The Power of Rhetoric in Green HRM and Ethical Talent Development: Engaging Generation Z for Sustainable Success

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Abstract. This study explores the strategic role of rhetoric in enhancing Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices and ethical talent development to effectively engage Generation Z in achieving sustainable organizational success. Using a systematic literature review of twelve journal articles published within the last five years, this research synthesizes key theoretical perspectives related to rhetorical communication, green HR practices, ethical talent development, and the work values of Generation Z. The findings demonstrate that rhetoric in the form of ethos, pathos, and logos serves as a persuasive instrument that shapes perceptions, builds trust, and strengthens commitment toward environmental and ethical values. Effective rhetorical strategies enable leaders to align employee motivation with the organization's sustainability agenda. Given Gen Z's preference for transparency, social responsibility, and meaningful work, rhetorical communication becomes essential in fostering engagement and long-term participation in green initiatives. The study concludes that integrating rhetoric into HRM practices reinforces employee engagement, supports ethical workplace culture, and accelerates the adoption of sustainable initiatives across organization.
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INTRODUCTION

Organizations today are under increasing pressure to embed sustainability in everything they do. In this context, Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is crucial. It helps translate environmental goals into everyday practices shaping how companies recruit, train, evaluate, and reward their employees (Indria et al., 2025; Ahmad, 2025). By integrating sustainability into these core HR functions, GHRM encourages employees to act more responsibly towards the environment and ultimately supports stronger and more sustainable organizational performance.

At the same time, Generation Z a group that places a high value on values, ethics, and transparency expects the workplace to demonstrate authenticity and genuine social responsibility (IDN Research Institute, 2024; Cyfert, 2024). These expectations strongly reflect ethical talent development principles, which center on fairness, integrity, and fostering moral growth within an organization's talent system (Luna-Arocas & Danvila-del-Valle, 2022).

Rhetoric the art of persuasive communication through ethos, pathos, and logos helps leaders convey sustainability goals in a compelling and relevant way. Previous studies have shown that strong persuasive communication can increase employees' willingness to embrace

organizational change (Rahmi & Hariani, 2023; Garvin & Roberto, 2005). However, despite its importance, there is little research on how rhetoric can support GHRM and ethical talent development, particularly in engaging Generation Z. This study seeks to fill this gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the theoretical foundations and prior research on Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM), the development of ethical organizational practices, and the role of rhetoric, all viewed through the perspective of Generation Z characteristics. The purpose of this review is to understand how these concepts intersect and how their relationship can inform the design of sustainable and effective human resource management strategies in today's organizational landscape.

1. Green Human Resource Manajemen (Green HRM)

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is a strategic approach that weaves environmental sustainability goals, values, and practices into every aspect of HRM. Beyond improving operational efficiency, GHRM aims to cultivate an organizational culture where pro-environmental behavior becomes the norm. Scholars describe GHRM as the alignment of HR policies, practices, and decision making with sustainability strategies to encourage ecological behavior and strengthen an organization's environmental performance (Yong et al., 2020; Paillé et al., 2024).

Conceptually, GHRM is built on several complementary core practices, which include:

a) Green recruitment and selection

Organizations implementing green recruitment seek candidates who demonstrate strong environmental values, awareness, and commitment. Sustainability-focused employer branding such as highlighting green initiatives or environmentally friendly practices has been shown to increase applicant engagement, particularly among younger generations who tend to have a stronger ecological orientation (Kim et al., 2023). During the selection process, organizations also evaluate candidates' potential to support and contribute to ongoing or future environmental programs, ensuring alignment between individual valuesand the company's sustainability goals.

b) Green training and development

Training is geared toward building environmental competencies, including energy efficiency practices, waste reduction, and other environmentally friendly activities. Green training programs improve employees' environmental literacy, thus encouraging ecological behavior and active participation in sustainability initiatives (Yong et al., 2020).

c) Green performance management

Performance management systems integrate environmental indicators into employee evaluations, including metrics such as resource efficiency, emissions reduction, and participation in green CSR initiatives. Incorporating these criteria strengthens accountability and ensures that environmentally responsible behavior becomes a formal part of performance assessments (Pham et al., 2020).

d) Green compensation systems

Organizations provide rewards, both financial and non-financial, to individuals or units that successfully achieve environmental targets. Green incentive systems have been shown to increase employee motivation to support sustainability activities and encourage green innovation (Pinzone et al., 2023).

