



CRAFTING GREEN CULTURE AROUND THE COMPONENTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Sustainability is the new hallmark for the dynamically changing business environment, including the education sector. The demand for sustainable management in the higher education industry is even more since the sector not only produces graduates with the environmentally conscious attitude but also contributes in the economic development of the country. It is therefore pertinent to explore the efforts of the higher education industry towards sustainable management in a challenged society of Pakistan, amidst the global demand for achieving SDGs. Hence, this research aims at exploring the components and challenges of green culture as an indicator of sustainable management in the Higher Education Institutes through phenomenological research design. 11 in-depth interviews were conducted from the policy makers at the governing body of the Higher Education Commission and the institutional leaders in the institutes across Pakistan. Thematic analysis revealed that environmental concern among leaders, curriculum design and decent work are key components of green culture among the higher education institutes in Pakistan. Furthermore, the cultural and regulatory factors have been identified as significant challenges while developing the green culture. This research offers insightful findings for policy makers in the higher education industry for a sustainable work environment in socio-economically



challenged societies like Pakistan. In addition, the novel findings of this research also contribute to the existing literature by offering meaningful future research directions for empirical investigation. Potentially, this research addresses the contribution of the Higher Education Commission towards SDG 8 related to decent work and economic growth in Pakistan.

Keywords: Green Culture, Sustainable Management, Decent Work, SDGs, Green HRM

Introduction

The SDG 8 of decent work and economic growth, based on the decent work agenda of International Labor Organization (ILO), is a centerpiece for the contemporary HR practitioners in order to ensure inclusive, well-paid and healthy jobs and sustainable working environment (ILO, 2012; Seubert et al., 2021). However, attainment of SDG 8 seems invincible amidst the worsening economic crisis in the post-Covid world (Hughes et al., 2021; United Nations, 2022). In addition, the unprecedented environmental crisis have been challenging the profit and non-profit organizations for taking sustainable management interventions in order to reduce the organizational carbon footprint (Aboramadan, 2020). Among such interventions for sustainability, the Green HRM (GHRM) practices play crucial role in creating decent jobs, offer better working conditions, ensure employee well-being and create a safe and equitable culture for employees (Podgorodnichenko et al., 2022). Among common GHRM practices, creation of a green culture has been reported to yield multiple benefits in terms of employees' proenvironmental behavior (Lasrado & Zakaria, 2020), green engagement (Qu et al., 2021) and improved organizational performance (Wang, 2019). The development of green culture is an important sustainable initiative for environmental consciousness of the organizations and its employees (Wang, 2019). The onus of creating a green culture is even greater in the higher education industry (Aboramadan, 2020; Scully-Russ, 2013). The products of this industry are environmentally conscious graduates with an ethical understanding of their actions and decisions towards environment. Despite of the growing interest of the companies towards GHRM, the focus on building a "green culture" particularly in the developing economies seems to be in initial phases (Lasrado & Zakaria, 2020). Thus, it is pertinent to explore the efforts of the higher education industry towards creating a sustainable culture in a challenged society of Pakistan, with a nuanced focus on SDG 8 of decent work.

The term "green culture" has been described in the literature as shared beliefs and values of organizations that are reflected in the organizational mission and policies designed in an environmentally sustainable manner (Li et al., 2019; Wang, 2019). Thus, the green culture is visible through the employees' actions pertaining to conservation of resources, green innovation and environmental management in particular (Yunguo, 2009). It is imperative to understand that culture is a deep rooted phenomenon which is not merely confined to the discussion of firm's environmentally safe products and strategies. Notably, green culture is beyond firm's eco-friendly



initiatives and efforts to reduce pollution (Pan et al., 2022). Researchers including Norton et al (2021) have studied the organizational green culture in the context of green ergonomics for understanding relationship between office layout and employee well-being and performance. Pan et al (2022) established empirical evidence for interplay among green culture and CSR in cultivating proenvironmental behavior among employees beyond the organizational setting. Thus, the organizational green culture may help in transforming societal values and behaviors too. Hence, the scope of green culture is broad and demands attention for exploring the phenomenon from a diverse perspective.

