



## Green Recruitment Practices and Employees' Green Behaviour in the eThekweni Municipality of South Africa

Taiwo Hassan Ajadi<sup>1</sup>; Samson Adeoluwa Adewumi<sup>2</sup>; Bhekabantu Alson Ntshangase<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

<sup>2</sup> Mangosuthu University of Technology, South Africa

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### **Abstract**

Discussions on green recruitment practices are sparsely interrogated in the canon of green human resource management literature (GHRM). Existing studies have focused on other areas of GHRM, especially in South Africa. This study addresses this gap through the examination of green recruitment best practices for employees' green behaviour, and unearths the collection of challenges plaguing green recruitment practices. The study purposively recruited 12 units' managers and employees from the corporate and human resource cluster of the eThekweni municipality. The semi-structure interview was employed to collect data and the NVivo (v.12) qualitative software was employed to identify themes and sub-themes from the transcript. The content qualitative analytical tool was employed to make sense of the themes and sub-themes respectively. Findings show a collection of green recruitment practices including the use of automated application process replacing the paper based application, the application of green interview process through Skype and Zoom and the advertisement of jobs on LinkedIn and other e-career portals. Other practices include the use of psychometric test in evaluating applicants' green behaviour value system and the setting up of a computer laboratory as job application hubs. The challenge of green recruitment practices include political interference, limited access to online facilities for job applicants, lack of online knowledge and skills and resistance to change. The study concludes on the need for a more strategic and innovative green recruitment practices and measures to address these challenges in the eThekweni municipality.

**Keywords:** *Human Resource; Management; Green Recruitment; Green Behaviour; Human Resource Management; Municipality; Public Organisation*

### **Introduction**

The rapid expansion of industries is no doubt engendering several environmental problems globally including ascending global temperature, resource scarcity and increased environmental pollution

(Diana, 2016) with increased demand for organisations to become environmental responsible (Dumont, Shen & Deng, 2017). Thus, a swelling number of organisations are becoming green environment compliant by practicing green human resource (GHRM). Employees' green behaviour that represent employees' behaviour in the organisation for the promotion of environmental sustainability has become a significant factor employed in promoting the green development agenda (Deshwal, 2015). The human resource management literature has consistently explained employees as the drivers of organisation's corporate environmental sustainability (Emerson et al., 2016). For emphasis, employees are positioned to increase the environmental reputation of the organisation and assist it gain a more competitive advantage on the one hand (Deshwal, 2015). Employees' green behaviour initiative can also improve the existing environment and contribute to the environmental sustainable development of the society at large on the other hand (Deshwal, 2015).

With the increasing importance of employees' green behaviour, policy analysts and human resource scholars have been giving critical attention to the appropriate management measures that can provoke these behaviours (Friedrich, & Trois, 2013). The literature has repeatedly identified one of such important measure to be GHRM. The GHRM comprised of several human resource management functions including, but not limited to, performance management, training, recruitment and reward and compensation tailored with an organisation's environmental policy action (Friedrich & Trois, 2016). The focus of this study is on bridging green recruitment to employees' green behaviour. The understanding of green recruitment explicates the processing of hiring candidates for job roles based on the possession of environmental management skills and values. In other words, it rides on environmental suitability personality, attitude and culture that an individual brings to an organisation for the promotion of green behaviour and environmental sustainability (Gregory-Smith et al., 2015).

Green recruitments studies have continued to increase as a response to the several environmental and pollution-related challenges related to the traditional recruitment procedures (Grolleau, Mzoughi & Pekovic, 2012). This contention supports the necessity of green recruitment initiative for sustainable environment and the promotion of employees' green behaviour. Rapid climate change provoked by pollution, deforestation challenges and other emission challenges have continued to engender environmental sustainability challenges to organisation (Ojo, Tan & Alias, 2020). In tune with this, the argument pursued in this paper is the significance of green recruitment practices in addressing pollution related problems, emission challenges and other waste concerns that are inimical to the environmental sustainability of the municipality. Therefore, advocating green recruitment practices where emphasis is on electronic rather than paper usage in applications and recruitment processes can help tame the tide of environmental pollution.