2. The Role of GHRM in Organizational Performance and Behavior

Recent studies have shown that the implementation of GHRM has a significant impact on environmental performance, organizational competitiveness, and employees' extra-role behavior. GHRM has been shown to increase organizational citizenship behavior for the environment (OCB-E), encouraging employees to voluntarily engage in pro-environmental actions that go beyond their formal job responsibilities. Furthermore, GHRM enhances organizational attractiveness and strengthens employer branding factors that are increasingly influential for younger generations, who often view sustainability as a key criterion in choosing a workplace (Kim et al., 2023). By promoting resource efficiency, enhancing corporate reputation, and deepening stakeholder trust, GHRM practices also support the development of long-term competitive advantage.

Thus, GHRM is more than just a collection of administrative practices, it is a long-term strategic approach that enhances operational sustainability and encourages pro-environmental behaviors throughout the organization.

3. Ethical Talent Devolepment

Ethical talent development integrates integrity, fairness, and responsibility into employee growth and learning processes. When employees perceive that HR systems operate ethically and treat them fairly, they tend to demonstrate stronger commitment and more ethical behavior (Luna-Arocas & Danvila-del-Valle, 2022). This, in turn, supports sustainable human resource management by encouraging high performance and moral well-being.

4. Characteristics and Work Values of Generation Z

Generation Z places a high emphasis on digital literacy, transparency, work-life balance, and meaningful work. Studies show that this generation is deeply concerned about environmental issues and expects companies to embody genuine sustainability values (IDN Research Institute, 2024; Sunaryanto & Idrus, 2025). Therefore, authentic communication and ethical leadership are crucial for attracting and retaining Gen Z talent (Vieira & Gomes, 2024)..

Theoretical Foundations Enriching the Literature Review

a) Social Identity Theory

This theory states that people are motivated to connect with organizations whose values reflect their personal identity. For Generation Z, a clear alignment with sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility strengthens their sense of commitment to the organization (Cyfert, 2024).

b) Stakeholder Theory

This theory argues that organizations must balance the interests of various stakeholders not only shareholders, but also employees, communities, and the environment. GHRM and ethical talent development reflect this stakeholder-oriented approach by ensuring that HR practices respond to broader social and environmental expectations (Indria et al., 2025).

c) Rhetorical Theory

The use of ethos, pathos, and logos offers a structured approach to persuasive communication. In human resource management, rhetorical strategies help build trust, create shared meaning, and increase motivation especially when communicating sustainability goals (Bitzer, 1968)

d) Sustainable HRM Framework

This framework integrates environmental, social, and economic considerations into human resource management practices, helping organizations strengthen their long-term sustainability.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to develop a structured and in-depth understanding of the relationship between rhetoric, Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), ethical talent development, and Generation Z characteristics. The SLR method was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive and evidence-based qualitative synthesis, ensuring that the resulting findings are valid and replicable (Vieira & Gomes, 2024).

A literature search was conducted across several academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, Mendeley, and leading open-access journals. The search used keywords such as rhetorical strategies, environmentally friendly human resource management, ethical talent development, and Generation Z behavior to identify relevant studies.

To ensure that the literature analyzed meets strong academic standards, this study applies several inclusion criteria, namely The articles were published between 2019 and 2024 to ensure the use of current and relevant literature (Kim et al., 2023).The articles were sourced from reputable peer-reviewed journals or scientific proceedings. Each article demonstrates direct relevance to the topics of organizational rhetoric, GHRM practices, ethical talent development, or Generation Z values and behaviors (Paillé et al.,2024). The articles are available in English or Indonesian to maintain readability and ensure the accuracy of the analysis.

Literature that did not meet the criteria or had significant methodological weaknesses was excluded from the analysis process (Pham et al., 2020).

254| HUMANIS (Humanities, Management and Science Proceedings) Vol. 06, No.1, December 2025

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Data Analysis

All selected articles were carefully reviewed to identify key concepts, theoretical models, research methods, and key findings. The analysis was conducted in three main stages.

1. Data screening and reduction were carried out by reviewing the abstract, methodology, and findings of each study to determine its eligibility (Yong et al., 2020)
2. Thematic coding, which is used to organize information into several major themes, including rhetorical strategies, GHRM practices, ethics in talent development, and Generation Z values.
3. Qualitative synthesis, which brings together all the findings to create a comprehensive narrative that describes the relationships between variables.
4. The structure of the analysis follows the literature synthesis guidelines outlined by Vieira and Gomes (2024), ensuring that the entire SLR process is conducted systematically and can be replicated in future research.