Under the lens of sustainability, green culture and decent work agenda seems synchronous. If decent work refers to the sustainable employment opportunities, as envisaged in the SDG 8 (Duffy et al., 2016; ILO, 2012; Seubert et al., 2021), green culture appears to be a pathway towards sustainable outcomes. However, there is a need to build a theoretical connection between the two. A particular notion of this article is to establish an understanding of the substantial role of green culture in achieving the ILO decent work agenda through creating opportunities for respectable employment (ILO, 2012), better working conditions (Duffy et al., 2016; Hughes et al., 2021), improved health and well-being (Duffy et al., 2016; Norton et al., 2021) and cultivating environmental consciousness among employees (Lasrado & Zakaria, 2020).

The connotation of green culture and decent work seem to vary with the social and economic situations across the world (Hughes et al., 2021). While some countries are still grappling with the basic employment rights (Järlström et al., 2018), the understanding of green culture and decent work remain incomplete unless researched in marginalized economies (Hughes et al., 2021; Li et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important to explore the practice, components and challenges of green culture particularly in the socio-economic background of developing countries. Thus, the current research is aimed at exploring the components and challenges for green culture in the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in the context of SDG8 of decent work and economic growth in Pakistan. Therefore, this research will address the following research questions:

***RQ1:** What are the components of green culture in the HEIs in Pakistan?*

***RQ2:** What are the challenges being faced by the HEIs in Pakistan while attempting to build a green culture at workplace?*

***RQ3:** What is the theoretical connection between the Decent Work agenda and Green Culture?*

Literature Review

Green Culture



The literature has discussed green culture with the synonymous terms of organizational green culture (Qu et al., 2021), environment or eco-friendly culture (Chen, 2011), green organizational culture (Norton et al., 2021), proenvironmental culture or climate (Tahir et al., 2019), and green work climate (Norton et al., 2014). Despite of the diversity in terms, the concept of green culture has been explained in the literature using Schein's definition of organizational culture (Gürlek & Tuna, 2018; Norton et al., 2021; Tahir et al., 2019). According to Schein (2017), the culture of an organization is a set of shared assumptions learned by a group of organizational members over time while solving problems of external adaptation and internal integration and are passed on to the new members of the group over years. The similar approach has been adopted by several authors to describe green culture of the organizations (Holt & Anthony, 2000; Schein, 2017; Tahir et al., 2019). Green culture is explained by the organizational approach of decision making reflected through the behaviors, thoughts and actions of employees towards proenvironmental issues (Qu et al., 2021; Yunguo, 2009). According to Roscoe et al (2019), the organizational green culture is reflected when employees' behavior exceeds from profit-maximization approach to environmentally conscious actions. Thus, green culture is a collective norm of values and beliefs that shape up the organizational tendency to exhibit concern towards natural environment (Pham et al., 2018; Roscoe et al., 2019). In this context, the role of HRM practices and policies are significant as it creates an enabling environment and craft the employees' values and behavior through appropriate training, job roles, reward strategies and appraisal (Roscoe et al., 2019).

With the increasing focus on GHRM studies, the literature provides empirical evidences on the role of green culture in various context. Holt and Anthony (2000) comparatively studied green culture and individual and organizational characteristics among two universities in the United Kingdom. The results of the study revealed that the environmental culture within an organization is predominantly influenced by the cultural practices at the industrial, organizational and national levels. One of the interesting finding of this study is an increased general concern for the environment among employees, whilst a lower result for actions taken for environment. Mission statement, as a manifestation of the organizational values, beliefs and attitudes towards environment was also examined and found out to be an indicator for the environmental attitude of the upper echelons as compare to the whole organization. The researchers proposed an in-depth qualitative analysis to explore employees' environmental values and other dimensions as artifacts of green culture in an organization for future studies (Holt & Anthony, 2000). Similarly, another research confirms the top management commitment for fostering green culture as a key resource to implement green practices in a firm (Li et al., 2019).

