the reflex to report if they identify ways to improve production efficiency. However, they want their employees to also develop the reflex to report when they identify ways to produce in a more environmentally friendly way.

Jean Del’Cour also conducted workshops when they decided to obtain the ISO 14001 certification. One of these workshops focused on waste sorting, as they had installed waste bins in all their workshops to facilitate the recovery of paper, plastic, wood, metal, electric wires, and other materials. Due to their workforce including disabled individuals who may face reading or writing difficulties, Jean Del’Cour could not conduct the same workshops for them as they did for their non-disabled employees. To provide training for all workers, including those with specific needs, they hired an external organisation specialised in training disabled individuals. This ensured that the workshops were delivered in a language and format tailored to their unique requirements.

Figure 6 illustrates how many of the interviewed companies organise workshops. For more detail on which companies exactly organise them, see table 8 in Appendix B.

Figure 6 – How many companies organise workshops?



Note. Own illustration.

¹⁷ In French, “Union wallonne des entreprises”.

4.3.4. Green performance management and appraisal

Several of the companies do not yet have any individual green objectives or environmental aspect in the evaluation of their employees. This is, for example, the case with Citadelle, where they have around 4,000 employees, and it is simply impossible for them to monitor the actions, behaviour, and individual contribution of each person. They utilise environmental indicators on the company level but do not extend it to the individual employee level. Similarly, at Jean Del'Cour, they do not have any type of environment evaluation for their employees. John Cockerill is currently in the early stages of developing a more sustainable approach, and as a result, they have not yet considered implementing green performance management practices. However, it is something that they are likely to implement in the future. Once they finish the calculation of their carbon footprint, they will proceed to take more concrete actions, including setting green objectives for individuals, and integrating environmental factors into their performance evaluation. One action they are thinking about is implementing a team-based travel quota, allowing teams to determine how they utilise their allocated travel limit. The founder of Intysify admitted that they have never even thought about implementing green performance management due to their activity as a consultancy. Their environmental impact remains relatively low, primarily limited to their travels to clients and the energy consumption at their office, both of which they can hardly reduce. Moreover, as a sustainability consultancy, implementing green objectives is what they do at their clients and not in their own organisation. Furthermore, La Ville de Liège does not set individual objectives and the criteria for their evaluations are set by the Walloon government, so they do not have any influence on it. These imposed criteria have no relation to environmental factors. Finally, the SPW conducts evaluations, but they do not include assessments of environmental aspects, behaviours, or attitudes, nor do they issue green individual objectives. They do not believe that “[their employees] need to have a flawless environmental attitude to be able to work at the SPW” (*Interview SPW*, personal communication, June 21, 2023).

Eloy stands out as the only company that combines the practice of setting individual green objectives and evaluating green behaviour. Annually, they assess eight different behaviours, among which is the idea of ‘safety mindset’¹⁸, emphasising respect and security for everything, including the environment. Furthermore, many employees at Eloy receive individual objectives that deviate from the strategic plan known as the 0, 30, 100 strategy. The process begins at the company level, with objectives cascading down to various departments and ultimately to individuals working on specific projects linked to these objectives. Throughout the year, managers monitor the progress of these projects and individual objectives within their teams, reporting the outcomes to the top management.

Ecosteryl does not explicitly establish individual objectives directly related to the environment for their staff, as their mission already revolves around benefiting the environment. Nevertheless, environmental responsibility is indirectly integrated into the objective-setting process, as employees are expected to uphold the company's mission and values, which encompass environmental considerations. Failure to align with these values may result in termination. However, it has never happened that a person was fired only because they did not respect the environment. Employment terminations usually stem from a combination of factors. Additionally, twice a year, during evaluations, employees and their managers will rank the employee on different topics which also include environmental ones.

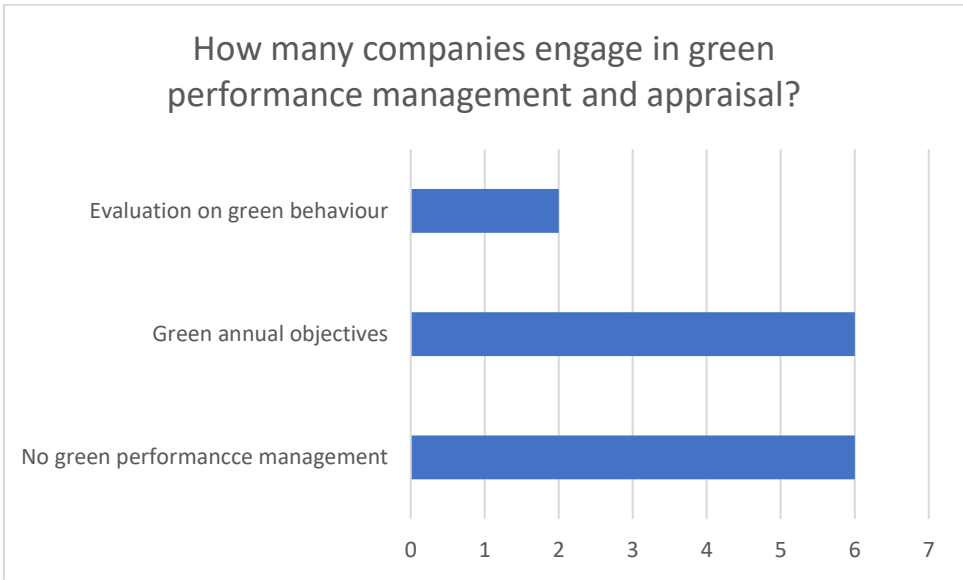
Some companies set annual objectives only for certain individuals in the company, but not for their entire staff. For example, objectives may be assigned to individuals in the sustainability teams, those employees whose roles are closely tied to the environment, or specific managers, depending on their respective functions. Sometimes, they also receive green objectives per department which they then collectively have to achieve. NMC's green team does not receive environmental objectives because

¹⁸ In French, “esprit sécuritaire”.

the company considers it unfair to impose additional objectives on these individuals. As voluntary members of the team, they believe these employees should not be penalised for their participation by being burdened with extra objectives. However, many other people in the company have green objectives such as people in R&D who have to look for ways to produce less polluting, or people in Purchase that have to buy in a more environmentally friendly manner. Nevertheless, green behaviour is not evaluated at NMC. During their evaluation process, there is a criterion called 'work attitude', but having a green mindset is not included in this criterion. They would like to add it to their evaluation but do not want to create an additional KPI simply because the tools are too complicated, and it would be impossible with SAP at the moment. The Vice president of HR at NMC stated that "in the end, it's the tools and processes that sometimes get in the way of the intentions" (Interview NMC, personal communication, June 19, 2023). However, during the interview, she realised that they could include pro-environmental behaviour in the criterion 'work attitude' without creating a whole new KPI. Ortis, similarly, does not conduct evaluations, primarily because they lack the necessary human resources to carry out such assessments. If they had more managers available to observe and evaluate their teams, they might consider implementing environmental criteria into their evaluation. However, the company faces challenges in recruitment due to a shortage of skilled workers, making it currently impossible. Nonetheless, some specific roles within the company, such as those responsible for infrastructure and maintenance, receive annual green objectives to encourage them to contemplate ways to enhance the building's eco-friendliness. Furthermore, the management at Ortis undergoes evaluation in an informal unique manner. Unlike typical companies with a CEO, Ortis follows a different approach. The management forms a team that reports directly to the board of directors, which places significant emphasis on sustainability. As a result, the board closely monitors the management's actions to drive long-term improvements in the company's sustainability efforts.

Figure 7 illustrates how many of the interviewed companies engage in the different forms of green performance management. For additional details, see table 9 of Appendix B.

Figure 7 – How many companies engage in green performance management and appraisal?



Note. Own illustration.

4.3.5. Green rewards and compensations

Companies can incite their worker to engage in green behaviour and actions by rewarding them for such deeds. These can be financial or non-financial rewards. In the following section, we will go through the different means companies can utilise.

4.3.5.1. Financial rewards and compensations

Nearly all companies, with a few exceptions, provide green travel benefits to their employees. However, Ortis is an exception as they do not offer such benefits due to their challenging geographical location, which lacks easy access by bike and has limited public transport connections. Additionally, most of their employees live over a half-hour car ride away from the company, making it highly unlikely for them to come by bike. Similarly, Jean Del'Cour also does not offer green travel benefits, but this is attributed to the unique nature of their workforce.

The remaining interviewed companies offer green travel benefits in various forms. Some fully or partially cover the costs of public transport subscriptions for their employees, while others reimburse them for using public transport. Additionally, some companies provide a monetary incentive, known as a "kilometre allowance," for each kilometre their employees commute to work using eco-friendly modes such as bikes, e-bikes, scooters, and similar options. Ecosteryl goes a step further by providing additional days off to employees who choose to commute to work using a bike. In some companies, employees have the option to lease bikes through the company. Furthermore, car-sharing is actively encouraged, and individuals who carpool to work can receive a monetary incentive at John Cockerill. Moreover, EVS is considering the possibility of granting extra days off to employees who opt for train travel instead of using cars or airplanes to go on vacations.

Furthermore, both La Ville de Liège and SPW, which offer green travel benefits, do not provide any other financial or non-financial compensation. This is because individual compensations are not part of their culture. As public services, their employees work collectively toward a shared objective, emphasising a unified approach rather than individual rewards. Therefore, they "try not to single out one agent more than another. Every member of staff contributes to providing a high-quality public service" (*Interview La Ville de Liège*, 5 June 2023). Regarding their green travel benefits, SPW has initiated a new project that involves offering personalised mobility coaching. As part of this initiative, individuals signing their contracts will receive guidance and advice on various commuting options to travel to work.