PRISMA Flow Results

The results of the article identification, selection, and screening process are summarized in the PRISMA flow as follows:

1. A total of 132 articles were identified during the initial search.
2. After removing duplicates, 42 articles remained.
3. Of these, 20 articles passed the full-text eligibility review stage.
4. 12 articles met all criteria and were included in the final synthesis.
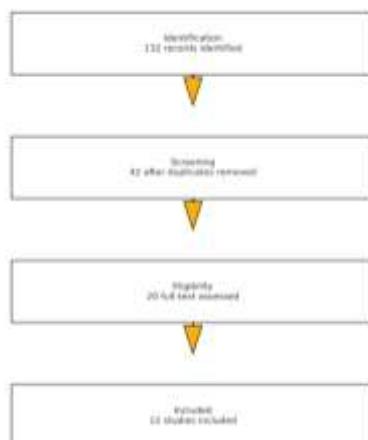

Figure 1 Prisma Flow Diagram

Summary of Literature Review (SLR Table)

NO	Authors & Year	Research Title	Method	Key Findings	Relevance to This Study
1	Indria et al. (2025)	Green HRM and Job Pursuit Intention among Gen Z	Quantitative	GHRM significantly increases organizational attractiveness for Generation Z applicants.	Provides theoretical basis for GHRM and Gen Z job attraction.
2	Ahmad (2025)	Trends in Green HRM Using NLP Approaches	Bibliometric	GHRM research increasingly focuses on green behavior, sustainability, and innovation.	Strengthens the concept of modern GHRM.

255| HUMANIS (Humanities, Management and Science Proceedings) Vol. 06, No.1, December 2025

Special issue: HUMANIS 2025 The Application Of Artificial Intelligence To Develop Digital Transformation In Operational Management

NO	Authors & Year	Research Title	Method	Key Findings	Relevance to This Study
3	Shoaib et al. (2025)	GHRM and Sustainable Organizational Performance	Survey	GHRM positively influences sustainable performance outcomes.	Supports the link between GHRM and sustainability.
4	Luna-Arocas & Danvila-del-Valle (2022)	Talent Management & Ethical Behavior	Survey	Talent management practices foster ethical employee behavior.	Provides basis for ethical talent development.
5	Rahmi & Hariani (2023)	Persuasive Communication & Change	Qualitative Study	Rhetorical strategies enhance the effectiveness of change management	Foundational theory for rhetoric-based HR interventions.
6	Cyfert (2024)	Green Competencies Gen Z	Survey	Gen Z demonstrates a strong orientation toward sustainability and pro-environmental values.	Reinforces Generation Z characteristics relevant to GHRM.
7	IDN Research Institute (2024)	Indonesia Gen Z Report	National Survey	Gen Z demands transparency, CSR, and ethical practices from employers.	Provides contextual relevance for Indonesian Gen Z.
8	Bitzer (1968)	The Rhetorical Situation	Theoretical	Rhetoric is shaped by situational context and audience needs	Foundational theory for rhetorical communication.
9	Garvin & Roberto (2005)	Change Through Persuasion	Theoretical	Rhetorical persuasion is crucial for driving organizational change.	Strengthens arguments on rhetoric in HR and change management.
10	Putu et al. (2024)	Green HRM and Organizational Performance	Survey	Green teams and GHRM initiatives enhance performance	Supports the performance benefits of GHRM
11	Vieira & Gomes (2024)	Talent Management and Generation Z	Systematic Literature Review	Employer branding is essential for	Reinforces the relationship between talent management

256| HUMANIS (Humanities, Management and Science Proceedings) Vol. 06, No.1, December 2025

Special issue: HUMANIS 2025 The Application Of Artificial Intelligence To Develop Digital Transformation In Operational Management

NO	Authors & Year	Research Title	Method	Key Findings	Relevance to This Study
				attracting and retaining Gen Z.	and Gen Z expectations
12	Sunaryanto & Idrus (2025)	Characteristics of Generation Z	Survey	Gen Z values flexibility, ethics, and meaningful work	Strengthens Generation Z profiling for this study

Results and Discussion

1. Rhetoric as a Catalyst for GHRM

Rhetoric serves as a strategic persuasive tool that strengthens GHRM implementation. Ethos enables leaders to build credibility when communicating sustainability commitments (Bitzer, 1968), which in turn increases trust in environmental policies (Garvin & Roberto, 2005). Pathos fosters emotional engagement a crucial element in motivating employees to participate in green initiatives (Rahmi & Hariani, 2023). Meanwhile, logos, through logic and data-driven explanations, reinforces the importance of GHRM practices for ecological and organizational performance (Yong et al., 2020).