The GHRM literature commonly uses the green culture to examine its impact on the environmental performance of organizations. A research by Gurlek and Tuna (2018) was conducted in the hotel industry in Turkey. This study empirically tested and confirmed the role of green culture as an antecedent for green innovation and competitive advantage of the firms (Gürlek & Tuna, 2018). García-Machado & Martínez-Ávila (2019) empirically tested the relationship between green culture and environmental performance, being moderated by the green innovation in the Mexican



automotive industry. Green culture, in this study, has been identified as a key strategic determinant as well as a new dimension for environmental management and competitive advantage of the company (García-Machado & Martínez-Ávila, 2019). A recent study employed structural equation modelling (SEM) technique to confirm that the most relevant factor for innovation is the green culture which helps in adapting environmental management practices in the textile industry in India (Sharma et al., 2021). The study suggested industrial managers to focus on strengthening the green culture in order to promote innovation for green management.

Since the culture of organization is important to reciprocate employee behavior, green culture has the tendency to induce proenvironmental attitude among employees. This notion has been tested in an empirical research where the moderating effects of green culture has been found significant on green training and organizational citizenship behavior for environment (OCBE) in the Chinese manufacturing firms (Pham et al., 2018). Norton et al (2014) furnished empirical evidence for sustainability policies and employee green behavior (EGB), a relationship being mediated by green work climate perceptions. The study concluded that the perceptions of green work climate are important in crafting EGB, thus it acts as a facilitator for sustainability practices in organizations (Norton et al., 2014).

Theoretical Perspectives on Green Culture

While employing green culture as a variable in previous researches, different theoretical perspectives have been established by various researchers. An important research by Li et al (2019) is worthy to be discussed as it furnishes sound theoretical justification for incorporating multiple theories providing basis to the use of green culture as a competitive advantage in the Chinese firms. Institutional theory provides rationale for green culture since it postulates that the economic, social and political forces compel the institutions to implement green culture and initiate green practices (Li et al., 2019). In this context, the study concluded that the government pressure and customers demand trigger the Chinese firms to promote green practices. The same research has employed another important theoretical perspective of Natural Resource Based View (NRBV). The NRBV approach suggests that the firms have to focus on their resources and capabilities for their impact on natural environment, in order to respond to the environmental threats for gaining competitive advantage (Hart, 1995). Li et al (2019) incorporated the same approach to justify the role of green culture as a key resource to potentially help firms transforming environmental threats into competitive advantage for the firms. Since Li et al (2019) focused on the competitive advantage of the Chinese firms, the role of top management turned out to be essential for strategic planning, resource allocation and decisions for sustainable management. Hence, the upper echelons theory was found relevant to the theoretical foundation of the study as it posits that the organizational strategic actions reflect the top management's values and beliefs (Hambrick, 2007). Among the different theoretical perspectives, the use of NRBV is common for researches undertaking green culture in various research context (García-Machado & Martínez-Ávila, 2019). The AMO



(Ability-Motivation-Opportunity) framework has also been undertaken to formulate the research idea based on green culture. The AMO framework postulates that the environment in organizations is pertinent to develop employees' abilities, create a motivating culture to appreciate and reward employees and provide them with the opportunities to exhibit proenvironmental behavior (Rayner & Morgan, 2017). Pham et al (2018) also formed the theoretical foundation of their study on AMO approach to examine the relationship between green training and OCBE through the moderating role of green culture. Lasrado and Zakarya (2020) also used the AMO framework along with the Behavior Change Wheel (BCW) to explore the organizational factors for green initiatives in the UAE.

Decent Work Agenda and Green Culture

The "*Decent Work Agenda*" is a concept developed by the International Labor Organization (ILO) that aims to promote safe and healthy working conditions, security in the workplace, and opportunities for personal and professional development (Cooke et al., 2019; ILO, 2012). It is an integrated phenomenon that encapsulates dimensions of dignified work including safe working conditions, fair compensation, organizational values aligned with the societal values, access to health care and employees' right for rest and free time (Ferreira et al., 2019). Though the decent work is embodied in all the SDGs, the SDG8 combines the decent work agenda with the economic growth under the goal of sustainable and inclusive economic growth for all (Winchenbach et al., 2019). Founded on the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT), decent work is still an emerging inter-disciplinary concept with the potential for public policy, social justice and respectful employment practices (Duffy et al., 2016). However, most of the researches encompassing decent work in different countries primarily focused on the contextual elements more as compare to the individual psychological factors that address the employees directly (Cooke et al., 2019).

