

Exploring the Implementation and Outcomes of Green House Resource Management: A Case Study of an Oil and Gas Firm in Northeast India

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices in a multinational oil and gas company in Northeast India. The purpose is to identify the environmental, managerial, and behavioural factors influencing the adoption of GHRM within the oil and gas industry, which is characterised by a large carbon footprint. Grounded in institutional theory, stakeholder theory, and social exchange theory, an exploratory qualitative case study design was adopted. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured open-ended surveys, and focus group discussions involving HR, CSR, HSE (Health, Safety and Environment) managers, executives, and trade-union representatives drawn from 33 respondents across managerial levels and departments. Thematic analysis and triangulation were applied to identify key constructs and drivers. Findings reveal that cultural transformation, employee engagement, and top-management commitment are central to effective GHRM adoption. The initiatives examined — such as paperless biometric attendance, clay-bottle substitution, corporate eco-gifting, and carpooling — improved environmental awareness, reduced waste, and enhanced employee discipline. The study also critically reflects on the risk of symbolic greenwashing and the structural tensions inherent in implementing sustainability in a carbon-intensive industry. The study concludes that embedding GHRM in organisational culture can yield sustained economic, social, and ecological benefits.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Environmental Sustainability, Green HRM (GHRM), Oil and Gas Sector, Qualitative Case Study.

Introduction

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) represents the integration of environmental management principles into human resource practices to promote sustainability at the organisational level. In the Indian context, GHRM is still in its developmental stage, where organisations are gradually transitioning from profit-centric models toward sustainability-oriented strategies. The increasing global awareness of climate change, coupled with international policy commitments such as the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has accelerated the need for organisations to adopt environmentally responsible practices (1). This is especially significant for the oil and gas sector, which is often criticised for producing substantial waste and contributing to a large carbon footprint. The human resource (HR) function plays a critical role in enabling this transformation, as it manages organisational

culture, employee engagement, and learning processes that drive sustainable behavioural change (2, 3). The relationship between green workplace behaviour and employee health has been described as cyclical: eco-friendly work environments enhance well-being, while poor environmental practices exacerbate stress, absenteeism, and reduced productivity (4). Given the growing significance of environmental sustainability in Asian economies, it becomes imperative to study GHRM adoption within this region's unique socio-cultural and industrial landscape. This paper presents an exploratory qualitative case study of a multinational oil and gas service company in Northeast India to assess its environmental HR practices, challenges, and driving factors. The present study draws on three complementary theoretical perspectives to explain GHRM uptake and resistance in a carbon-intensive industry. Stakeholder theory highlights that organizations must balance the divergent interests

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(Received 12th March 2026; Accepted 17th June 2026; Published 18th July 2026)

iof shareholders, employees, communities, and regulators when implementing sustainability initiatives (5). GHRM serves as a bridging mechanism through which HR functions can respond to both internal (employee) and external (regulatory, community) stakeholder demands. Social exchange theory posits that employees who perceive organisational investments in their welfare and sustainability—through green training, recognition, and empowerment—reciprocate with higher levels of green organisational citizenship behaviour (6). The resource-based view (RBV) further contextualises GHRM as a source of sustained competitive advantage when green competencies are rare, inimitable, and embedded in organisational routines (7). Together, these frameworks inform both the drivers of GHRM adoption and the structural barriers to full implementation in organisations whose core operations remain fossil-fuel-dependent.

Concept of GHRM

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) encompasses HR policies and practices that foster environmental sustainability through employee involvement (8). GHRM has been defined as the incorporation of environmental consciousness into all HR processes — recruitment, development, appraisal, and reward systems—to build a workforce that supports eco-friendly initiatives (9). It has also been characterised as the implementation of HRM strategies that advance social, financial, and environmental agendas while mitigating negative ecological impacts (10). Greening HR has further been described as involving the design of policies to preserve organisational knowledge while ensuring ecological and economic efficiency (11).

Role of Employees in GHRM

Making an organisation green begins with making its employees green. Four green roles — preservationist, conservationist, non-polluter, and creator — have been proposed, supported by competencies, attitudes, behaviours, and results (12). A positive correlation between green competencies and sustainable behaviours has been identified, suggesting that training and skill development are key drivers of environmental engagement (13). Positive employee attitudes, shaped by affective and cognitive dimensions, influence willingness to participate in green

initiatives (14). Organisational citizenship behaviours—such as eco-helping and eco-civic actions—further enhance sustainability both within and beyond the workplace (15).