Research consistently shows that organizations that use persuasive communication achieve greater adoption of green policies and stronger environmental citizenship behaviors (Kim et al., 2023; Paillé et al., 2024). This suggests that rhetoric is not simply an add-on element it is foundational in ensuring GHRM initiatives are fully understood, accepted, and internalized.

2. Strengthening Ethical Talent Development Supported by Rhetorical Alignment

Ethical talent development thrives when an organization's messaging aligns with its values-based practices. Rhetoric serves as a medium to communicate and reinforce ethical principles such as fairness, transparency, and integrity (Luna-Arocas & Danvila-del-Valle, 2022). When employees perceive consistency between what an organization says and does, moral behavior tends to increase, and their intention to remain is strengthened.

Research shows that persuasive and ethical communication improves employees' moral reasoning, reduces ambiguity in expectations, and strengthens trust in leadership (Vieira & Gomes, 2024). Thus, rhetoric serves as a reinforcement mechanism that legitimizes ethical norms in talent development systems.

3. Engaging Generation Z Through Authentic Narratives Construction

Generation Z is highly responsive to authenticity, transparency, and alignment with sustainability values (IDN Research Institute, 2024). Their identity orientation suggests they prefer companies whose narratives demonstrate a genuine ethical and environmental commitment (Cyfert, 2024). Rhetorical strategies help support this alignment by crafting messages and stories that align with Generation Z's expectations for meaningful and purpose-driven work.

Findings indicate that Gen Z assesses an organization's credibility based on the consistency, authenticity of its ethical stance, and the coherence of its sustainability efforts (Sunaryanto & Idrus, 2025). When rhetoric effectively communicates these values, Gen Z tends to demonstrate stronger engagement, higher motivation, and greater willingness to participate in environmentally friendly initiatives.

4. Integrative Synthesis an Integrated Framework for Sustainable Human Resource Management

The literature synthesis suggests that sustainable engagement develops through a series of interrelated mechanisms:

a) Rhetoric creates meaning, builds trust, shapes perception (Bitzer, 1968; Garvin & Roberto, 2005).
b) GHRM operationalizes environmental values through structured HR practices (Indria et al., 2025).
c) Ethical Talent Development strengthens moral foundations and fairness (Luna-Arocas & Danvila-del-Valle, 2022).

257| HUMANIS (Humanities, Management and Science Proceedings) Vol. 06, No.1, December 2025

Special issue: HUMANIS 2025 The Application Of Artificial Intelligence To Develop Digital Transformation In Operational Management

    d) Generation Z moderates the influence, amplifying effects when values align (IDN Research Institute, 2024).

This integrated relationship forms a Sustainable HRM Model, in which rhetoric is the binding force enabling alignment between environmental goals, ethical systems, and generational expectations. Placement of Conceptual Model: The conceptual model should be inserted right after this section as Figure 2, before the Conclusion. You may place a placeholder such as:
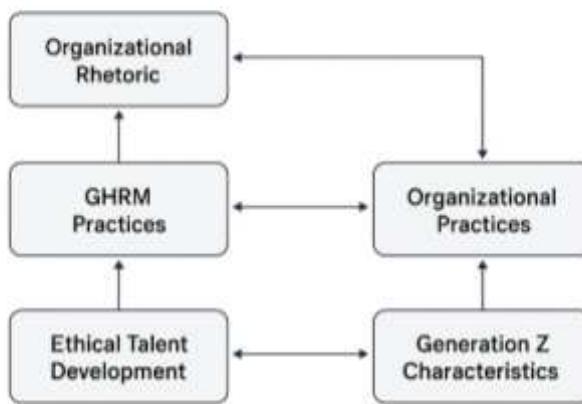
Figure 2. Integrated Rhetoric–GHRM–Ethical Talent–Generation Z Conceptual Model.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Rhetoric plays a strategic and transformative role in enhancing GHRM and ethical talent development, particularly in engaging Generation Z employees. Through persuasive communication, leaders can build trust, articulate sustainability values, and align employees with environmental and ethical goals. Incorporating rhetoric into human resource management practices strengthens a culture of sustainability, reinforces ethical behavior, and increases employee commitment

1. Train leaders in rhetorical and persuasive communication techniques.
2. Embed ethical principles into talent-management systems.
3. Communicate GHRM practices using compelling narratives rather than administrative language.
4. Engage Gen Z through authenticity, transparency, and meaningful work.
5. Conduct empirical research to test rhetorical effectiveness in sustainability-oriented HRM.

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