A "*green culture*" refers to a set of values and practices that prioritize environmental sustainability. Theoretical analysis of the green culture reflects that it has possible association with the decent work agenda. A green culture in the organization can contribute to the creation of decent work by promoting environmentally sustainable industries and jobs, as well as by promoting practices within industries that prioritize the health and well-being of workers and the environment. However, there is a gap in literature while establishing this link. Despite of several empirical evidences for the impact of green culture on employees' behavior (Lasrado & Zakaria, 2020; Qu et al., 2021) and organizational performance (Wang, 2019), there is a dearth of research studying green culture under the lens of decent work agenda. Since decent work encompasses working conditions, compensation and employee rights that may vary with the contextual differences (Duffy et al., 2016), the phenomenon of green culture may be revisited under the philosophy of decent work. While striving for environmental goals through green culture and employing decent work agenda, it is pertinent to take into account the employees' perceptions for an operable policy for decent work and green management (Cooke et al., 2019). The PWT intends to capture the



contextual and psychological variables which impact the decent work, employees' needs at work and their well-being (Duffy et al., 2016). The AMO, commonly used framework for the green culture, corroborates the factors that enhance employees' abilities and motivate them for desirable organizational performance (Pham et al., 2018). In this regard, the PWT and AMO may provide theoretical base for exploring the phenomenon of green culture as a tool to attain decent work agenda.

In a nutshell, the literature is enriched with the empirical evidences for green culture as a predictor, moderator or mediating factor for various environmental outcomes (García-Machado & Martínez-Ávila, 2019; Lasrado & Zakaria, 2020). However, there is a scope of exploring the green culture under the lens of decent work agenda in the socio-economic context of developing countries.

Research Methodology

This is an exploratory phenomenological study conducted in the Higher Education Industry in Pakistan. The unit of analysis is the policy makers in the regulatory body of Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the HEIs across Pakistan. Since the phenomenon of green culture is relatively novel, particularly in the context of Pakistan, the inclusion criteria for interviews involved the individuals who are involved in the strategic planning for sustainable and green practices across the HEIs. Therefore, 11 in-depth interviews have been conducted from the Directors at HEC (federal and regional offices), the Vice President, Deans and Head of Departments at various HEIs across Pakistan. The sample size and selection of the respondents was carried out using purposive snowball sampling. This sampling technique was adopted since it offers selection of respondents based on their expertise pertaining to the research idea under study (Saunders et al., 2009). The respondents, upon their agreement for interviews, were sent an interview protocol explaining the purpose of research and seeking their willingness to participate. The interviews were semi-structured, initially asking questions about demographic details while later on asking questions to probe the respondents' understanding of the phenomenon and the practices in Pakistan. It is important to note that the interviews were conducted during the emergence of Covid, therefore, some of the respondents preferred an online mode of interview over face-to-face. Therefore, 9 interviews were conducted online while 3 were conducted in person. In order to maintain transparency and confidentiality of the data, the respondents have been given pseudonyms. Also the construct validity is measured through the use of multiple sources for data collection through interviews and any other relevant documents. All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim in the Microsoft Word document. For analyzing data, thematic analysis has been employed using N-Vivo 11 through identification and formulation of themes through a rigorous process.

Profile of Respondents



This study comprised 11 in depth interviews from the upper echelons of HEC and HEIs. Table 1 summarizes the pseudonyms of respondents, public/ private sector their HEI belongs to, respective province, designations of respondents and mode of interview.

Table 1 Profile of Respondents

S.No	Pseudonym	Sector	Designation	Province	Mode of Interview
1	Asma	Public	Head of Accreditation & Foreign Linkages	Sindh	Face to face
2	Usama	Semi-Private	Head of Department	Sindh	Online
3	Faraz	Private	Dean-Faculty of Management & Social Sciences	Sindh	Online
4	Nida	Semi-Private	Academic Director	Sindh	Online
5	Sana	Public	Assistant Professor & Program Head	Balochistan	Online
6	Ahmed	Public	Director Business Council-HEC	Federal	Online
7	Farah	Semi-Private	Assistant Manager – Safety and Environment Sustainability	Sindh	Online
8	Hassan	Public	Assistant Professor	KPK	Online
9	Umair	Private	Vice President-Administration	Sindh	Face to face
10	Maira	Private	Head of Department	Punjab	Online
11	Faizan	Public	Regional Head-HEC	Balochistan	Online