With the increasing knowledge of the GHRM literature, there are still sparsity of green recruitment studies in South Africa (Friedrich & Trois, 2016). This position leaves a gap on how South African organisations can leverage on the significance of green recruitment practices in building a robust employee green behaviour model for environmental sustainability. For example, available GHRM studies include Saeed et al., (2019) study on promoting employees' pro-environmental behaviour through green human resource management practices; effect of green human resource management on employees' workplace green behaviour (Dumont Shen & Deng, 2017); engaging information technology (IT) employment in pro-environmental behaviours across selected IT companies (Ojo, Tan & Alias, 2020) and Gilal et al., (2009) study on the role and influence of GHRM practices on employees' in a higher educational institution. One similar study is Diana's (2016) study on the effectiveness of green recruitment practices among HR executives. What is largely missing in the body of GHRM literature is the interrogation of green recruitment practices as a platform for the pursuit of employees' green behaviour and environmental sustainability in South Africa, with specific concern on the eThekweni municipality. In addition, the array of existing studies have largely relayed focus on the private sector establishments leaving sparse or no attention to the public sector organisations. These identified research

gaps established the rationale and novelty of this study. The objectives of this study are to understand the existing green recruitment best practices model for employees' green behaviour and unravel challenges of green recruitment practices inimical to green employees' environmental behaviour in the eThekweni municipality.

The contribution of this paper is the acknowledgement that green recruitment practices and employees' green behaviour discourse are still sparse in the GHRM literature in South Africa. By interrogating this problem, the study hopes to ignite a fresh discussion on green recruitment practices and employees' green behaviour through the lens of the public sector organisation. This intention is no doubt important for the elimination of waste, emissions and environmental pollution engendered by the traditional recruitment practices of paper-based applications and physical interviews among others.

## **eThekweni Municipality's Green Organisation Initiative**

The Republic of South Africa is no doubt faced with climate change challenge with the position of the country in one of the most vulnerable regions of the world in terms of climate change projections (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 2019). The challenge of municipalities are becoming evident in recent times due to inadequate capacity and funding constraints (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 2019). For instance, the tourism industry and local economic development of municipalities have been experiencing challenging times as a result of the impact of climate change in South Africa. In response, there have been concerted efforts from all stakeholders to help minimize the impact through increase capacity building workshops, local government partnerships with private organisations and appropriate policy legislation instruments (Obaid & Alias, 2015). In addition, some of these strategies also include the Ecosystem-based Adaption (EBA) and Municipality Climate Protection Program (MCP) launched in 2006. These strategies were provoked as a response to several environmental challenge and other green behaviour concerns faced by communities in the Durban metropolis specifically (Taylor, Cartwright & Sutherland, 2013).

The eThekweni municipality is positioned in a global diversity hotspot influenced negatively by increased urban growth (eThekweni Municipality Integrated Development Plan, 2014). The concerns of the manufacturing companies in the municipality have steered an increasing environmental challenge for the local municipality and an increasing negative impact on riverine coastal ecosystems (Lervik & Sutherland, 2017). In turn, the eThekweni municipality and other private institutions have consistently sought for appropriate interventions towards ensuring that the municipality is environment-friendly. The argument of this paper is the pursuit of a green organizational culture for the eThekweni municipality. Therefore, adopting green organizational culture can be appropriately managed by the HR department which is referred to as Green Human Resource Management (GHRM). GHRM involves the integration of human resource practices with environmental sustainability principles in an organisation (Taylor, Cartwright & Sutherland, 2013).

The eThekweni municipality has existing structures in place for addressing the rising impact of climate change and work pollution (eThekweni Municipality Integrated Development Plan, 2014). However, the inclusion of GHRM can help imbibe appropriate attitudinal change to work environment among employees. There are existing private organisations moving towards green in South Africa in order to reduce the negative impact of climate change and pollution. Public organisation like the eThekweni municipality can incorporate green management initiatives for employees' onboarding into adopting green work culture. In other words, this will stimulate a green behaviour among the workforce, and also assist the municipality overall environmental protection and compliance image, the delivery of service to members of the community and becoming environment-friendly in the discharge of various human resource functions such as recruitment and selection.