In Belgium, companies can benefit from green tax incentives when purchasing company cars. Presently, hybrid and electric company cars enjoy tax advantages (see Appendix E with table 12). While these advantages will gradually decrease for hybrid cars in the coming years, they will continue to apply to electric cars. Companies are now increasingly transitioning their company fleets to greener options and investing in the installation of charging stations. Some companies allow their employees to choose between hybrid and electric cars. However, others strongly encourage electric cars due to the fact that hybrid cars are not truly environmentally friendly, as they switch between electric and thermic power. For instance, NMC prefers electric cars for their employees, except for salespeople who require greater mileage and may find electric cars less suitable. On the other hand, Eloy gives its employees a choice, but influences their decision by calculating the Total Cost of Ownership (See Appendix F for an explanation) to make electric cars more appealing.

Among the companies interviewed, some offer individual or collective bonuses as financial incentives to their employees based on the accomplishment of green objectives. However, not all companies provide bonuses to their staff. For example, Citadelle does not implement an individual financial reward system because they cannot evaluate the green behaviour of the large number of employees working at the hospital. On the other hand, Intysify does not offer individual bonuses since their employees' impact on the environment is minimal, and the small impact they have cannot be significantly reduced.

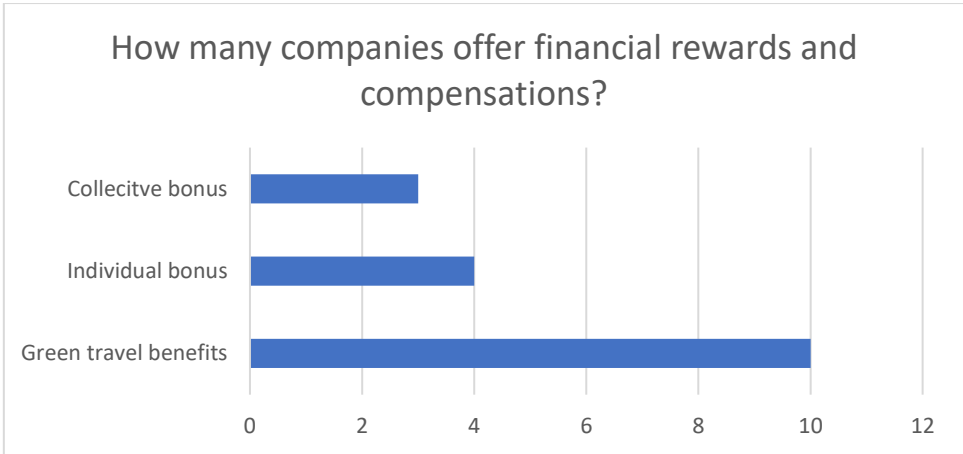
However, EVS for example offers financial rewards tied to environmental performance. The leadership team receives a portion of their variable remuneration based on the company's ESG rating. Additionally, employees have the opportunity to receive a spot bonus, which are small individual bonuses, for suggesting valuable environmental ideas. It is important to note that this spot bonus initiative is more informal and not officially part of their bonus policy.

Eloy follows a similar approach by offering discretionary bonuses to employees who excel in a particular project. However, similar to EVS, this practice is not officially included in their bonus policy. On the other hand, some other companies have a more structured approach in their bonus system, incorporating environmental considerations. In such companies, individuals with annual green objectives can receive a bonus if they successfully achieve these specific objectives. However, the receipt of the bonus is not solely based on meeting environmental goals, but on the achievement of the objectives in general. If an employee achieves 100% of their objectives, they will receive 100% of their potential bonus. If they only achieve half of their objectives, they are entitled to half of their potential bonus. Consequently, if they successfully meet their environmental objectives, they will be entitled to a portion of their potential bonus.

Some companies offer collective bonuses to the entire company based on the accomplishments of company objectives. Prayon, for instance, occasionally offers collective bonuses. During certain years, the company has environmental objectives which, if achieved, will grant the entirety of their staff a collective bonus. Other companies, mostly those whose value systems include environmental values, exclusively distribute collective bonuses in their company. This approach signifies that they refrain from rewarding individual employees, as they firmly believe that the company's success is a result of the collective efforts and contributions made by the entire team. Furthermore, Eloy prioritises collective bonuses over individual ones because of research indicating that individual bonuses provide short-term motivation. Instead, the company aims to foster intrinsic motivation, where individuals are driven by the objectives or projects themselves, rather than solely by the prospect of financial rewards. Eloy aspires for environmental consciousness to become an ingrained norm within the organisation. They envision a culture where people naturally exhibit respect for the environment, not merely due to financial incentives, but because it is an inherent part of their values and beliefs.

Figure 8 illustrates how many among the interviewed companies offer which financial rewards and compensations. For more details, see table 10 in Appendix B.

Figure 8 – How many companies offer financial rewards and compensations



Note. Own illustration.

4.3.5.2. Non-financial rewards and compensations

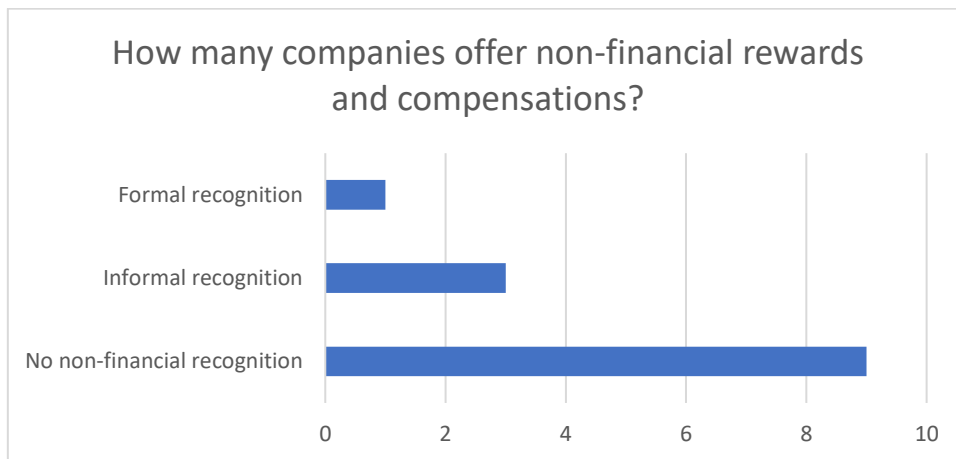
Among the companies interviewed, some provide non-financial rewards alongside financial incentives. Some companies have formal systems in place to address environmental considerations, while others adopt a more informal approach. For instance, at Citadelle people are recognised by their peers for exceptional green behaviour. If a worker stands out thanks to their good behaviour and motivation in terms of environmental matters, they can become a kind of ambassador who is encouraged to share their knowledge on ‘good practices’ with their colleagues. John Cockerill also acknowledges their employees in an informal manner by highlighting those who come up with valuable ideas to enhance the company's environmental friendliness. These employees are

recognised, and their ideas are communicated within the company to inspire others. Furthermore, at Eloy, individuals who excel in their projects and surpass expectations are invited to the monthly meeting where updates on ongoing projects, including environmental projects, are shared with everyone. These exceptional employees get the opportunity to present their successful projects and receive recognition and celebration for their outstanding contributions.

One other company has established a formal system to recognise the environmental contributions and efforts of its workers. At Ecosteryl, one employee is awarded each year for their exceptional environmental initiatives, receiving a voucher or a gift. NMC is also planning to introduce a similar award in the future, honouring one or two individuals per year who have come up with outstanding ecological ideas. Currently, they have an award for exceptional ideas focused on improving product quality or production processes. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Jean Del’Cour had envisioned a plan where if a group’s idea or project has an impact on the company’s financial results, a part of this benefit would have been shared with the group in the form of a gift. However, due to the impact of Covid-19, this plan was put on hold and not executed.

Figure 9 illustrates how many companies offer non-financial rewards and compensations. For more details on which companies exactly offer them, see table 11 in Appendix B.

Figure 9 – How many companies offer non-financial rewards and compensations?



Note. Own illustration.

4.3.6. Thoughts about GHRM practices

Following the discussion on GHRM, the interviewees expressed diverse opinions concerning their usefulness and effectiveness. But many agreed that it is an important topic to focus on and improve in the future. However, as Fabienne Guaglianone said, “when it comes to HR, there are many issues that have, in [her] opinion, a higher priority than this one” (*Interview Fabienne Guaglianone, personal communication, June 15, 2023*).

Some participants mentioned that they do not believe that GHRM practices can be applied universally across all sectors or types of companies. Moreover, they argued that implementing these practices just for the sake of it is not the right approach. Instead, a company should adopt these practices if they genuinely want to incorporate environmental respect into their values and culture. Otherwise, it could be considered as greenwashing and merely a marketing tactic. GHRM should be implemented with the intention of doing good and bringing about positive change, not just for advertising purposes. For GHRM to be effective, it is essential for the company’s messages to align consistently with their values. While many participants view working on GHRM positively, as it gives employees a sense of purpose in their work, some questioned the overall efficiency of these practices. They noted that many responsible companies already have a workforce that is environmentally sensitive and aware, making them wonder if GHRM practices would significantly

improve the company's EP. Some participants believe that instead of relying solely on individual workers, the government and society should take a more active role in driving environmental changes.