Thematic Analysis

Identifying common patterns in the data, thematic analysis has been carried out in this study through six step approach given by Braun and Clarke (2006). Initially, familiarity with the data is important. Therefore, the transcripts have been thoroughly reviewed for identification of important statements. The statements have been rigorously reviewed for forming initial and category codes. Table 2 represents an example of developing initial and category codes. Once codes are formed, they are constantly reviewed for identification of themes among them. Later on, the selected themes are further reviewed and then reported in the manuscript. Table 3 represents process of thematic analysis and generating codes and themes.

Table 2 Development of Initial and Category Codes

Pseudonym	Excerpt	Initial Coding	Category Coding
Faraz	It is leadership awareness. The technical term we can use is Leadership orientation. So it's a lack of top management leadership orientation	Environmental Concern among Leaders	Environmental Concern
Usama	Now something that is unfortunate still in our curriculum is that most of our degree programs...don't teach people or train people to be environmentally concern.	Degree and Curriculum	
Nida	How you are building the infrastructure...may be there's an accident, a building falls down or students suffer or get hurt.	Health and Safety	Decent Work
Asma	Faculty is a very different employee segment... so providing them good working condition, working hour's flexibility, good environment, friendly environment. That is important.	Working Environment and Ergonomics	
Nida	First we have particularly the furniture is designed in such a way like the table, length, desk, chair and material that has been used. All has been		



designed very carefully
that we have a 90 degree
angle when seated and
working on a laptop

Table 3 Process of Thematic Analysis

S. No	Initial Codes	Category Codes	Axial Codes	Theme
1	Leadership/ Top Management Attitude	Environmental Concern	Components	Green Culture
2	Environment attitude among employees			
3	Environmental attitude among Graduates			
4	Degree and Curriculum			
5	Working Environment and Ergonomics	Decent Work		
6	Respectful Environment			
7	Health and Safety			
8	Work-Life Balance			
9	Post Covid Measures			
10	Lack of Environmental Code of Conduct	Regulation	Challenges	
11	Role of HEC			
12	Provincial Disparity	Culture		
13	Lack of Environmental Concern among Asians			

Findings

The premise of this study is based on three research questions. The findings, emerged through thematic analysis of interviews, generate two significant themes: 1) components of green culture and 2) challenges of green culture. These themes are discussed in detail in the section below:



Theme 1: Components of Green Culture

Through the interviews, green culture has been identified as a first step towards sustainable management in the organizations. Explaining the idea of green culture, the respondents related green culture with an “*enabling environment*”. Asma, one of the respondents, coherently explained the concept of green culture:

Green means creating a healthy environment which overall effects the overall society and obviously the nature also. For example, faculty crammed in small cubicles, in small rooms, small spaces, then the work life balance, their health fitness, their mental stress. I think this all should be the part of the Green culture. (Asma, Line 21-25)

Elaborated further by Asma and other respondents, the following factors have been identified as components of green culture among the HEIs in Pakistan.

Environmental Concern

All the respondents unanimously expressed the significance of attitudes and beliefs towards the environment among the leaders of the higher education industry, employees and the graduates. Since it is the leadership that sets the tone of an organization through its strategic vision and decision making, the environmental concern among top management, both at the HEC and the HEIs, have been identified as a primary indicator. Denoting it with the term of “*leadership orientation*”, one of the respondents Faraz cohesively explained that it is a matter of leadership awareness, understanding and priority about the environmental sustainability (Faraz, Line 64-70). Green culture is impossible to be established unless the vision and support from the top management is there. The leadership orientation towards environment is then trickled down among employees of the HEIs and ultimately among the students. In this regard, the respondents shared their institutional practices of urging employees to switch off electricity while leaving rooms, less use of paper and printing, regular on and off campus plantation drives as few examples to exhibit green behavior among employees. Moreover, an important component identified is the quality of environmental education and awareness imparted through the degree programs and the curriculum design among the HEIs in Pakistan. It is pertinent today for the degree programs to inculcate understanding and sensitivity towards environment among the students through appropriate courses, class projects and institutional policies that instill a responsible environmental conduct among students. Since these graduates shall serve as leaders for tomorrow in the industry, they will surely be able to exhibit environmentally conscious behavior in their future roles too. The respondent from the HEC also reassured that the HEC and accreditation bodies in Pakistan audit the HEIs, degree programs and curriculum to ensure the focus of the HEIs towards quality education as well as sustainability (Ahmed, Line 10-18).