### **Green Recruitment Explained**

The conceptual clarification of green recruitment can be explained as a process of selecting and hiring individuals with environmental management skills, mind-sets and behaviours that promote environmental management in the workplace (Wehrmeyer, 2017). Green recruitment practices also includes the application of environment-centered testing (knowledge of risks, harmful substances to the environment and potential emissions) and the selection and hiring of candidates with focus on the disposition of environmental management behaviours (Ojo, Tan & Alias, 2020). Green recruitment essentially focused on the expectations of candidates to possess personality and attitudes that support the prevention of waste and a high sense of creativity and innovation in terms of environmental protection and sustainability skills (Le Roux & Pretorius, 2016). Other conceptual explanation of green recruitment have been reported in the human resource management literature. For instance, Obaid and Alias (2015) conceptualized green recruitment as the process of employing people with the requisite knowledge, skills and behaviour needed for the management of the work environment. The broad canon of green recruitment goal is an attempt towards achieving environmental sustainability of the workplace through the elimination of waste and dwindling its carbon-foot prints within the organisation to a large extent. To put in perspective, green recruitment encapsulates the recruitment and on-boarding process of new employees' executed through carbon-free exercise or done through online processes.

Wehrmeyer's (2017) thesis argued that the indulgence of green recruitment practices could offer firms the opportunity of attaining a compelling performance in the environmental protection and sustainability discourse, particularly by ensuring that the newly-hired members staff are willing to always maintain and abide by the principle of pro-environmental management values. The literature has argued in favour of the human resource department of an organisation as the sole initiator and appropriate unit saddled with the implementation of green recruitment practices and processes (Le Roux & Pretorius, 2016). To be sure, the human resource of an organisation has the responsibility of maintaining organizational culture and sustainability and remains the only professionals trained to manage employees' behaviours such as green behaviour through employing appropriate HR metrics.

The conceptual meaning of green recruitment can also be explained as the introduction of innovation in the way recruitment is done through cost-reduction (Benn, Teo & Martin, 2015). For instance, reducing cost can be introduced through employing automation process in recruitment and selection processes for the conservation of papers and its impact on the environment. Turner et al., (2019) argued that by automating recruitment process, job applicants can become aware of the green policy of the organisation. Green automation saves costs and add to the firm's environmental branding and reputation. One of the components of green recruitment is the electronic recruitment process. Electronic recruitment process helps in the conservation of energy and pollution associated with the traditional form of recruitment. Transportation costs borne by applicants in the traditional form of recruitment are saved in electronic recruitment and saves the recycling of papers associated with printing and submission of curriculum vitae in green recruitment processes (Dahlmann, Branicki & Brammer, 2019).

Green recruitment practices include the use of job portals for hiring prospective employees, resume scanners, telephonic interview, online or video interviews as may deem appropriate. There are existing challenges known with the implementation of green recruitment in any organisation (Jones et al, 2012). However, the inherent benefits in terms of improved organizational branding, reduced usage of paper and its impact on the environment and the indulgence in green behavioural practices are more important to environmental sustainability discourse in this era of increase climate change challenges and continuous pollution of the environment.

### **Green Recruitment Practices and Employees' Green Behaviour: An Empirical Review**

The broad concept of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) appeared first in the human resource management literature in the 1990s and only went mainstream in the year 2000 (Dahlmann,

Branicki & Brammer, 2019). Going forward, several academic commentaries have argued that employees' green can only be achieved through the application of the right mix of GHRM practices (Dal Maso et al., 2020; Oaya, Ogbu & Remilekun, 2017). One of those practices is green recruitment. The emphasis of this section of the paper is to distill empirical arguments on the nexus between green recruitment and employees green behaviour. In a study of MBA students in the United States of America, Tuner et al., (2019) found that over half of the number of graduates were prepared to take up jobs from an environment-friendly, responsible and compliant organisations (Dumont, Shen & Deng, 2017). The implication of this finding explains the possibility of applicants desiring to work in an environmental friendly and green culture oriented organisation while neglecting other indices such as pay. Again, this analysis showed the importance of green recruitment in the attraction of employees with green behavioural work attitude.