Integrating Green Practices into HR Functions

The linkage between HR functions and environmental management has been underscored across multiple studies. The role of green training in fostering environmental management has been highlighted (16), while three key HR components have been identified: developing green talent, motivating employees through evaluation and rewards, and fostering engagement via empowerment and culture (13). GHRM's influence on job design, recruitment, and performance management through the AMO (Ability-Motivation-Opportunity) framework has been empirically confirmed (17). Core GHRM practices have been classified as green recruitment, green appraisal, green reward systems, and employee participation (11).

Scope and Drivers of GHRM

Modern organisations employ GHRM to minimise carbon footprints through digitalisation, telecommuting, waste reduction, and eco-friendly infrastructure (18, 19). Practices such as paperless documentation, energy-efficient systems, and corporate recycling initiatives enhance operational sustainability (20). Moreover, GHRM aligns with global trends in green building, renewable energy, and sustainable corporate governance (21). Collectively, these practices reflect a paradigm shift from reactive compliance to a proactive environmental approach, positioning GHRM as a vital component of organisational strategy.

Greenwashing and Structural Tensions in Carbon-intensive Industries

A critical consideration in GHRM research, particularly in high-emission sectors such as oil and gas, is the risk of symbolic greenwashing — the projection of an environmentally responsible image without substantive transformation of core operations. This perception can undermine trust, reduce genuine employee engagement, and erode the legitimacy of GHRM programmes (5). Furthermore, there exists a fundamental structural mismatch between the rhetoric of organisational sustainability and the operational reality of fossil-

fuel-dependent business models. Oil and gas firms face an inherent tension: their commercial purpose generates the very environmental harm that GHRM claims to mitigate.

Methodology

Background of the Study

The present case study explores the implementation of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices within one of the world's largest oilfield service companies—a multinational energy technology corporation committed to advancing innovation for a sustainable planet. The company operates extensively in the upstream oil and gas sector across Northeast India and employs approximately 1,156 personnel across exploration sites and corporate bases. The sector's inherently high environmental impact, including emissions, waste generation, and occupational risks, makes it a critical context for analysing green HRM adoption. This study examines how GHRM practices have been designed and embedded within the organisation's policies to mitigate adverse environmental impacts and align with sustainable development goals (SDG-2030).

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding this case study is: Why were the organisation's GHRM initiatives only partially successful despite adequate resources and management support? Supporting sub-questions include:

- a) What are the key driving forces influencing the implementation of GHRM in the select organisation?
- b) How do specific green HR initiatives affect employee engagement, discipline, and environmental awareness in the select organisation?
- c) What organisational and cultural factors contribute to the partial success or failure of these initiatives?

Organizational Context

The company, part of a global MNC, operates in a complex ecosystem where environmental management is intertwined with regulatory compliance, community welfare, and operational efficiency. The Indian branch, located in the Northeastern region, plays a vital role in upstream operations including drilling, exploration, and field support. Management's sustainability agenda aligns with international frameworks such as the

UN SDG-2030 and the G20 Green Business Charter, emphasizing eco-friendly workplace conduct and corporate accountability. The HR department serves as a strategic agent for greening initiatives, promoting awareness campaigns, and introducing sustainability-linked HR practices. With respect to green performance indicators, the organisation has integrated environmental criteria into its recruitment screening, induction training, annual performance appraisal, and recognition/reward programmes. However, formal green metrics in promotion decisions and remuneration structures remain nascent, representing an area for further development.

GHRM Initiatives Implemented in the Organisation

Several key initiatives were launched under the GHRM programme to integrate environmental responsibility into HR and administrative functions:

- a) **Paperless Biometric Attendance System:** A biometric system was implemented as a GHRM initiative. Faster authentication reduces time theft and buddy punching, while encouraging paperless attendance documentation.
- b) **Permanent Tea Mugs in Place of Disposable Cups:** Excellent-quality permanent tea mugs were distributed to all employees. The concept was an initial success, but it was subsequently observed that top management demonstrated carelessness in consistently using the mugs.
- c) **Leaf-Made Plates and Crockery:** As demand for traditional leaf crockery grows among business organisations, leaf-made plates were adopted for canteens and field operations. Leaf plates can be composted and decomposed naturally.
- d) **Clay Water Bottles and 20-litre Refill Jars:** Single-use plastic bottles were replaced with clay bottles and larger refill jars to minimise waste and promote sustainable hydration practices.
- e) **Eco-Friendly Corporate Gifts:** The organisation adopted biodegradable gifts such as potted plants and reusable materials for corporate events and recognition programmes.
- f) **Carpooling and Proximity-based Accommodation:** A structured carpooling plan was implemented for staff commuting to remote sites, significantly reducing the organisation's fuel consumption and emissions.