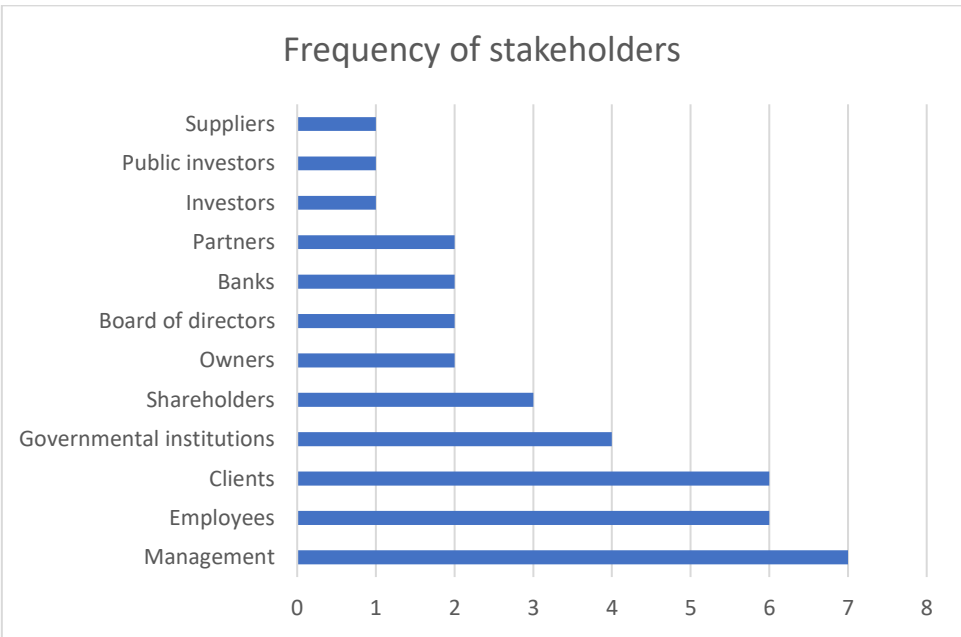
Another individual expressed their reluctance to engage in green management practices due to the term itself, which they believe gives the impression of greenwashing. Moreover, they do not believe these practices to have a significant impact on a company's environmental footprint. While they may have unintentionally and indirectly implemented some practices, they have no intention of actively adopting more in the future. “[They]’re investing in [their] facilities precisely to reduce environmental risks, to reduce dust emissions, water emissions, air emissions and so on. That’s what [they] want to work on, that’s what [they]’re investing in, not setting indicators, or setting targets for workers” (Interview Prayon, personal communication, May 25, 2023). Furthermore, another interviewee argued that companies should avoid prioritising the environment above all else and refrain from extreme stances. They emphasised that sustainability encompasses more than just the environment and that the other pillars of sustainability should not be overlooked. It is essential to maintain a critical and thoughtful approach when considering these matters.

The consensus among all interviewees was that these practices serve as an effective means to attract individuals, particularly younger people, who are sensitive to environmental concerns. This stands true even for companies operating in sectors that may not inherently be environmentally friendly, like Prayon, which deals with chemicals.

4.4. Stakeholders that can influence sustainability

This section will highlight the stakeholders who can play a role in the implementation of companies’ sustainable actions and initiatives. Nearly all companies have a diverse set of stakeholders who can influence their commitment to sustainability. In some cases, the internal stakeholders like management, employees, shareholders, or the board of directors exert pressure on the company to transition. For other companies, external stakeholders such as clients, investors, or the government can impact their behaviour and decisions. In certain instances, it is a combination of both internal and external stakeholders. Figure 10 illustrates how many times the different stakeholders were mentioned by the interviewed companies. For more details on which company mentioned which stakeholder, see table 13 in Appendix G.

Figure 10 – How many times were the stakeholder mentioned?



Note. Own illustration.

4.4.1. Internal stakeholders

Employees were repeatedly mentioned as having the capacity to exert pressure on the company to drive change. They were also more likely to spot any inconsistencies in the company's behaviour, making them sensitive to greenwashing practices. Additionally, the Vice President of the HR department at NMC emphasised the significance of future workers, who place great importance on the environment and sustainability. To retain their current workforce and attract new talent in the future, investing in sustainability becomes crucial for the company.

In the case of Eloy, a family-owned business, numerous stakeholders can exert influence, but the most crucial impact comes from the family itself. The director of the HR department explained: "Everyone will be looking to the captain. And so, the only way we're going to move clearly in that direction is if the three members of the Eloy family are very clearly aligned and pulling everyone towards the same direction and that behind them, it's a bit like when sometimes you see birds flying in the sky with one leading and then it makes a big 'V'. It's really this idea, that the captain is there, that behind him the sub-captains who are the department heads are also aligned, that they bring along their colleagues, so by cascading the whole managerial line, that everyone is very much aligned with that and pulls everyone in the same direction" (*Interview Eloy*, personal communication, June 21, 2023). At Intysify, a similar dynamic exists, where the founder of the branch holds the most significant decision-making power. Some companies also mentioned shareholders to have an influence on the adoption of sustainable actions and practices at the company as they set the tone for the company.

The management was mentioned most often to have an influence on sustainability as it often holds an interest in the subject and can play a crucial role in driving sustainable projects forward. For instance, at LaCar MDx, the CEO pays close attention to this matter, while at EVS, a member of their leadership team takes responsibility for it. At John Cockerill, the topic has captured the attention of both management and the board of directors, but it was not a priority until recently. Consequently, progress on sustainability initiatives was challenging in the past, but now it has gained more significance and attention as a priority.

4.4.2. External stakeholders

Some interviewees also highlighted the involvement of banks in considering a company's environmental impact and their policies for reducing it. Nowadays, banks often offer different interest rates for loans based on the CO2 emissions of the company. Consequently, a company's environmental performance plays a significant role in securing favourable loan terms. Public investors are also expressing interest in the environmental impact of companies. For example, 'Wallonie Entrepreneurs,' a public investor of Jean Del'Cour, required them to complete an ESG charter that included five points related to reducing their carbon footprint and demonstrating a concrete commitment to improvement. The investor agreed to finance the company only if they signed this charter.

Clients have the authority to request their suppliers to complete surveys or conduct audits to assess their practices. Their decision to continue working with the supplier may depend on the audit's results. These audits typically cover aspects like finance, risk-analysis, environmental practices, and certifications. Therefore, holding certifications such as ISO 14001, as Jean Del'Cour does, proves to be advantageous. NMC, for example, deals with major clients, who conduct surprise audits and interview the company's staff to evaluate the company's environmental practices. This places pressure on companies to ensure environmentally friendly operations.

Other public organisations, such as the government, can also impact companies in their approach to sustainability. For example, Eloy, operating in the construction sector, must adhere to various legal and governmental regulations that vary from country to country. Similarly, Ortis, involved in the production of herbal food supplements, must comply with multiple government-imposed regulations.

Moreover, the government of the Walloon region wields significant influence on the conduct of SPW. Moreover, SPW must attentively consider the interests of Walloon companies and respond to their pressure. Additionally, public bodies like the congregational college, town council, or the mayor can also exert influence on the decisions of La Ville de Liège.

The mobility manager interviewed at Citadelle found it challenging to determine the importance of one stakeholder over another. In his view, all stakeholders hold the potential to influence the company. When developing their sustainability roadmap, they conducted a survey involving all employees within the company. Additionally, they organised participative workshops with various external stakeholders, including La Ville de Liège, the university, schools, suppliers, general practitioners, and representatives from other hospitals, to gather their input and opinions. After these constructive discussions, they analysed feasible and financially viable options to formulate their strategic action plan.

For their societal report, Prayon constructed a materiality matrix (see figure 13 in Appendix H) by seeking input from a wide array of stakeholders, both internal and external, representing three spheres: economic, civil, and authority. These stakeholders were consulted on 14 pillars intended to guide the management of the company's societal responsibilities. The stakeholders were asked to rank these pillars based on their importance. The stakeholders and the company itself agreed that the protection of the environment is the most crucial of all these pillars.

5. Discussion

This chapter aims to answer the research question through the links between theory and the interviews conducted for this research. The research question reads as follows:

“Do companies implement Green Human Resource Management practices, and what influence can stakeholders have on their implementation?”

The research question will be divided into two parts. The first part will focus on the implementation of the GHRM practices within companies, while the second part will explore the role of stakeholders in this implementation. Additionally, this chapter aims to explain any unexpected findings and highlight implications for professionals in the field.

Many companies are motivated to embrace sustainability for various reasons. For some, environmental consciousness and sustainability are deeply ingrained in their DNA and corporate culture. They have integrated green practices into their core values either because environmentally friendly operations align with their core business activities or because their products are inherently eco-friendly. In some cases, companies consciously decide to prioritise environmental protection, making it an essential part of their mission and strategic plans even if their business is not inherently green. On the other hand, some companies may be driven towards sustainability due to external pressures from society and stakeholders. As Paulet et al. (2021) have explained, organisations increasingly receive strong signals emphasising the growing significance of sustainability. These companies might not have pursued sustainability if it were not an obligation. They perceive the expectation for environmental attention as an additional constraint, particularly in an already challenging economic situation. Consequently, there is a distinction between companies that engage in sustainability due to moral motives, where it is seen as “doing the right thing”, and those with instrumental or relational motives, approaching it from a business perspective to meet expectations and avoid potential repercussions. Public organisations, however, are led by different motives, as they serve the general public and are expected to serve as an example in sustainable efforts. As a result, these organisations view themselves as role models, demonstrating the positive impact that can be achieved through sustainable practices.

In this chapter, it will be demonstrated that various companies have implemented diverse GHRM practices, although many of them did so without conscious intention. Unsurprisingly, not even half of the interviewees were familiar with GHRM practices, as it is still a relatively new topic, and prior to the interviews, they were unsure if their contribution could be relevant for this thesis. However, as they explored the different practices during the interviews, they all recognised that they had unconsciously implemented some of these practices. Some plan to implement further practices in the future, while others oppose this idea, as just the name itself, GHRM, insinuates greenwashing.