Decent Work

The respondents shed light over the green culture as a deep phenomenon which is reflected through the decent work practices. The respondents elaborated that the most crucial and sensitive employee segment in the HEIs is the faculty who is primarily engaged in the intellectual work. Hence, it is pertinent to develop a decent working environment in the HEIs which is productive, respectful and designed keeping in mind the ergonomic details ensuring faculty's health, safety and well-being at work. Ergonomics has been ostensibly explained by the respondents as a major component of green and decent working environment. One of the respondents Nida elaborated that her institute ensures to provide all employees with the furniture and infrastructure designed with the ergonomic focus (Nida, Line 55-57). Since, ergonomics has a direct relationship with the employees' physical health, it is a key factor to be considered while designing faculty rooms and other facilities. However, this has not been a common practice among all HEIs in Pakistan. Faraz, another respondent, exclaimed that there has been a lack of focus on ergonomics among the HEIs (Faraz, Line 49-52). On one hand, the educational leaders claim for sustainable actions, while on the other, there has been no consideration of environment when it comes to the infrastructure design and facilities. Talking about the practices, he stated:

I can't see the simple and ergonomics furniture, e.g. you know using a lot of timber. A lot of tables and chairs, all of them made from wood. It means we are cutting a lot of trees. So if we are using a lot of this material things, it means they are coming from factories which are emitting harmful gases. I can't see any such thing. May be we are far behind this. (Faraz, Line 49-52)

Particularly in the post-Covid era, the need to focus on physical and mental well-being of employees is a must. Not only the ergonomics, but also maintaining a clean and green environment is equally important. Apart from the physical health, psychological well-being is another consideration. Exploring this factor, the respondents indicated that the institutional policies for health and well-being, career development and work-life balance are important to evaluate. The female respondents appreciated the HEIs for providing them with the respectful and safe working environment, in general. Asma, another respondent, spoke at length about the work-life balance as an indicator of green culture and an important factor of decent work (Asma, Line 30-34). She added that the working hours' flexibility must be there for faculty. Since the teachers in the higher education are engaged in research along with teaching, the productivity should not be associated with the hours spent at work (Asma, Line 95-98). Intellectual creativity demands peace of mind which may be attained through the work-life balance by offering flexibility in working hours. Career development and growth opportunities have also been considered important. The green culture is perceived to be an enabling environment where the employees get equal and ample opportunities for their growth as professionals. Moreover, the availability of digital learning solutions, access to good quality journals and space for intellectual discussion among students are



few more examples of enabling environment in the tertiary education. Apart from it, there has been a mention of safety at workplace as an indicator of green culture. A respondent from a leading business school in Pakistan stressed upon the need to consider safety measures in the workplace design. In this regard, the presence of safe exits, fire alarms and remedies in case of any accidents are extremely necessary (Nida, Line 204-208). However, there is a stark difference for safety considerations among the HEIs, discussed in the section below as a challenge.

Theme 2: Challenges of Green Culture

The green culture seems to be a challenge in the HEIs in Pakistan. Based on the indication of a number of challenging factors, this theme has been emerged as a major finding of this research. The challenges being faced by the HEIs are discussed below:

Regulatory Challenges

The regulatory body for the higher education in Pakistan is the HEC. The analysis revealed a number of challenges pertaining to the regulation in the HEIs. Fundamentally, the respondents from the HEIs indicated the lack of environmental code of conduct from the HEC as a regulating body. All of the respondents expressed their resentment over the role of HEC which seems to be ambiguous in general. It has been brought to discussion that the policies from HEC have an academic focus only. However, the SDGs have not yet been the focus of the HEC. Nevertheless, the academic policies have also been reported to lack clarity and concreteness. The HEIs blame the HEC for its lack of support, clarity and consistency in terms of policy making and implementation. Particularly when it comes to the environmental sustainability and establishment of green culture, the efforts have been made by the HEIs themselves. However, this factor has been contradicted by the representatives of HEC when interviewed. Ahmed, from HEC, expressed that the HEC is rightly aware of the need for sustainable management in the higher education and already has started working towards it. According to him, as a regulatory body, the HEC takes input from all potential stakeholders including the government, HEIs, and researchers for a comprehensive plan for SDGs (Ahmed, Line 43-48).