Research Design

A qualitative exploratory case study design was adopted following framework adopted in prior studies for investigating complex organisational phenomena within real-life contexts (22). This design enabled the researchers to analyse lived experiences, organisational behaviour, and implementation dynamics over one year. Data were collected from October 2022 to January 2023 using three triangulated qualitative methods: observations, semi-structured surveys, and focus group discussions (FGDs).

Sampling and Participants

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants with direct involvement in sustainability and HR processes (23). Of 72 targeted employees, 33 respondents participated (response rate: 46%). The sample was distributed across managerial levels and functional departments as follows: three HR managers, one CSR manager, two HSE (Health, Safety and Environment) officers, two senior executives from top management, one mental health professional, two employee representatives, and one trade union member for the FGD component; and additional responses from mid-level managers, field supervisors, and administrative staff via the survey instrument.

This composition ensured representation across

HR, HSE, CSR, executive, union, and operational stakeholder categories.

Data Collection Procedures

Observation, Surveys, and Focus Group Discussions were organised to explore views, perceptions, and experiences regarding challenges of Green HRM practice implementation. FGD encourages the free exchange of ideas and experiences (24, 25). The implementation of these procedures is described in detail as given below:

Observation

One of the authors (simultaneously an employee within the HR division of the organisation) and a colleague conducted systematic observations at oil and gas exploration field sites and three office bases between October 2022 and January 2023. Observations were conducted during daily activities across varying times and locations — morning, afternoon, and end-of-shift periods — on a frequency of approximately three visits per week across each site. A covert observation strategy was adopted whereby subjects were unaware of being observed. Field notes documented how employees interacted with GHRM initiatives, used eco-friendly products, and engaged in environmentally sustainable behaviours. Observations are presented in Figures 1A-1C as categorised field-note summaries organised by site and initiative type.

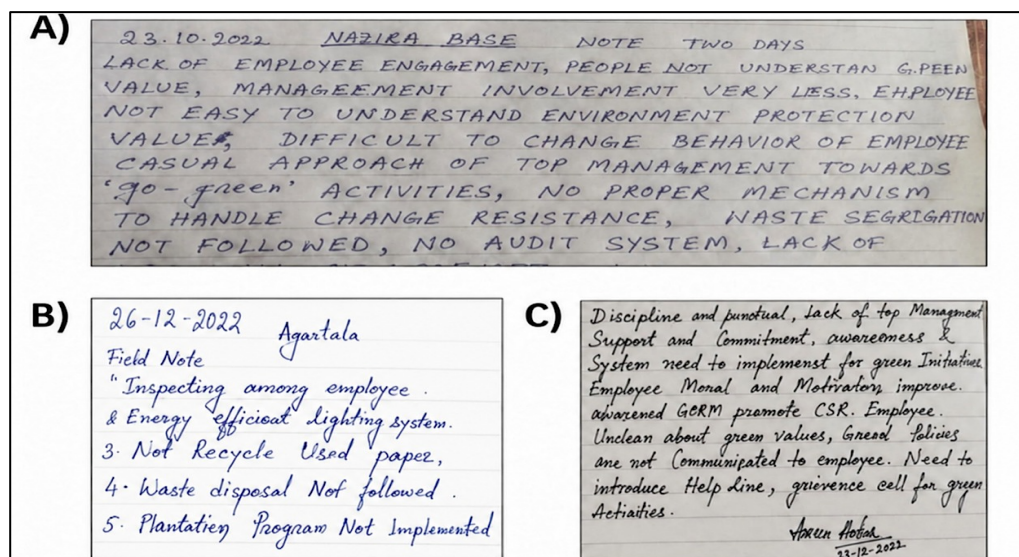


Figure 1: Images of Observation Field Notes. (A) Field Note on Employee and Management Behavior Towards Green Initiative at Site A, (B) Field Note on Initiative Like Carpooling at Site B, (C) Managerial Barriers and Employee Barriers Observed at Site C