However, it was questioned by some interviewees whether GHRM practices could be applied across different sectors. There might be some sectors, where simply because of certain factors inherent to the sectors, these practices can not be applied. Moreover, merely implementing these practices superficially, without internalising them, would amount to greenwashing and raise concerns about their legitimacy. It is crucial that these practices are implemented with the genuine intention to improve the EP of the company and not merely for marketing purposes. Additionally, there is uncertainty regarding whether it is the responsibility of the HR department to address sustainability concerns. However, Vázquez-Brust et al. (2022) argue that successful implementation of sustainable practices across the whole company requires collaboration among individuals and departments across functions and levels within the company. As the HR department impacts all employees, regardless of their function, it is logical for them to take the lead in addressing these matters. Furthermore, questions arose about the potential magnitude of the impact these practices can have on the company's EP, which can however not be answered in this thesis.

The results revealed that the majority of the companies had incorporated environmental aspects into their job descriptions. However, contrary to Malik et al.'s (2020) findings, these companies did not implement job descriptions that explicitly required *all* employees to be committed to environmental issues. Instead, most companies included environmental aspects only in job descriptions for roles that were partly or wholly dedicated to environmental matters. The exception here was Intysify where each employee had environmental aspects to their job description given that they are a sustainability consultancy. Moreover, while Malik et al. (2020) considered adding environmental aspects to job descriptions as extremely rare, our interviews indicated that many of the companies had at least one position with a job description relating to environmental responsibilities. This suggests that the practice may not be as rare as previously thought. For the companies that did not adopt these practices, the primary reason cited was that they were still at an early stage in their ecological transition. Consequently, they did not include environmental responsibilities explicitly in their job descriptions, even though some employees were already involved in tasks related to the environment. Moreover, certain companies claimed that they simply did not need a position related to the environment in their line of business.

Hypothesis 1: The implementation of green analysis and job description depends on the progress of the company's transition towards a more sustainable business and their line of business.

As proven by the results, a significant number of companies also make use of green recruitment and selection. For most of these companies, sustainability and environmental consciousness are integral to their core values, and it is essential for potential candidates to share these values. They seek to hire individuals with a strong green awareness. However, despite the importance of green awareness in candidate selection, none of the companies use any form of tests or assessments to identify candidates who exhibit a green awareness, as suggested by Tang et al. (2020).

Some companies take their commitment to environmental values a step further by making alignment with these company values a crucial selection criterion. For some, the alignment with company values holds even more significance than the candidate's competencies. As noted by Pham et al. (2019), ensuring compatibility between the values of individuals and the organisation fosters a strong person-organisation fit and boosts job satisfaction. For positions directly related to environmental tasks, certain criteria assessing the candidate's green knowledge and competencies may also be incorporated. However, it is interesting to note that none of the interviewed companies apply any other selection criteria beyond alignment with their environmental values for their general staff. This contrasts with Gupta's (2018) viewpoint, which emphasises the need for employees to possess relevant skills and genuine interest in environmental matters to create a green workplace. It appears that many companies might not be far enough along in their ecological transition to prioritise skills and experience in environmental matters during recruitment. Some of them might never even consider it a priority at all. Companies that refrain from using any green selection criteria do so for various reasons. Some of them currently face significant recruitment challenges due to a shortage of skilled workers, leading them to focus solely on the essential criteria required for the positions. Others simply do not view green selection criteria as a priority but might in the future. Moreover, others will never consider implementing green selection criteria as their line of work does not require it. An example of this is Jean Del'Cour, a protected workshop with a particular workforce of disabled individuals. For them, green selection criteria are neither useful nor a priority due to their specific circumstances.

Hypothesis 2: The implementation of green selection criteria depends on the current situation of the company, their sector, the particularity of their workforce and their priorities.

Most of the companies interviewed actively invest in their green employer branding. However, for some of them, whose core business or products are inherently green, their reputation and image are automatically favourable in terms of sustainability. Others in turn work diligently on their image,

especially if they operate in sectors not traditionally associated with green practices. They aim to attract workers, particularly the younger generation entering the job market, who are more environmentally sensitive. As described by Pham et al. (2019), companies with a strong green reputation find it easier to attract pro-environmental job seekers. The positive perception of their green image enhances their attractiveness to potential candidates. However, not all companies prioritise their green employer branding. Some may not view it as crucial for their business, while others fear the risk of greenwashing, a concern rightly acknowledged by Pham et al. (2020). Being cautious about greenwashing, they recognise that overemphasising their green initiatives might lead to scepticism. Consequently, some companies choose to communicate less about their sustainability efforts to maintain authenticity and credibility.

Hypothesis 3: Whether a company actively works on their green employer branding depends on their line of business, their priorities, and their fear of greenwashing.

Some of the companies conducted their interviews exclusively online, with only a few exceptions made, for ecological considerations or convenience in terms of availability and location. In contrast, other companies opted for in-person interviews despite the potential environmental impact, as they prioritise the value of meeting candidates face-to-face for a more comprehensive assessment, especially when evaluating certain soft skills that might not be apparent through a screen. On the other hand, some companies do not adhere to specific rules and vary their interview methods based on the requirements of each position.

Hypothesis 4: Whether a company conducts its interviews in person or online depends on its managerial preferences and the participants' availabilities.

The results of the interviews have demonstrated that all companies offer their workforce opportunities for development on sustainable topics through various means. These initiatives encompass a wide range of activities designed to motivate employees to acquire environmental protection skills, raise awareness of environmental issues, and encourage participation in environmental initiatives (Tang et al., 2020). Companies can organise campaigns and communicate through messages to educate their staff about sustainable practices, sensitise them to different environmental issues, and inform them about ongoing environmental actions and projects. However, to ensure authenticity and avoid greenwashing, companies must be truthful in their communication efforts. Additionally, workshops and seminars with guest speakers provide a platform for employees to engage in discussions.

Companies also have the option to organise training programs to educate their workforce. One approach is to conduct mandatory trainings for newcomers, which provide essential information about current environmental issues, and teach how both the employees and the company can contribute to addressing these challenges. However, this practice contradicts the recommendation of conducting trainings on a regular basis, as mentioned by Malik et al. (2020), since such mandatory trainings are only offered once in an employee's career. During the interviews, it was observed that some companies, although currently not implementing mandatory training, have plans to introduce such programs in the future. They recognise the importance of environmental education but have not prioritised it until now. Another alternative is to offer training exclusively to employees in roles related to the environment, but this approach also conflicts with the literature, which emphasises the significance of making green training accessible to all members of the organisation, irrespective of their specific job functions (Malik et al., 2020). For companies that do not mandate green training, they can opt to include it in their training catalogue, allowing employees to voluntarily enrol in the courses. Additionally, during the interviews, some participants disclosed that if an employee presented a valid reason for needing environmental training, the company would accommodate their request.

Another effective method for educating employees beyond basic sensitisation is through workshops. In these workshops, people learn practical ways to reduce their environmental impact, such as energy

conservation, waste reduction, waste reuse, and repair practices. These hands-on workshops empower employees with actionable knowledge and skills to actively contribute to environmental sustainability.

Some companies do not offer specific training or workshops, either due to extensive government-imposed training programs, which prevent them from implementing further trainings, or different priorities within the company. Not all employers are willing to invest time and resources in training their employees, as acknowledged by Malik et al. (2020).

A noteworthy finding is the importance of considering how companies communicate with their personnel in messages, trainings, and workshops. Language barriers, literacy limitations, and internet accessibility may hinder effective communication, requiring innovative approaches to ensure that messages reach all employees.

Moreover, green recruitment and selection can facilitate green training, as mentioned by Pham et al. (2020). However, a pertinent question arises when the workforce is already environmentally aware and sensitive due to successful green recruitment practices: in such cases, is it necessary to train these already sensitive individuals, given that green training is meant for overcoming individual barriers to pro-environmental behaviours and fostering integration within the workplace (Pinzone et al., 2019), since workers that are already aware do not have such barriers and contribute to a green workplace?

According to Yafi et al. (2021), green training and development is the most widely implemented GHRM practice, which aligns with the findings of this study, as all interviewed companies engage in some form of green training, whether through formal programs or reminders during day-to-day operations. Employees appreciate green training as it reinforces the alignment between their values and those of the organisation, inspiring them and enhancing job satisfaction (Pinzone et al., 2019).

Hypothesis 5: The implementation of trainings depends on the company's priorities and time availabilities.

As evident from the findings, certain companies successfully implement green performance management and appraisal practices by incorporating green objectives into their employees' annual targets or evaluating their green behaviour and attitudes. Traditional performance management often overlooks these aspects entirely (Gupta, 2018), which remains true for many companies in this research as well.

Certain companies establish environmental objectives for specific employees and provide regular feedback to monitor their progress. However, none of the companies in the research fully adhered to the theory's recommendation of translating environmental corporate objectives into action plans for *all* staff members (Tang et al., 2018). Instead, they only added these objectives for certain employees, such as certain managers, members of the sustainability team, individuals working in environmental roles, or even regular employees assigned with sustainability-related responsibilities, like seeking more sustainable suppliers in the sales departments. Notably, Intysify stands out in this regard, as they do not set environmental objectives for their employees as their job is doing exactly this for their clients. Therefore, not all sectors are adapted to setting green objectives. Additionally, for some companies, the concept of management by objectives does not align with their organisational culture, leading them to refrain from setting green objectives for their employees. Moreover, for a few companies, prioritising green individual objectives is not a current focus, and they have not yet considered its implementation.

Hypothesis 6: The implementation of green individual objectives depends on the company's line of business, culture, and priorities.