Ahmed added that the HEC provides development opportunities not only to the individual researchers but at the institutional level and also has established quality assurance agencies to audit the HEIs for proper implementation (Ahmed, Line 50-58). Ahmed shared the HEC vision 2025 which is the testament of its commitment of service to the HEIs and the society in general (Ahmed, Line 10-18). In contrast, the representatives of the HEIs were found to be ignorant of this vision. Therefore, there seems a gap between policy making and dissemination of approved policies among the HEIs for implementation.

Cultural Challenges



Among the challenges for developing green culture in the tertiary educational institutes in Pakistan, the provincial disparity has been the most considerable one. Sana, a respondent from the province of Balochistan, explained in detail that the province has not yet been able to attain the basic facilities in the HEIs of the region. She highlighted that the HEIs in this province have been struggling for equal employment opportunities, safety at workplace and lack of basic infrastructure (Sana, Line 34-40). Amidst this alarming scenario, the green culture and sustainable development in the region is out of question. Safety at workplace is a big challenge in the said province. Therefore, employees lack psychological well-being since the tribal systems create life threats for them (Sana, Line 112-115). Hence, the indicators of green culture may be found among the developed provinces of Sindh and Punjab or the Federal region, nonetheless, sustainability is a far cry for an under developed province like Balochistan.

Apart from the provincial challenge, respondents also related the societal attitude towards environment as a cultural factor. According to Asma, the Asians, in general, lack environmental concern among them (Asma, Line 17-19). As a result, there is a need to inculcate awareness for sustainability among people in Asian countries like Pakistan. Currently, the HEIs in Pakistan lack any evidence related to the green culture or sustainability in terms of a policy document.

In summary, the two themes emerged through analysis revolve around the components and challenges for green culture in Pakistan and address the proposed research questions.

Discussion

This research contributes to the body of sustainability literature through exploring the concept and practice of green culture in the HEIs in Pakistan as a contribution of the higher education industry towards SDG 8 of decent work and economic growth. Potentially addressing the first research question, this qualitative research explored the factors of environmental concern and decent work as key components of the green culture. In the light of the Upper Echelons Theory (Hambrick, 2007), the environmental concern among leadership and support from them is the first step towards sustainable management. The establishment of green culture is only possible when the leaders of the HEIs themselves realize the need and benefits of working towards it. This finding is aligned with the Institutional Theory (Li et al., 2019), according to which the external and internal stakeholders are important to urge organizations for taking potential strategic decisions. In this regard, the internal resources of leadership, employees and students play significant roles. Once a strong green culture is developed through the top management, the employees also start adopting the responsible attitude towards environment and transferring the same concern and education to the students. Hence, developing the green culture in the HEIs is a strategic move as it not only resolves the current need for sustainable actions but also yield future generations with environmental awareness. Another indicator of green culture, explored through this research, is the decent work. The ILO decent work agenda outlines the possible ways for ensuring decent, respectful, healthy and equal employment opportunities (Bletsas & Charlesworth, 2013; ILO,



2012). The factors of decent work, as explained by the respondents, stress upon the focus of HEIs towards employee well-being and growth through ergonomics, respectful work environment and career development opportunities. These factors seem to be synchronized with the decent work agenda. According to the AMO theory, the employees' abilities and motivation for environmental actions enhance when they are provided with the suitable environment in the organizations (Rayner & Morgan, 2017). The green culture, similarly, offers an enabling environment that plays positive role in building employees' knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) to be used for environmental actions and sustainability. Moreover, thoughtfully crafted institutional compensation policies, appraisal practices and health benefit programs for employees' physical and psychological well-being induce motivation among employees and offer opportunities to exhibit responsible conduct towards environment. Hence, this notion addresses another research question of this study and establishes theoretical connection between the decent work agenda and the green culture. Therefore, there seems a potential future research guideline to explore the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT), underlining the decent work philosophy, and the application of AMO for cultivating green culture in the organizations.