Semi-structured Surveys

An email containing two semi-structured open-ended questions was circulated to 72 persons in the targeted population. Thirty-three email responses were received. Thematic saturation was reached at fourteen responses, as no new insight emerged from the remaining emails. Survey responses were incorporated into the thematic analysis by extracting recurring phrases and coding them alongside FGD and observational data, enabling cross-source triangulation. The two questions asked were: a) What are the benefits of environmental sustainability activities? and b) List the factors that can help the successful implementation of 'go-green' and 'eco-friendly' activities in your organisation. The responses of the respondents were analysed line by line, to identify patterns and themes.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus groups are perceived as less intimidating by many research participants, and this setting is beneficial for participants to express perceptions, ideas, opinions, and thoughts (24, 25). The focus group discussion was held on the office premises, at participants' convenience and after they had gained expertise in environmental management. A focus group discussion guide was prepared in advance. Twelve of the fourteen targeted participants were present. Five participants were seated around a table, while the remainder joined virtually, given the organisation's spread across the northeastern region. The focus group constituted twelve participants: three from Human Resources, one from CSR, two from Health Safety and Environment, two executives from top management, one mental health professional, two employee representatives, and one trade union member. One author served as moderator, supported by two assistant moderators. All focus group discussion data were transcribed into Word documents for analysis.

Data Analysis

Handwritten observation field notes were digitally transcribed. Transcripts were thoroughly read to understand the meaning of initial data through repeated reading (26, 27). Following Hsieh and Shannon's qualitative content analysis approach, recurring themes were identified and coded through an inductive process, with particular attention to deeper thematic patterns rather than reliance on frequency visualisation alone (28).

Triangulation was used to cross-validate insights across observations, surveys, and FGDs (29, 30).

Results and Discussion

The triangulated analysis of observations, survey responses, and focus group discussions revealed a comprehensive set of outcomes and driving factors associated with Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) implementation in the oil and gas organisation.

Impacts of GHRM Implementation

- a) **Environmental and Organisational Impact (Planet):** The organisation demonstrated measurable progress in reducing waste, energy use, and plastic dependency. These outcomes align with findings emphasising that GHRM fosters a pro-environment mindset through operational design and behavioural reinforcement (13, 31–33).
- b) **Employee-centered Impacts (People):** Employee responses and observations indicated that GHRM practices enhanced workplace discipline in the context of punctuality, environmental behaviour, and accountability via biometric systems, motivation, and satisfaction. Programmes encouraging green behaviour improved health outcomes and psychological well-being (34–37). Increased job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour toward sustainability have been empirically demonstrated (15).
- c) **Strategic and Economic Impact (Profit):** The GHRM initiatives produced financial and reputational benefits. Cost savings were achieved through waste reduction and digital systems. GHRM has been associated with long-term profitability through efficiency and corporate goodwill (38, 39), and with strengthening CSR alignment with business outcomes (40).

Driving Forces of GHRM

Implementation

- a) **Leadership and Management Commitment:** Transformational leadership emerged as a decisive factor in GHRM success. When top management modelled eco-conscious behaviours — such as using non-disposable materials or promoting carpooling — employees were more likely to participate voluntarily. Conversely, inconsistent

managerial adherence led to partial adoption. These findings resonate with evidence emphasising the role of leaders as sustainability champions (41, 42).

- b) **Green Organisational Culture:** A shared environmental culture within the organisation was vital for sustaining initiatives. Employees who perceived environmental values as integral to organisational identity displayed higher participation levels. The importance of cultivating a green mindset across departments to achieve systemic change has similarly been highlighted (43, 44).
- c) **Employee Empowerment and Participation:** Empowerment practices—such as green suggestion schemes, problem-solving sessions, and team-based initiatives—helped employees take ownership of environmental outcomes. Participatory mechanisms have been confirmed to enhance sustainability through shared responsibility (45).
- d) **Learning and Development (Green Competence Building):** Green training and induction programmes significantly improved environmental awareness (46). The organisation conducted workshops on sustainable processes, emphasising the practical implications of green policies.
- e) **Regulatory and Institutional Influences:** External drivers, including environmental regulations, reinforced organisational motivation for adopting GHRM (47).

Challenges and Barriers

Despite progress, the study found several constraints that hindered full implementation of GHRM initiatives. Limited training accessibility led to uneven understanding of green practices. Human factors frequently determined implementation success (48–50). Importantly, certain employees reported that some green projects were

perceived as inconvenient or impractical — not because of a lack of environmental knowledge, but due to operational demands, workload pressures, and insufficient behavioural reinforcement mechanisms. For instance, the permanent tea mug initiative faced non-compliance not from ignorance of its environmental value but from the friction of maintaining and carrying personal items during field operations. These findings suggest that GHRM design must account for operational convenience and behavioural nudges alongside awareness and culture. Additionally, the structural contradiction inherent in a fossil-fuel-based organisation pursuing green credentials raised perceptions among some employees that initiatives were symbolic rather than substantive—a green-washing concern that should be explicitly addressed in management communication and sustainability reporting.