Among the companies interviewed, only a few incorporated environmental criteria into the evaluation of their employees. These were typically organisations where environmental

considerations hold a vital place in their value system. Interestingly, some other companies also support environmental values and encourage their workers to act accordingly but chose not to include specific environmental criteria in their performance evaluation. For some of these companies, adding environmental criteria to their evaluation process is being considered for the future. However, they are currently at a stage in their ecological transition where it has not been fully integrated into their evaluation framework. On the other hand, certain companies do not perceive it as essential in their line of work, as green behaviour might not directly influence their ability to carry out their tasks effectively. Furthermore, specific structural or workforce particularities play a role in determining whether environmental behaviour is formally evaluated. For instance, companies like Citadelle, with a large workforce of 4,000 individuals, find it impossible to observe and assess the environmental behaviour of each worker. Similarly, Jean Del'Cour's workforce, consisting of disabled workers, poses unique challenges that make it difficult to implement formal evaluations of ecological behaviour. The theory by Saeed et al. (2019) aligns with these observations, as it acknowledges that different firms possess distinctive structural attributes and resources, rendering standardised evaluation criteria arbitrary in certain cases. Additionally, for a public company, the evaluation criteria were imposed by the government and did not include environmental aspects, limiting the company's autonomy in shaping its evaluation process. Once again, Intysify stands out from the rest, as their environmental impact is already minimal, leaving little room for improvement, and consequently, there is no need for evaluation.

Hypothesis 7: The implementation of environmental evaluation criteria depends on the company's current situation, the progress in their ecological transition, their line of business, their structure, their workforce, and their priorities.

Dis-benefits were primarily applied through peer reprimands or managerial feedback when employees failed to comply with desirable behaviours. In some cases, persistent non-compliance could lead to termination. However, it is important to note that dismissal was often not solely based on non-compliance with environmental practices, but rather a combination of factors.

The research findings reveal that companies can utilise various methods, including financial or non-financial rewards and compensation, to motivate their employees in contributing to the company's environmental goals. However, as pointed out by Pham et al. (2019), some employees may already possess an intrinsic motivation to protect the environment. They might therefore not require any additional incentives. Additionally, Tang et al. (2018) assert that green rewards and compensation can play a vital role in retaining talented employees and attracting new talent. However, it is noteworthy that, during the interviews, the companies did not mention these incentives to be attractive for candidates, except for green travel benefits.

Companies can implement financial green rewards and compensations in the form of green travel benefits. These may include covering the cost of a public transport subscription, providing an allowance for employees choosing eco-friendly transportation methods for their daily commute, or offering extra days off for opting for environmentally friendly transportation options. Interestingly, the companies that did not offer green travel benefits had valid reasons for doing so. In some cases, the location of their offices did not allow for feasible green transportation methods for employees to commute. For other companies, the nature of their workforce limited the possibility of providing green travel benefits.

Hypothesis 8: The implementation of green travel benefits depends on accessibility of the location and particularity of the workforce¹⁹.

The green tax incentives in Belgium are unique due to the country's promotion of company cars. Recent governmental regulations have provided incentives for companies to opt for hybrid or electric cars, resulting in a notable uptake of these environmentally friendly vehicles by businesses.

¹⁹ For instance, disabled workers might not be able to use public transport or use a bike to come to work.

Companies have the option to provide individual or collective bonuses to their employees, depending on their preferences and bonus systems. The distribution of collective bonuses can be linked to the accomplishment of the company's green objectives, as this approach emphasises the shared responsibility of the entire organisation for its success. For instance, Eloy does not offer individual rewards as they aim to cultivate environmental consciousness as an ingrained norm within the organisation, where individuals naturally exhibit respect for the environment based on their values and beliefs, rather than being solely motivated by financial incentives. However, certain entities, such as public services, may not offer individual rewards and compensations, as it does not align with their organisational culture. Similarly, smaller, more informal companies may avoid individual rewards to avoid creating a sense of hierarchy among employees.

On the other hand, some companies do provide individual financial rewards in the form of individual bonuses, which employees can receive for achieving their objectives. Companies that do not offer individual bonuses may have various reasons, including their preference for using collective instead of individual rewards, not setting individual objectives, or having a structure that makes it challenging to evaluate the personnel for bonus allocation. Instead, such companies may distribute small informal bonuses for extraordinary behaviour.

Nevertheless, it is essential for companies to maintain consistency in their communication and information dissemination regarding green rewards to avoid scepticism among employees, as highlighted by Paillé et al. (2020). In cases where informal bonuses might lead to confusion or doubts, it may be preferable for companies to refrain from using them altogether.

Hypothesis 9: The implementation of collective or individual rewards depends on the company's structure and managerial preferences.

Companies have the option to combine financial incentives with non-financial rewards, which researchers widely recognise as one of the most effective ways to motivate employees (Tang et al., 2018). These non-financial rewards can take on more informal forms, such as peer recognition or public praise from the company for exemplary behaviour or innovative ideas. Additionally, companies can implement a more structured approach by presenting employees with awards or gifts for their exceptional environmental initiatives. The primary aim of these non-financial rewards is to instil a sense of pride in employees, a concept wholeheartedly encouraged by the theory, as it serves as a source of inspiration for further participation in eco-initiatives (Tang et al., 2018). By combining both financial and non-financial incentives, companies can create a well-rounded and motivational environment that encourages employees to actively engage in environmentally responsible practices. However, not many of the interviewed companies offer such rewards.

In general, it can be asserted that the majority of GHRM practices are implemented by diverse organisations, with certain practices being implemented more frequently than others.

The second part of the research question, which focuses on the influence of stakeholders on the implementation of GHRM practices, can be addressed by considering various perspectives. The interviewed companies reported that numerous stakeholders have an interest in their sustainability efforts, emphasising the importance of going beyond external regulations and voluntarily dedicating resources to fully implement corporate practices that foster environmental protection, as highlighted by Vázquez-Brust et al. (2022). Various stakeholders can exert pressure on companies to adopt GHRM practices. Responding to stakeholder demands can motivate companies to implement greener HRM practices. This pressure is important because according to scholars, companies find it challenging to incorporate sustainable practices unless they encounter pressure from stakeholders (Shahzad et al., 2023).

Among the stakeholders, employees and prospective workers were cited as having a significant influence on the application of GHRM practices. Employees, especially the younger generation, may prefer to work for companies with strong sustainability initiatives, and companies may respond to

this preference by adopting GHRM practices. However, companies need to be cautious in their sustainable actions to avoid greenwashing, as employees can be sensitive to insincerity.

Shareholders and owners of companies hold considerable power and can foster a culture of environmental consciousness within their organisations. When sustainability becomes a priority at the leadership level, it can pierce through all levels of the organisation, leading to effective implementation of green HRM practices and a positive impact on the environment. Nevertheless, the influence of individual stakeholders varies depending on the ownership structure of the company.

Management plays a critical role in the successful implementation of GHRM practices. Their commitment is of immense importance in driving organisational changes and integrating sustainability into corporate strategy and resource allocation according to Shahzad et al. (2023). Leading by example and demonstrating genuine dedication to sustainability can inspire the entire organisation to embrace environmentally responsible practices.

Banks can play a dual role in the implementation of GHRM practices, as stakeholders and as institutions. As institutions, they can influence the behaviour and practices of other companies through their financial regulations. Financial institutions can be influential stakeholders. They may screen companies based on their environmental performance and commitment to sustainability, affecting their access to funding and investment opportunities. GHRM practices can be seen as a positive signal to investors and lenders, leading to improved financial prospects.

Similarly, public investors adhere to established practices, guidelines, and norms that shape their investment decisions. As significant investors, these public institutions hold financial interests in the companies they invest in. As stakeholders, they maintain expectations concerning the companies' green practices, evaluating how these practices may influence the companies' long-term value and risk profile. Their financial interests align with their concern for the companies' performance and sustainability, making sustainability considerations vital in their investment strategies.

Institutions, including governments and regulatory bodies, also play a pivotal role in shaping HRM practices through environmental regulations. These regulations can drive companies to integrate environmentally friendly practices into their HRM strategies to comply with the law and avoid penalties.

Clients can significantly impact the implementation of GHRM practices, with B2B clients possibly exerting more influence through surveys, audits, and collective actions. As more clients demand sustainable practices from companies, organisations are more likely to adopt GHRM initiatives to remain competitive and meet clients' expectations.

Overall, although stakeholders might not explicitly request the implementation of GHRM practices, the pressure they exert on companies for greening indirectly influences the adoption of such practices. Studies have shown that both institutional and stakeholder pressures have a positive effect on the implementation of GHRM practices (Marrucci et al., 2023). However, companies must respond with a genuine and substantial commitment to the environment to avoid a loss of confidence due to symbolic gestures which would be perceived as greenwashing (Testa et al., 2018).

It is noteworthy that the literature does not unanimously agree on the relative power of different stakeholders. Some authors suggest that societal stakeholders, such as employees, may have more influence than market stakeholders like customers or financial institutions. Similarly, regulatory stakeholders, like the government, might not always hold significant power (Shahzad et al., 2023). In this research, societal stakeholders as well as market stakeholders were proven to have influence. Moreover, depending on the sector, the government also holds a lot of influence.

6. Conclusions and implications

This master thesis aimed to answer the research question on whether companies already implement GHRM practices and what influence stakeholders can have on their adoption. Through interviews with various companies, the study provided valuable insights into the diverse approaches taken by organisations in integrating GHRM practices and the role of stakeholders in driving sustainability within the workplace.