The development of green culture in the ailing economic scenario of Pakistan is a challenge itself. The lack of finances, regulatory code of conduct and strategic vision from the HEC pose great deal of challenge for the HEIs while striving for the green culture. The analysis indicates that the efforts made so far in the higher education industry towards SDG 8 have been an individualistic contribution at the end of the HEIs. Though the HEC realizes the significance of the sustainable management and have been working on the framework for application, there seems a potential gap between the regulatory body and the institutes. In order to reduce this gap, the HEC must involve all the stakeholders while devising a strategic plan for sustainable management. The HEC Vision 2025 is a proactive step from the HEC as an effort to align the human resource development with the production capacity while contributing to the socio-economic development of the country. This plan outlines the strategic, technological and innovative capacity building of the national higher education through leadership building, financial support, technological advancements and innovative curriculum. Albeit the strategic plans of HEC sound promising, the ground realities are different. The HEC must lend a helping hand to the HEIs regardless of provincial discrimination and develop a concrete code of conduct for the environmental regulation across the country.

Conclusion, Practical Implications and Future Research Directions

This phenomenological study has been conducted with the objective to explore the factors and challenges for green culture in the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in the outlook of SDG8 of decent work and economic growth in Pakistan. Thematic analysis of interviews, conducted from the policy makers, leaders and regulatory authorities for higher education, revealed key components and challenges for establishing green culture in Pakistan. Among the components of green culture, the environmental concern among leaders, employees and graduates as well as



decent work have found to be the most significant. On the other hand, the regulatory and cultural factors have been explored as key challenges for development of this culture. The major contribution of this research is establishing a theoretical connection between the green culture and decent work. The findings of this research have multiple implications, theoretically and practically both.

The notion of “*green culture*” and “*decent work*” are often perceived contingent to the socio-economic and cultural context. Precisely, this research presents the understanding of green culture and decent work from the perspective of Pakistan, a country with struggling economy. Theoretically, this research highlighted that PWT encompasses all the contextual and psychological factors that impact the employees’ abilities to secure decent work, satisfy their needs and enjoy a dignified life. The future researchers may base their research on PWT while empirically testing the effects of decent work environment on employees’ health and well-being, incorporating the AMO model.

While the literature is rich in offering contextual variables explaining the decent work, this study also adds individual factors that impact employees’ well-being directly. Since the decent work is a primary determinant for well-being, the findings of this research offer a concrete base for policy making towards an employee’s right to a dignified work without compromising self-respect and well-being. Particularly in the context of the higher education industry in Pakistan, this research advocates for a comprehensive policy framework offering dignified work at first, along with conducive work place design, better incentives, career progression opportunities and improved health facilities for employees.

Practically, this study offers a guideline in terms of the role of leadership in creating a decent work environment while striving for sustainability. The higher education sector, being the platform for producing potential workforce in the labor market with the required set of KSAs may contribute significantly to the economic growth of the country through the application of the factors identified through this research. For a long term impact, there is a sheer need for the HEC and the HEIs in Pakistan to focus on the curriculum design and teaching methodologies for inculcating environmentally conscious KSAs among the students. Further, the HEC may consider designing an environmental code of conduct as a framework for HEIs to pace up the sustainability initiatives. Moreover, the leaders in the HEIs in Pakistan must develop a conducive and decent work environment for the teachers and staff members in order to motivate them for contributing towards the sustainability agenda while ensuring their development, career progression, health and well-being. Additionally, the HEC in Pakistan must develop a comprehensive communication plan to disseminate the environmental plans and objectives timely with the HEIs across the country. It is imperative to bridge the gap between the regulatory body of HEC and the HEIs, regardless of the provincial differences. The contribution of Pakistan in the 2030 sustainability agenda, in general and SDG 8 in particular, remains incomplete unless all the potential development sectors including the higher education actively contribute.



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