Theory Development from the Study

An approach for analysing case studies was drawn to generate the following theoretical propositions: (a) skill transformation through GHRM, whereby employees acquire transferable environmental competencies and creative problem-solving abilities; and (b) behavioural regulation through technology, where biometric and digital systems foster accountability and punctuality (51).

Proper time management has been highlighted as enabling employees to spend leisure time with family as shown in Figure 2. The possibility of work–life balance as an outcome of green HRM practice has been noted (52). Through developing green workplace culture and green staff who care about environmental challenges, GHRM serves as an instrumental strategy that aids businesses in achieving their environmental objectives (9, 53, 54). The impact of green HRM practices on employees' pro-environmental behaviour is demonstrated in Figure 3 (55).

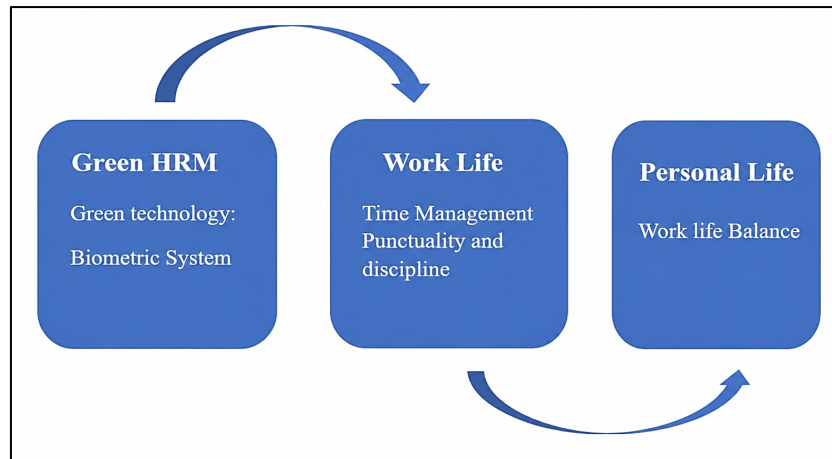


Figure 2: How Green HRM Leads to Work Life Balance

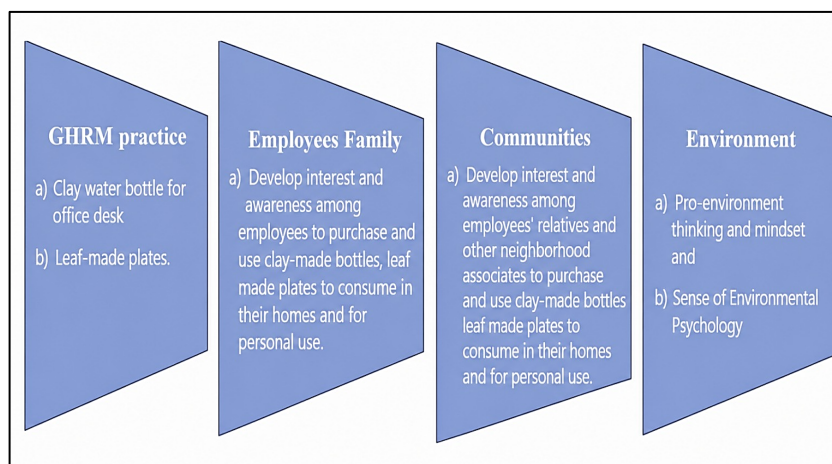


Figure 3: Green HRM Practice Transmit Through Individual to Society to Create Positive Impact on Environment

Synthesis of Findings

Table 1 presents a comprehensive synthesis of the key findings regarding the implementation of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) across various organizational domains. Table 1 categorizes the core outcomes into environmental, social, and economic impacts, highlighting specific

benefits such as reduced energy use, enhanced employee morale, and improved cost efficiency. Furthermore, it summarizes the critical driving forces enabling these initiatives, including leadership support and training, alongside the primary challenges encountered, such as behavioral resistance and resource gaps.