The literature review presented valuable insights into the realm of GHRM, examining its fundamental concepts, the significance of stakeholders, and the implications of GHRM practices. Initially, the review delved into the broader context of sustainability, subsequently narrowing its focus to explore GHRM practices. A comprehensive analysis of GHRM was conducted, unravelling its multifaceted dimensions. Within this framework, the review covered various GHRM practices, including green analysis and job description, green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance management and appraisal, and green rewards and compensations. In addition, the literature review focused on the stakeholder theory, also incorporating insights from the institutional theory to explore the connection between stakeholders and sustainability. It explained how stakeholder pressures can drive companies to adopt green practices, particularly GHRM practices. By synthesising these theoretical foundations, the literature review provided a framework for the empirical part of the master's thesis, enabling a comprehensive investigation into the implementation of GHRM practices and the role of stakeholders.

The empirical part delved further into the analysis of how companies in Belgium have actually implemented these practices in the real-world environment. Moreover, we explored what influence stakeholders can have on the sustainable actions and practices of companies and therefore indirectly also on GHRM practices. This was achieved through the conducting of semi-structured interviews with members of the HR departments of companies advertising themselves as green, as well as other participants considered relative to the study.

The research findings revealed that companies' motivations for embracing sustainability varied significantly. Some organisations demonstrated a deep-rooted commitment to environmental consciousness, incorporating green practices into their core values and business activities. Such companies viewed sustainability as integral to their mission and strategic plans, either due to their inherent green products or a genuine moral motive to protect the environment. On the other hand, some companies adopted sustainability practices in response to external pressures from society and stakeholders, perceiving environmental attention as an additional constraint. The distinction between companies driven by intrinsic moral motives and those influenced by instrumental or relational factors played a crucial role in shaping their sustainability initiatives.

Among the GHRM practices, the implementation of green analysis and job descriptions was dependent on the company's progress towards a more sustainable business and was influenced by the company's line of business, their company culture, and their priorities, which may not yet or may never include sustainability.

Similarly, green recruitment and selection were adopted through green selection criteria where the candidates' alignment with the company's ecological values was a condition for employment. However, the implementation of green selection criteria may be hindered by the company's current recruiting problems, the progress in their ecological transition, the particularity of their workforce, and again, their priorities. Companies that prioritised sustainability and environmental values in their core business practices were more inclined to incorporate green selection criteria to attract environmentally conscious job seekers. Green employer branding was another area explored in this

study, with some companies actively investing in promoting their sustainability initiatives to attract environmentally sensitive talent. Some companies did not need to work on their employer branding given that their line of business or products automatically created a green image of the company. However, other companies preferred to exercise caution in their green communication efforts to avoid greenwashing concerns and maintained authenticity and credibility in their sustainability efforts.

Regarding green training and development, the findings demonstrated the significance of providing employees with opportunities to acquire environmental protection skills, raise awareness of environmental issues, and participate in environmental initiatives. Green training was well-received by employees and reinforced their alignment with the company's environmental values. However, the implementation of training programs depended on the company's priorities and time availabilities, as some companies already had heavy training programs which prevented them from adding more trainings.

Furthermore, green performance management and appraisal practices were found to be adopted by certain companies, particularly those with strong environmental values. However, the full integration of environmental objectives into action plans for all staff members was not observed at any company. The implementation of green individual objectives depended on the company's line of business, their culture and preferences, and their priorities. Regarding environmental evaluation criteria, only a few companies evaluated their employees' environmental behaviour as part of their performance appraisal process. The adoption of environmental evaluation criteria was influenced by the company's current recruitment problems, the progress in their ecological transition, their line of business, their structure, the particularity of their workforce, and their priorities.

The study also explored green rewards and compensation, revealing that companies had the option to provide financial and non-financial incentives to motivate employees in improving their ecological behaviour and contributing to the company's environmental goals. Financial incentives, such as the green travel benefits that were offered by most companies, could however be hindered by the accessibility of their location or particularity of their workforce. Some companies also offered individual or collective bonuses for the achievement of green objectives. Their implementation depended on the company's managerial preferences. Other companies combined financial incentives with non-financial rewards, such as peer recognition or public praise. Moreover, the unique context of green tax incentives in Belgium was discussed, indicating the role of institutional stakeholders, such as the government, in driving environmentally responsible practices.

The research also shed light on the influence of stakeholders on the implementation of GHRM practices. Employees and prospective workers were found to play a significant role in driving companies to adopt GHRM practices, particularly the younger generations, who prioritise sustainability in their work environment. Management, shareholders, and owners also played a critical role in fostering a culture of environmental consciousness within organisations. Financial institutions, public investors, governments, regulatory bodies, and clients exerted indirect pressure on companies to adopt GHRM practices through financial regulations, sustainability considerations, and demands for sustainable practices.

To summarise, the implementation of GHRM practices varies for different companies, depending on their current situation, which is heavily influenced by economic conditions and recruitment challenges. Additionally, company culture plays a significant role in deciding whether certain practices should be adopted, as they must align with the company's values and culture. While sustainability is gaining importance, not all companies prioritise it enough to invest time and resources in adapting

their structures accordingly. Furthermore, the specific sector and line of business of a company can also impact the feasibility of certain GHRM practices.

Another key takeaway of this study is that the new generation entering the job market holds distinct views as consumers and employees compared to previous generations. Companies must accommodate these perspectives to remain competitive.

In conclusion, this master thesis provides valuable insights into the adoption of GHRM practices and how they are influenced by stakeholders. The research emphasises the necessity for companies to genuinely commit to sustainability and customise their sustainability initiatives based on their unique circumstances. As organisations increasingly prioritise sustainability due to stakeholder pressures, the responsible and effective implementation of GHRM practices can contribute to environmental protection and generate positive impacts. The hope is that these research insights will guide HR professionals in adopting sustainable HRM strategies and contribute to global efforts in addressing environmental challenges.

6.1. Limitations and future paths

A limitation might be that even though the saturation point was thought to be achieved, there might always be special sectors or companies that have not been taken into consideration that might give completely different answers compared to the companies interviewed. There might be other obstacles for the implementation of GHRM practices that have not been considered.

Furthermore, it is possible that certain companies engage in additional GHRM practices or possess other significant stakeholders who could impact their environmentally friendly initiatives. However, the interviewees might not have thought about these during the interview or might simply not know about them, and they are therefore not taken into consideration in this thesis.

Another limitation is the unfamiliarity of most people with the topic of GHRM practices. Apart from some exceptions, none of the interviewees had ever heard about this topic as it stays quite theoretical. Even though most studies on it have begun in 2018, it is known by hardly anybody. Therefore, it was difficult to find interviewees, as most people thought, they could not be of help for this topic, which in the end turned out not to be true.

An idea for future research could be the difference between the younger and older generations in the job market. It has been mentioned at several interviews that younger people bring change and pay a lot more attention to sustainable topics. It could be interesting to find out how these GHRM practices can differently affect different generations. Moreover, it could be interesting to see whether these practices are even useful for younger generations, given that they are already sensitive to the topic and do not need to be made aware of it.

It could also be interesting to see how these practices are applied at different companies from the same sector if all these companies are confronted with the same constraints.

Moreover, the hypotheses that have been concluded in the discussion part, are in no way proven by this thesis. Further research with empirical studies would need to be done to prove each one of them and they might absolutely not be true. It remains to be seen whether these obstacles can be universally applied.

Furthermore, greenwashing has been mentioned several times during this study by several different people. A study analysing the relationship between GHRM practices and greenwashing could be interesting to establish whether these practices even have a future.

7. Appendixes

7.1. Appendix A – Interview guide

1. Who takes care of the topic of sustainability at your company? Sustainability team, department, consultant, manager, officer, ...
2. Have you heard about Green Human Resource Management and its practices before?
3. Does your company engage in:
 - a. Green analysis and job description?
 - i. Designing job positions exclusively considering environmental aspects of the organisations
 - b. Green recruitment and selection?
 - i. Selecting candidate with environmental knowledge and awareness (through tests, ...)
 - ii. Using green branding to attract green employees
 - iii. Making candidates aware of organisations environmental goals during recruitment process
 - iv. Using online tools like video conferencing for recruitment
 - c. Green training and development?
 - i. Developing exclusive training programs on environmental management for employees
 - ii. Designing special workshops for energy management within the organisation
 - iii. Organising special training session for waste management and recycling
 - d. Green performance management and appraisal?
 - i. Using green performance indicators during appraisals (establish green criteria for instance for green incidents, green responsibilities, carbon emission reduction, waste reduction etc.)
 - ii. Setting green objectives and targets for employees
 - iii. Setting objectives for managers for green outcomes from employees
 - iv. Negative appraisal for noncompliance with environmental objectives
 - v. Regular feedback to employees to achieve environmental goals
 - e. Green rewards and compensations?
 - i. Green travel benefits to the employees
 - ii. Financial incentives and tax cuts (This refers to tax incentives for a greener company fleet for instance)
 - iii. Green recognition for environmental management (publicly recognising, rewarding in terms of gifts, vacations, time off etc.)
 - iv. Bonus pay for employees surpassing their environmental targets
 - v. Rewards for innovative environmental suggestion
 - vi. Green team excellence awards
4. Why did you decide to engage in GHRM and more specifically GHRM practices?
5. What specific factors influenced your decision to engage in these practices? Location, sector, size, management, etc.
6. What specific factors prevented you from implementing said GHRM practice?
7. What are you doing or planning to do to overcome these obstacles?
8. Who are the important stakeholders of your company that can have an influence on your sustainable practices?
9. Did the company's stakeholder have an influence on you choosing to engage in these practices? Did you receive any feedback from them about the practices?

10. Do you intend to implement more GHRM practices in the future?
11. Do you think that these practices help to improve the company's environmental performance?

7.2. Appendix B – Which companies engage in the GHRM practices

Table 3 – Which companies use green job description?