Oaya, Ogbu and Remilekun (2017) and Yu and Ramanathan (2015) separate studies empirically established that green recruitment practices and processes contribute significantly to an organisation's ability to recruit and hire employees with green behaviour competency that can influence an organisation's green behavior brand and image. In Palestine, Masri and Jaaron (2017) analysis showed green recruitment as the most positive and influential GHRM practices among other GHRM practices indicators with green training showing the least impact. Through a mixed method approach, findings from this study established that organisations prefer the use of green recruitment approach in attracting employees with green induced behaviour than the application of green training. Put together, the importance of green recruitment has consistently form the basis of GHRM practices among other indices for green employees' environmental behaviour.

Studies have continued to link GHRM practices with employees' pro-environmental behaviour (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014; Wells, Manika & Graham, 2015). However, the argument pursued in this paper is that green recruitment policies are more linked to employees' psychological ownership, belief systems and norms that are more in sync with the organisation's environmental green behavioural practices. Employees are likely to take green recruitment initiatives when their target are closely related with the self and a feeling of possession and belonging to the organisation (Jones et al, 2012). For instance, Liu (2010) found a significant effect of green recruitment initiative on psychological ownership of Chinese small and medium-sized enterprises. Competency development instilled in employees through green recruitment may also build employees to effectively know the environmental sustainability requirement of their organisation and the appropriate green behavioural disposition required for the actualization. This contention is backed by other management models such as the Expectancy Theory that employees recruited on green recruitment process tend to be more provoked to exhibiting green behaviour and feel more fulfilled when the organisation's environmental goal is actualized (Ones & Dilchert, 2013).

The aggregate of the studies enumerated above have consistently reiterated the importance of green recruitment practices towards employees' green behaviour. Consequently, the important research gap was the focus of these studies on private sector organisation with little or no account credited to the public sector organisation. The current study through the prism of the public sector organisation hopes to stimulate a fresh discussion and understanding of green recruitment and employees' green behaviour to the growing GHRM research and literature.

### **Material and Methods**

The study employs the interpretivist philosophical assumptions as its research philosophy to qualitatively understand green recruitment practices and employees' green behaviour. This philosophical approach affords the opportunity to explore, understand and interprets how green recruitment practices can aid the provocation of employees green behaviour for sustainable green work place. It offers the opportunity to integrate human element into a study with a focus on the meanings and how the meanings

can be interpreted in a research (Creswell, 2012). The human elements involved in this study were human resource personnel selected from the corporate and human resource management cluster of the eThekweni municipality. They were interrogated in order to infer meanings of the nexus between green recruitment practices and how employees can be green behaviour complaint in the organisation. The study was design based on the exploratory research assumptions. The assumptions of the exploratory design was to ensure the expansion the existing knowledge on green recruitment practices and employees' green behaviour (Kumar, 2012). For instance, the existing literature shows research gap on green recruitment practices and green behaviour, particularly with reference to the eThekweni municipality.

The study population comprised of selected units managers and employees of the corporate and human resource management cluster. These selections were based on their knowledge and roles in green recruitment practices in the municipality. A total of 12 sample size were recruited from different sections cluster to participate in the semi-structure interview. This sample size is appropriate and justified to unearth deep and exploratory research findings in a qualitative research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Their selection does not take into account any known criteria or skills, but the mode of interaction between the interviewer and respondents offer a robust and comprehensive understanding of respondents opinions, perception and experiences of the research problem (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Samples were recruited conveniently. First, an initial identification of unit's managers and employees from the cluster were identified. Thereafter, referrals were made to conveniently identify and recruit respondents with the appropriate knowledge of the subject matter from the different units of the cluster (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013).

The study employs the semi-structure interview to elicit data. The rationale was to allow the uncovering of supplementary questions and ensure clarity to all responses in the event of perceived ambiguities (Yin, 2016). An interview schedule was also employed to guide the narration of questions and responses (Yin, 2016). There are known challenges peculiar to the interview data collection including ambiguity of language, vagueness of responses and the misinterpretation of questions and responses respectively (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). These challenges were mitigated in this study by ensuring that the interview questions were structured in a friendly and easy-to-comprehend language and the questions were arrange to eliminate any barrier of misinterpretation on the part of the respondents. The interview procedure followed all the COVID-19 non-pharmaceutical guidelines in the prevention and spread of the COVID-19 virus. The entire interview procedure lasted between February, 2021 and April, 2021 culminating in a total of 3 months. The interviews were recorded and appropriate complementary notes were observed to ensure clarity. The interview commenced with a brief introduction of the researcher and the aim of the research. The general questions bordered on the nexus between green recruitment practices and employees green behaviour in the workplace. The specific questions include; what are green recruitment best practices in the eThekweni municipality? What are the challenges of aligning green recruitment practices with employees' green behaviour in the eThekweni municipality?