Table 1: Synthesis of GHRM Findings Across Impact Domain

Impact Domain	Key Findings	References
Environmental	Reduced waste, pollution, and energy use; improved sustainability culture	(10, 32)
Social	Enhanced discipline, health, morale, and engagement	(20, 35)
Economic	Cost efficiency, CSR alignment, competitive advantage	(39, 40)
Driving Forces	Leadership support, culture, training, regulation	(42, 48)
Challenges	Behavioral resistance, inconsistency, resource gaps	(49, 50)

Conclusion

This case study examined the implementation of GHRM practices in a multinational oil and gas service company in Northeast India. Using a qualitative exploratory approach grounded in

institutional theory, stakeholder theory, and social exchange theory, and drawing on observation, semi-structured surveys, and focus group discussions, the study identified how GHRM

practices promote sustainable environmental management and enhance organisational performance.

The findings demonstrate that GHRM practices — such as paperless operations, waste reduction, eco-friendly procurement, and carpooling— generate positive outcomes across environmental, social, and economic dimensions. These initiatives fostered employee discipline, green awareness, and innovation, while simultaneously reducing resource wastage and improving organisational reputation. Two unique contributions emerged:

- (a) skill transformation through GHRM, in which employees acquire transferable environmental competencies and creative problem-solving abilities; and
- (b) behavioural regulation through technology, where biometric and digital systems foster accountability and punctuality.

Together, these outcomes highlight that GHRM functions as both a sustainability mechanism and a behavioural management tool.

However, the study also surfaces a more critical dimension. The structural contradiction between fossil-fuel-based operations and green HR rhetoric creates conditions in which employees may perceive sustainability initiatives as performative rather than genuine. This greenwashing risk is compounded by the fact that the most significant environmental impacts of an oilfield services company — emissions, habitat disruption, and resource depletion — lie largely outside the reach of HR-level interventions. Successful GHRM in carbon-intensive industries must therefore move beyond peripheral initiatives toward embedding sustainability in core operational strategy, and must be communicated with transparency to avoid legitimacy deficits.

Successful implementation depends on consistent managerial commitment, continuous training, attention to operational convenience, and a strong organisational culture of sustainability. In industries like oil and gas — characterised by high environmental risk — the integration of GHRM can play a transformative role in aligning operational goals with global sustainability mandates such as the UN SDG-2030 and the G20 Green Business Charter.

This study offers several practical implications for industry practitioners, particularly in resource-intensive sectors. For example, HR departments

can incorporate sustainability principles into recruitment, training, and performance evaluation systems for positive impact on triple bottom line, i.e., people, planet and profits. Further, the study demonstrated that to implement GHRM initiatives in the organisation, it is important for senior management to model green behaviours and reinforce them through recognition and reward programmes. Also, it was observed that continuous training and orientation on eco-friendly practices can help employees internalise environmental values. The study also found that suggestion schemes, volunteer programmes, and collaborative problem-solving in sustainability issues can increase employee engagement. Another important insight from the study was that eco-friendly digital systems such as biometric tracking can enhance transparency and behavioural consistency.

Despite the study's contributions, several limitations need to be acknowledged. The research was conducted within a single organisation, which may limit generalisability to other sectors or regions. Data collection spanned only four months, potentially excluding long-term behavioural changes. Future studies could mitigate these limitations through multi-industry comparisons, longitudinal data collection, and mixed-method approaches.

Abbreviations

AMO: Ability-Motivation-Opportunity, CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility, FGD: Focus Group Discussion, GHRM: Green Human Resource Management, HR: Human Resources, HSE: Health, Safety and Environment, ILO: International Labour Organization, MNC: Multinational Corporation, RBV: Resource-based View, SDG: Sustainable Development Goals.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the editor and anonymous reviewers for their comments, which helped improve the quality of this work.

Author Contributions

Nandan Dhara: Conceptualisation, Data Collection, Field Observation, Original Draft Preparation, Akashdeep Joshi: Methodology, Supervision, Review and Editing, Ayesha Khatun: Literature Review, Review and Editing, Preet Kanwal: Data Analysis, Review and Editing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest for this publication.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to organisational confidentiality agreements.

Declaration of Generative AI

Technologies

During the preparation of this work the author(s) used generative AI to improve the language of the article. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Ethics Approval

The respondents of the study were informed about the purpose of the study and asked to participate voluntarily. Ethical approval to conduct the study was obtained from the organizational ethics committee.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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How to Cite: Dhara N, Joshi A, Khatun A, Kanwal P. Exploring the Implementation and Outcomes of Green House Resource Management: A Case Study of an Oil and Gas Firm in Northeast India. *Int Res J Multidiscip Scope*. 2026;7(3):1109-1119. DOI: 10.47857/irjms.2026.v07i03.012309