Attribute	Companies
Companies without green job descriptions	Citadelle Ecosteryl EVS LaCar MDx
Companies having jobs with some green aspects in the job description	Eloy Intysify Jean Del’Cour NMC Ortis Prayon,
Companies having jobs with green job descriptions	Eloy John Cockerill NMC SPW La Ville de Liège

Note. Own illustration.

Table 4 – Which companies use green selection criteria?

Attribute	Companies
Companies using green selection criteria for all positions²⁰	Ecosteryl Eloy Intysify LaCar MDx NMC
Companies not using green selection criteria for all positions²¹	Citadelle EVS Jean Del’Cour John Cockerill Ortis Prayon SPW La Ville de Liège

Note. Own illustration.

²⁰ They set conformity with the company's values as a condition for being hired.

²¹ They only use green criteria when the position requires it.

Table 5 – Which companies have a green employer branding?

Attribute	Companies
Companies working on their green employer branding	Citadelle Ecosteryl Eloy Intysify John Cockerill LaCar MDx NMC Prayon Ortis SPW
Companies not working on their green employer branding	EVS Jean Del’Cour La Ville de Liège

Note. Own illustration.

Table 6 – How do companies conduct their interviews?

Attribute	Companies
Companies conducting their interviews online	NMC Ortis
Companies conducting their interviews in person at the company	Eloy Intysify SPW La Ville de Liège
Companies conducting their interviews either online or in person depending on the position and the availability	Citadelle EVS Jean Del’Cour John Cockerill LaCar MDx Prayon
Companies conducting their interviews in a mixture of online and in person	Ecosteryl

Note. Own illustration.

Table 7 – Which companies organise green training?

Attribute	Companies
Companies not organising any training	Citadelle Ecosteryl LaCar MDx Ortis SPW
Companies organising mandatory training for everybody	Prayon EVS Intysify Jean Del’Cour
Companies only organising training for positions that require it	Eloy John Cockerill NMC Prayon La Ville de Liège
Companies offering trainings in their training catalogue	John Cockerill

Note. Own illustration.

Table 8 – Which companies organise workshops?

Attribute	Companies
Companies organising workshops	Citadelle Ecosteryl Eloy Jean Del’Cour LaCar MDx NMC
Companies not organising any workshops	EVS Intysify John Cockerill Ortis Prayon SPW La Ville de Liège

Note. Own illustration.

Table 9 – Which companies engage in green performance management and appraisal?

Attribute	Companies
Companies not engaging in any green performance management and appraisal	Citadelle Intysify Jean Del’Cour John Cockerill SPW La Ville de Liège
Companies setting green annual objectives for all/certain employees	Eloy EVS LaCar MDX Ortis NMC Prayon
Companies evaluating green behaviour	Ecosteryl Eloy

Note. Own illustration.

Table 10 – Which companies use financial green rewards and compensations?

Attribute	Companies
Companies offering green travel benefits	Citadelle Ecosteryl Eloy EVS Intysify John Cockerill NMC Prayon SPW La Ville de Liège
Companies offering individual bonuses	EVS NMC Ortis Prayon
Companies offering collective bonuses	Eloy LaCar MDx Prayon

Note. Own illustration.

Table 11 – Which companies offer non-financial green rewards and compensations?

Attribute	Companies
Companies not offering any non-financial recognition	EVS Intysify Jean Del’Cour LaCar MDx NMC Ortis Prayon SPW La Ville de Liège
Companies offering informal non-financial recognition	Citadelle Eloy John Cockerill
Companies offering formal non-financial recognition (awards)	Ecosteryl

Note. Own illustration.

7.3. Appendix C – Jean Del’Cour Colibri logo

Figure 11 – Logo Colibri



Note. Retrieved through the interview held with Dany Drion and Bernadette Marenne on the 24th of June 2023.

7.4. Appendix D – Intysify training catalogue

Figure 12 – Intysify training catalogue

INTYSIFY : PROJECT MANAGER

Corporate Social Responsibility

Introduction to Corporate Sustainability, Social Innovation and Ethics
5 tokens

Discovering Corporate Social Responsibility
15 tokens

Measuring Sustainable Development
5 tokens

Climate Action: Solutions for a Changing Planet
5 tokens

Innovative Environmental Management Models: Case Studies and Applications
10 tokens

40 tokens

Responsible Sourcing

Natural Resources for Sustainable Development
5 tokens

Critical Raw Materials: Managing resources for a sustainable future
10 tokens

15 tokens

Soft Skills:
Agile Innovation and Problem Solving Skills - 15 tokens
Mentoring Engineers with Impact - 5 tokens

Regulatory Framework

The UN Sustainable Development Goals: an Interdisciplinary Academic Introduction
5 tokens

How to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals
5 tokens

Transforming our world: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
5 tokens

15 tokens

INTYSIFY : BUSINESS ANALYST

Responsible Data & Business Analysis

Tech for Good: The Role of ICT in Achieving the SDGs
5 tokens

Storytelling with Data using Socio-Environmental Report Cards
10 tokens

Data Ethics, AI, and Responsible Innovation
5 tokens

Ethics in AI and Data Science
10 tokens

30 tokens

Regulatory Framework

The UN Sustainable Development Goals: an Interdisciplinary Academic Introduction
5 tokens

How to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals
5 tokens

Transforming our world: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
5 tokens

15 tokens

Soft Skills:
Agile Innovation and Problem Solving Skills - 15 tokens
Mentoring Engineers with Impact - 5 tokens

INTYSIFY : SUPPLY CHAIN



Sustainable Supply Chain

- Essential Tools for the Low Carbon Economy
15 tokens
- Waste Management and Critical Raw Materials
10 tokens
- Solid Waste Management
5 tokens
- Circular Economy: an Interdisciplinary Approach
10 tokens
- Circular Economy: an Introduction
5 tokens
- Procurement and Logistics Management
20 tokens
- System Design for Supply Chain Management and Logistics
5 tokens
- Intelligent and Integrated Energy Systems in Transition: an introduction for decision-makers
10 tokens

80 tokens

Responsible Sourcing

- Natural Resources for Sustainable Development
5 tokens
- Critical Raw Materials: Managing resources for a sustainable future
10 tokens

15 tokens

Waste Management & Packaging

- Waste Management and Critical Raw Materials
10 tokens
- Solid Waste Management
5 tokens
- Sustainable Packaging in a Circular Economy
10 tokens

25 tokens

Soft Skills:
Agile Innovation and Problem Solving Skills - 15 tokens
Mentoring Engineers with Impact - 5 tokens



RETAIL, FMCG & ENERGY: FINANCIAL CONTROLLER



YEAR 1:

Master the Technical Tools

- Introduction to Corporate Finance
15 tokens
- Finance Essentials
5 tokens
- Financial Reporting I
30 tokens
- Financial Analysis for Decision Making
10 tokens

55 tokens

YEAR 2:

Implement Improvements

- Corporate Finance
15 tokens
- Soft Skill: Avoid Crisis in a Team
5 tokens
- Soft Skill: Team Dynamics
5 tokens
- Soft Skill: Show Assertiveness
5 tokens
- Soft Skill: Give & Receive Feedback
5 tokens

35 tokens

Continuous Learning: Language Course - 30 tokens



INTYSIFY : FINANCIAL CONTROLLER



Sustainable Finance

Macroeconomics for a Sustainable Planet
5 tokens

5 tokens

Circular Economy

Circular Economy: an Interdisciplinary Approach
10 tokens

Circular Economy: an Introduction
5 tokens

Engineering Design for a Circular Economy
5 tokens

20 tokens

Soft Skills:
Agile Innovation and Problem Solving Skills - 15 tokens
Mentoring Engineers with Impact - 5 tokens



PROJECT MANAGER



YEAR 1:

Master the Technical Tools

Prince2 Foundation
35 tokens

MS Project (depending on project environment)
0 tokens

Lead A Meeting
5 tokens

Show Assertiveness
5 tokens

45 tokens

EXTRA: Best Practices for Project Management Success

10 tokens

Continuous Learning: Language Course - 30 tokens

YEAR 2:

Implement Improvements

Applied Scrum for Agile Project Management (depending on project environment)
10 tokens

Negotiation Skills
5 tokens

Drive Change
5 tokens

Improve Your Credibility
5 tokens

Give & Receive Feedback
5 tokens

30 tokens

YEAR 3:

Lead Your Project

Scrum Master Certification (depending on project environment)
10 tokens

Prince2 Practitioner
35 tokens

Adapt Your Style to Others
5 tokens

Set Motivating Objectives
5 tokens

55 tokens



BUSINESS ANALYST



YEAR 1:
Master the Technical Tools

- Simple Business Analysis
0 tokens
- Analyzing and Visualizing Data with Power BI
10 tokens
- Business and Data Analysis Skills
10 tokens

20 tokens

YEAR 2:
Implement Improvements

- MS Project
0 tokens
- Scrum Master Certification
10 tokens
- Show Assertiveness
5 tokens
- Drive Change
5 tokens
- Give & Receive Feedback
5 tokens

25 tokens

YEAR 3:
Lead Your Project

- Change Management Practitioner
35 tokens
- Improve Your Credibility
5 tokens
- Negotiation Skills
5 tokens

45 tokens

Continuous Learning: Language Course - 30 tokens



SUPPLY CHAIN



YEAR 1:
Master the Technical Tools

- Lean Yellow Belt
5 tokens
- Analyzing and Visualizing Data with Power BI
10 tokens
- MS Project (depending on project environment)
0 tokens
- Supply Chain Fundamentals
10 tokens
- Excel for Everyone: Data Management
10 tokens
- Lead a Meeting
5 tokens

45 tokens

YEAR 2:
Implement Improvements

- Lean Green Belt
35 tokens
- Supply Chain Design
10 tokens
- Show Assertiveness
5 tokens
- Set Motivating Objectives
5 tokens

55 tokens

YEAR 3:
Lead Your Project

- Supply Chain Dynamics
10 tokens
- Supply Chain Analytics
10 tokens
- Negotiation Skills
5 tokens
- Give & Receive Feedback
5 tokens
- Improve Your Credibility
5 tokens

45 tokens

Continuous Learning: Language Course - 30 tokens



Note. Retrieved through the interview with Karim Mebarki on the 26th of June 2023.