In a bid to ensure the reliability of the qualitative data, the Trochim and Donnelly's (2007) four steps of ensuring the reliability of the qualitative data were employed including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of data. The credibility of the data was ascertained by ensuring that the opinions of all the respondents reflected in the results and findings of the study. The transferability of data was pursued by ensuring that the results and findings of the study are transferable to other research context, while dependability was ensured through compliance with all ethical rules and guidelines. For example, this study was approved by the Humanities and Social Science Research Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa with protocol number HSSREC/00000377/2019. Similarly, a gate-keeper certificate was issued from the eThekweni municipality among other ethical worthiness. Conclusively, the conformability of data was ascertained by ensuring a nexus between the data set and the results of the study. The NVivo (v.12) qualitative software was utilized for the identification of themes and sub-themes from the transcribed interviews. Thereafter, the different themes and sub-themes were

made sense of with the content qualitative analytic tool. In all, the data present important insights into understanding of green recruitment practices as a measure for the realisation of green behaviour and the inherent implementation challenges.

### Analyses and Interpretation of Results

#### Green Recruitment Best Practices and Green Environmental Behavior

The importance of green recruitment initiatives is no doubt supported with the myriads of environmental work place challenges in which the changing global warmings and other environmental pollution issues have engendered. Human resource professionals, policy makers and environmental sustainability enthusiasts have continued to raise concerns on how recruitment practices and approaches can best be environmentally modified to reduce its impact on the environment. The sentiments towards the realisation of green environmental behaviour on the part of organisations need a careful integration of appropriate green recruitment procedures into the fabrics of the recruitment and placement exercise in order to dwindle the environmental effect of the traditional recruitment practices on the work environment. In so doing, employees can become green environment behavior-inclined. Realizing a high level of compliance to green environmental behaviour where green values, attitudes and perceptions are being respected and uphold in an organisation cannot be achieved in isolation of the best green recruitment model and practices.

The majority of the respondents interviewed clearly explained that some green recruitment models are in place in the municipality and are being utilized in the recruitment and selection of applicants for various job positions. For instance, these green models include the elimination of paper-based curriculum vitae (CV) and applications for jobs, the advertising of jobs on LinkedIn and other familiar e-career platforms to replace the traditional paper and physical application routine, the practice of green psychometric test where prospective employees are being evaluated on their green value knowledge (see Figure 1). Other green recruitment model includes the application of video calling such as Skype to facilitates online interview process in place of the physical interview process, gradual roll-out of electronic time and attendance policy and the compulsory application of jobs on e-platforms (see Figure 1). In particular, the need to expunge the use of paper based CV and applications for jobs neatly support a pro-environmental initiative. For instance, many of the environmental degradation and other pollution concerns are engendered by the harmful impact of paper on the environment. Similarly, paper use has caused and led to many pollution-related problems in recent time. One of the respondents reported below:

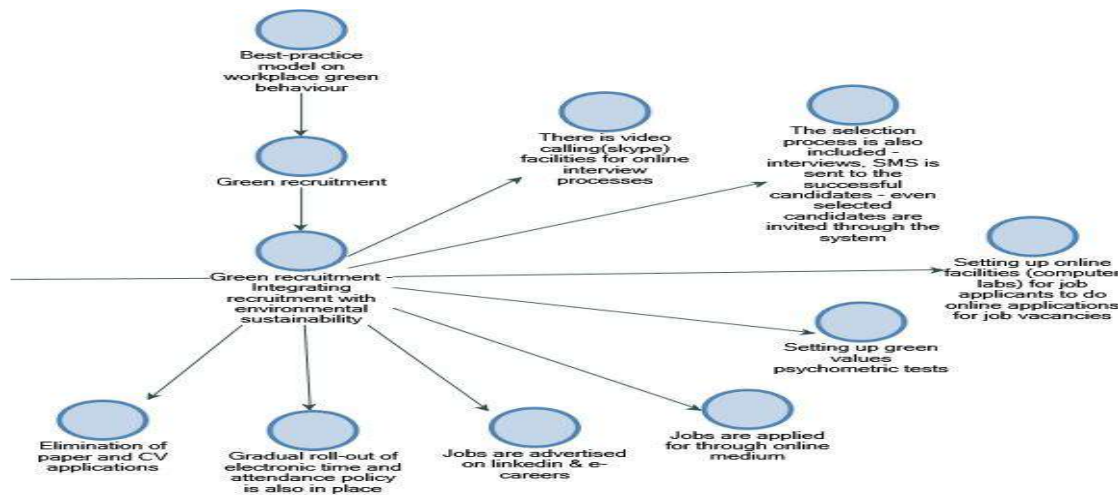


Figure 1: Green recruitment best practice model

We often receive loads of applications and for each this means you have to filter through these manual applications. You can imagine, we use to have a lot of paper and this required high level of manpower to sort into different race and groups accordingly in tandem with how they meet the job requirement one after each other. So with the automated process where paper CV and manual applications are being eliminated, you can quickly draw a report on a candidate and this can be done through killer questions. The point I am trying to pass across is that the fade off of the traditional pattern of recruitment with the elimination of paper CV and manual applications has encouraged a greener environmental work behaviour.

In contrast to the above submission, other sentiments were shared on the controversy of adaptability of the green recruitment agenda by members of the local community. For instance, this include the lack of acceptance and appropriate utilization of the green recruitment initiative for a greener environment and green work place behaviour. In other words, it cannot be entirely ruled out that the municipality is not fully green recruitment compliant as there are still some pockets of the traditional recruitment procedure in place. One of the respondents shared some highlights below:

We have had many people from the local communities saying that they do not have access to computers and internet and that they cannot apply online. So we have to still use the old traditional means where papers CV's and applications are being submitted, although there are enough room for people who would prefer to submit online to do so. So it is a mix of paper CV and application and green recruitment process. Honestly, we are not there yet in terms of full compliance with green recruitment and it is expected that achieving green environmental behaviour is still not close.

The changing world order has conveyed several improvements in all human facets, especially technological innovations that have continually make the execution of work easy. Notwithstanding also, technological advancement has also supported the application of green recruitment for a greener work behaviour and environment. For instance, technological innovations have birthed various applications that are positive to green recruitment including utility of micro-blog applications such as Skype and Zoom for the conduct of virtual interviews without physical contacts. The majority of the respondents unanimously agreed that conducting interviews using micro-blog applications such as Skype has in recent times reduced the impact of face-to-face interviews, thereby dwindling emissions and environmental pollution. A recruitment specialist in the municipality reported below:

We are aware of the importance of green recruitment. In trying to contribute towards a greener environment and green behaviour initiatives in the eThekweni municipality, we now have an online interview process. We have introduced Skype as one of our interview processes so that we will not only eradicate cost of physical presence, but importantly reduced emissions and pollution when we have a large number of people for interviews. I can tell you that the Skype interview is in place now and will kick up any time soon.

Another respondent reiterated on the importance of conducting virtual interviews as a path to becoming greener in terms of the work environment and employees' work green behaviour.

I think we have to look at it from the many advantages of having our interviews virtually, maybe through Skype or Zoom as maybe appropriate. We can no longer remain where we are in terms of the traditional interview method of recruitment. We need to move with the trends if we are actually serious about becoming a greener workplace. So going forward, the municipality should invest more in ensuring that interviews are conducted virtually to reduce the impact of people gathering in numbers, if we are really talking about achieving green work behaviour through green recruitment initiative.

The vast majority of the respondents also emphasized the importance of job advertisement on micro-blogs like LinkedIn, the municipality website and other e-career platforms as green recruitment



measures. This narrative was also argued to avail a number of advantage to job applicants in terms of travelling for job applications, especially applicants from the hinterlands on the one hand. On the other hand, advertising jobs through appropriate platforms affords the municipality the opportunity of reducing applicant physical presence and in return reducing emissions and environmental pollution that threatens the feasibility of green environment and workplace behaviour. Other opinions shared reflect the call for the alignment of all advertising and recruitment processes through the major online job advertising platforms. One of the respondents explained as follows:

We use to have it done manually by receiving applications forms. This is after we must have advertised these jobs on the newspapers such as *Sunday Tribune* and *Sunday Times* etc. But now, jobs are being advertised via LinkedIn and other e-career platforms. So that means we are going more online. The manual application process has been severely cut down because there are lots of job application that come through the online medium.