7.5. Appendix E – Car tax deduction

The government's objective is to phase out tax benefits for new company cars that are not carbon-neutral (including plug-in hybrids) so that they disappear from the fleet by 2026.

Table 12 – Car tax deduction

Véhicules commandés	Entre le 01/01/2023 et le 30/06/2023	Entre le 01/07/2023 et le 31/12/2025	Entre le 01/01/2026 et le 31/12/2026	A partir du 01/01/2027
Véhicules plug in hybrides	Déductibilité des frais d'essence et diesel limitée à 50 %		Plus de droit à déduction	
Véhicules à émission non zéro (y compris les plug in hybrides)	Régime de déductibilité actuel	Déductibilité progressivement réduite (à partir de l'année d'imposition 2026)		
Véhicules à émission zéro	Déductibilité à 100%			Déductibilité progressivement réduite

Note. From “Voitures de société : Nouveau régime fiscal et social à partir du 1er juillet 2023” by Securex, 2nd January 2023. <https://www.securex.be/fr/lex4you/employeur/actualites/voitures-de-societe-nouveau-regime-fiscal-et-social-a-partir-du-1er-juillet-2023>

7.6. Appendix F – Total Cost of Ownership

Employees have the right to a car in their remuneration package. Eloy wants to encourage their employees to choose electric cars, even over hybrid cars. Electric cars are much more expensive than internal combustion engine vehicles. For the same amount of money, you can have a way nicer thermal vehicle than an electric car.

To make electric cars more attractive they use the system of « total cost of ownership » or TCO. TCO takes into account not only the initial purchase price of a vehicle but also the overall costs incurred during its lifetime, including maintenance, fuel (or electricity in the case of electric cars), and other operating expenses.

While the upfront cost of electric cars may be higher than that of traditional internal combustion engine vehicles (thermal vehicles), their lower maintenance and fuel (electricity) costs over the years can balance out the initial investment. In some cases, electric cars with a higher purchase price may end up being more cost-effective in the long run due to their efficiency and reduced operational expenses.

By considering the TCO, companies can allocate a higher budget for purchasing electric cars, enabling their employees to choose eco-friendly vehicles without facing financial penalties. This approach encourages environmentally conscious choices and contributes to sustainability efforts while providing employees with the freedom to select vehicles that match their preferences.

In this way, the TCO approach helps shift the focus from merely comparing purchase prices to understanding the comprehensive financial impact of different vehicle options, ultimately promoting the adoption of electric cars and supporting environmentally responsible choices.

7.7. Appendix G – Which companies mentioned which stakeholders?

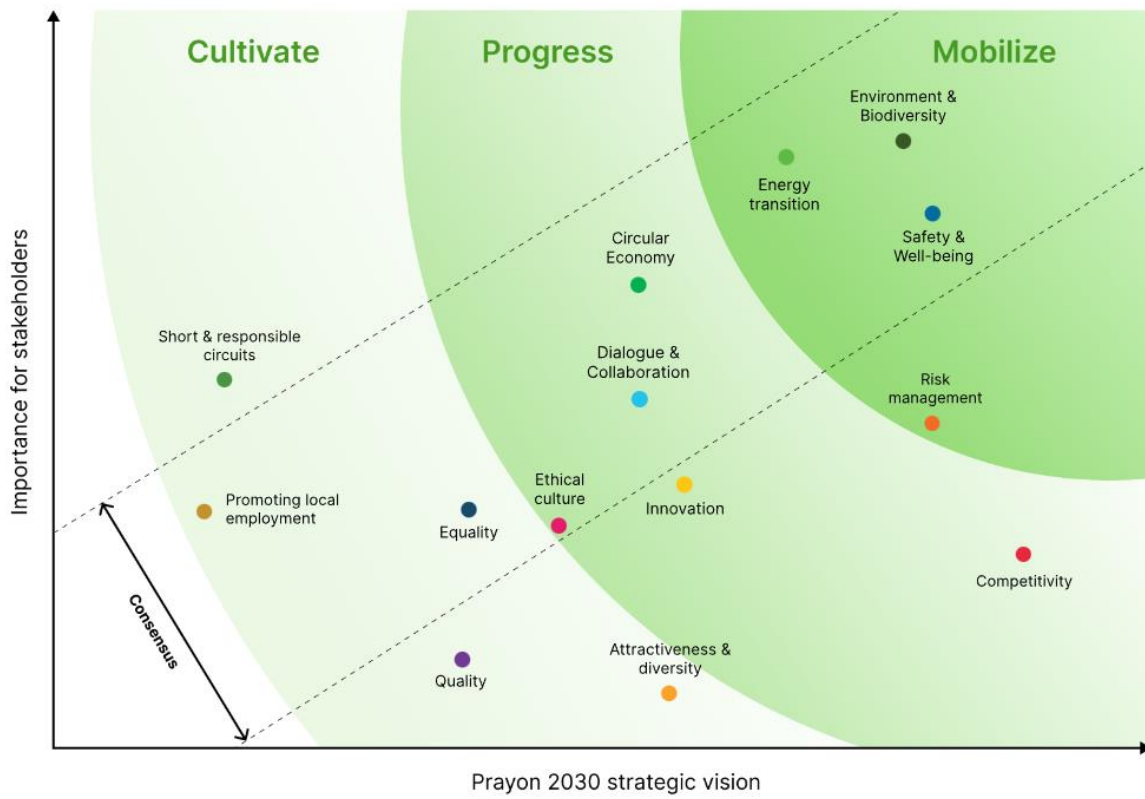
Table 13 – Which companies mentioned which stakeholders?

Organisation	Stakeholders
Citadelle	Employees La Ville de Liège Schools University of Liège Suppliers General practitioners Other hospitals ...
Ecosteryl	Shareholders Management
Eloy	Family shareholders Management Employees Government
EVS	Clients Employees Investors Shareholders Management
Intysify	Clients Founder Employees
Jean Del'Cour	Banks Public investors Clients
John Cockerill	Clients Management Board
LaCar MDx	CEO
NMC	Clients (Future) employees
Ortis	Management Board Government
Prayon	Clients Banks (See Materiality Matrix in Appendix G)
SPW	Employees Government Walloon companies
Le Ville de Liège	City dwellers Congregational college Town council Mayor

Note. Own illustration.

7.8. Appendix H – Prayon’s materiality matrix

Figure 13 – Prayon materiality matrix



Note. Retrieved through the interview with Vincent Quinet on the 25th of May 2023.

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9. Executive Summary

Human activities have left a profound impact on the environment, leading to resource depletion and pollution, which in turn have aggravated environmental problems. With the escalating concerns surrounding climate change, global warming, and mounting pressures from various stakeholders, sustainability has emerged as a focal point for organisations. In response to this mounting pressure, companies have begun adopting green practices, among which Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices. Despite the significance of GHRM practices, empirical research in this relatively new field remains limited. Consequently, this master's thesis aims to address the lack of research in this specific context by investigating on whether companies implement these practices and identifying potential obstacles that prevent them from doing so. Additionally, the study will emphasise the importance of stakeholders in driving the adoption of GHRM practices, helping organisations respond effectively to their stakeholders' greening pressures.

The literature review delved into a comprehensive analysis of GHRM, unravelling its multifaceted dimensions. The review covered various GHRM practices, including green analysis and job description, green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance management and appraisal, and green rewards and compensations. In addition, the literature review focused on the stakeholder theory, also incorporating insights from the institutional theory to explore the connection between stakeholders and sustainability. It explained how stakeholder pressures can drive companies to adopt green practices, particularly GHRM practices.

The empirical part of the thesis focuses on semi-structured interviews with HR manager or other relevant participants of Belgian companies. The implementation of GHRM practices varies for different companies, depending on their current situation, which is heavily influenced by economic conditions and recruitment challenges. Additionally, company culture plays a significant role in deciding whether certain practices should be adopted, as they must align with the company's values and culture. While sustainability is gaining importance, not all companies prioritise it enough to invest time and resources in adapting their structures accordingly. Furthermore, the specific sector and line of business of a company can also impact the feasibility of certain GHRM practices. The research also shed light on the influence of stakeholders on the implementation of GHRM practices. Employees and prospective workers were found to play a significant role in driving companies to adopt greener HRM practices, particularly the younger generation, who prioritise sustainability in their work environment. Management, shareholders, and owners also played a critical role in fostering a culture of environmental consciousness within organisations. Financial institutions, public investors, governments, regulatory bodies, and clients exerted indirect pressure on companies to adopt GHRM practices through financial regulations, sustainability considerations, and demands for sustainable practices.

In conclusion, this master thesis provides valuable insights into the adoption of GHRM practices and how they are influenced by stakeholders. The research emphasises the necessity for companies to genuinely commit to sustainability and customise their sustainability initiatives based on their unique circumstances. As organisations increasingly prioritise sustainability due to stakeholder pressures, the effective implementation of GHRM practices can contribute to environmental protection and generate positive impacts. The hope is that these research insights will guide HR professionals in adopting green HRM strategies and contribute to global efforts in addressing environmental issues.

Key words: *Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices, sustainable HRM, green analysis and job description, green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance management and appraisal, green rewards and compensations, Stakeholder Theory, Green Stakeholder Pressure.*

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