A reiteration of the above position on green advertising was also repeated by another respondent:

Most of our advertisement and applications were manually conducted. You can imagine receiving about 30,000 applications for one single job position. So what we are doing now is to move to a new system like LinkedIn. So there will be no need for CV or paper applications. The only people that need to bring their CVs are the people that have been shortlisted, for everybody will have to go online and apply.

Green recruitment was argued through the lens of psychometric test. For instance, it was argued that the pursuit of a greener environment and employee's compliance with green behavioural disposition can also be unraveled through the application of psychometric test on prospective employees during recruitment and selection processes. In other words, the value of the employees can be checked against their green behaviour dispositions during the recruitment and selection process. One of the respondents talked about the importance of psychometric test in understanding employees' green behaviour initiatives as follows:

We can achieve green environment through psychometric testing. For example, during recruitment we can assess the value of the candidate to see the cultural fit for the organisation in terms of environmental sustainability and their possible adherence to green behaviour measures. Presently, we do not have psychometric assessment yet, we are still trying to come up with the idea. So, the assessment will be out to help screen the values and personality of the applicant during recruitment and one can tell if this person is green inclined and will pursue the green behaviour initiative of the organisation.

### **Challenges of Aligning Green Recruitment Practices with Green Environmental Behaviour**

The integration of green recruitment practices into green environmental behaviour model cannot be unconnected from challenges ranging from implementation and other change management constraints. For instance, the human resource management of the organisation saddled with the policy implementation are often confronted with myriads of challenges in a bid to introduce and implement new policies such as the green recruitment. The majority of the respondents explained that implementing green recruitment practices for a sustainable work environment where the culture of green behaviour can be instilled in employees have consistently been constrained with several challenges. This concern has continued to raise important questions within the green human resource management (GHRM) literature on the roles and responsibilities of human resource management in ensuring that the culture of green recruitment is swiftly integrated into the organisation's human resource culture with little or no hassles.

Accordingly, these challenges include political interference in the green recruitment policy of the organisation, lack of adequate online knowledge and skills on the part of many job applicants, and the

presence of manual- based employment process still being practiced in some units of the municipality (Figure 2). Other challenges include resistance to change on the part of unions and other members of the society to green recruitment implementation, and applicants from the hinterland communities having limited access to online facilities such as computers and internet (Figure 2). In particular, the problem of political interference is characterized by the excessive involvement of political leaders and party loyalists in the conduct of green recruitment exercise where their favourite or preferred candidates are often imposed on the municipality without following the due process of the green recruitment. One of the respondents lamented about the concern of political interference as follows:

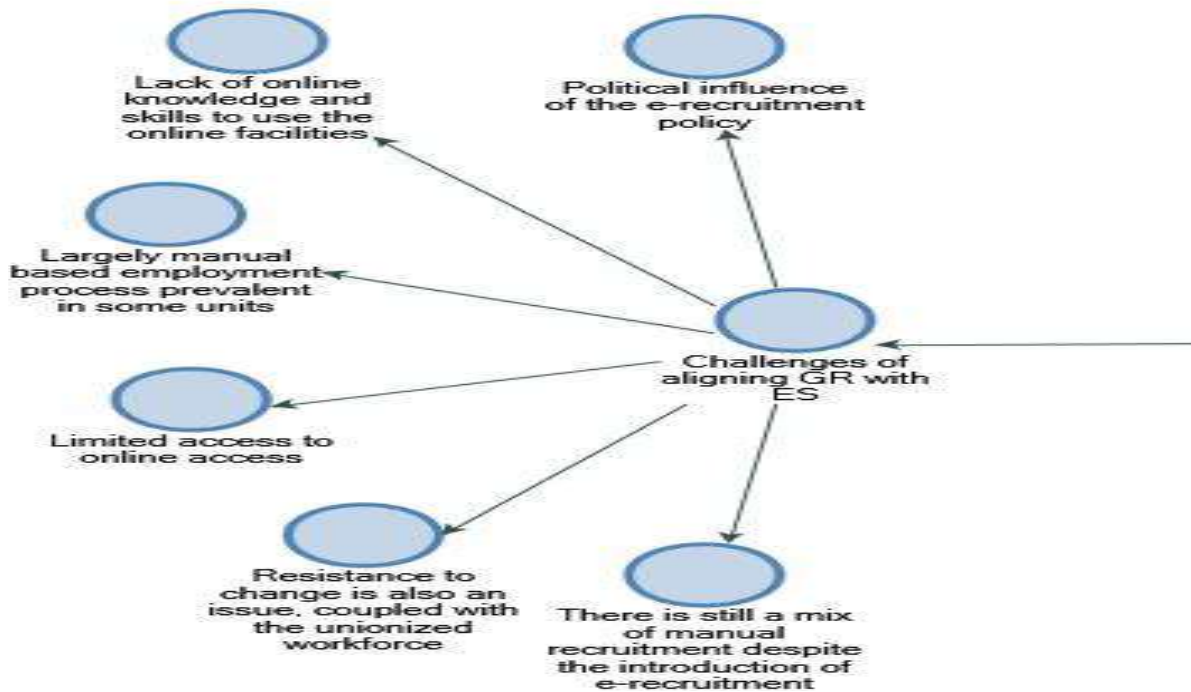


Figure 2: Challenges of green recruitment practices

I think we need to talk about the problem of political interference as a challenge which has remained a very serious one in seeing to the success of the green recruitment implementation in the municipality. There are a number of times where politicians do disregard the green recruitment policies and procedures by demanding the employment of their preferred candidates without following due procedures like applying online. They just come with the paper CV and documents of the candidates and give instructions that the candidates must be employed. This is a shortfall on the progress of the green recruitment initiative with consequence on the green behaviour of both the employees and organisation.

The concern of lack of online knowledge and skills on the part of many applicants has continued to pose hindrance to the realisation of green environmental work behaviour through green recruitment practices. For instance, majority of the respondents argued that a large number of job applicants, to an extent, especially those from the rural areas who lack appropriate skills and knowledge of the usage of the internet and computers to access job applications and apply for jobs. It was further contended that applicants approach the municipality with paper copy applications negating the green policy initiative of the eradication of papers for environmental sustainability in the workplace. These arguments reflect an urgent need for a mass education on computer knowledge and skill acquisition within the municipality in

order to dwindle the lack of online knowledge skills on the part of job applicants. This measure, no doubt, will help increase the numbers of online knowledge applicants for progress in the green recruitment agenda and environmental sustainability. One of the respondents explained:

Aligning green recruitment practices with green environmental behaviour and sustainability has continued to be a serious challenge from the job applicants' perspectives. I am aware that most job applicants do not have the requisite online knowledge and skills to effectively apply for jobs. This on its own has been a problem to the green recruitment initiative of the municipality. We have seen people bringing their paper CV and documents to the municipality to submit for job applications despite the online application portals. There is no way we can have green behaviour and environmental sustainability with this.

Majority of the respondents also highlighted the challenge of limited access to online facilities for job applicants. This concern reflects the state of many local communities in municipality where access to information technology tools such as computer and internet facilities are sparse. A number of respondents argued that the green recruitment initiative has continued to suffer setback due to the non-availability of these facilities where applicants from the rural communities can have access in order to submit their applications through the e-portals thereby showing commitment to the progress of the green recruitment and green environmental behaviour agenda. These arguments support the narrative pursued in this paper on the roles and responsibilities of the municipality in ensuring the success of the green recruitment initiative through adequate provision of facilities needed for the promotion of green agenda. One of the respondents reported the lack of these facilities in the following lines:

We are not there yet in terms of meeting up with the provision and access to online facilities for members of the rural communities to access and apply for jobs when the need arise. But we have made some effort in this regard. For instance, we now have some computer labs in the city and one in our office here. The one in the city is of the general use for people to apply for jobs, while the one in our office is for our staff to use when they also want to apply for jobs. The whole idea is to reduce the use of paper applications and to support the green recruitment campaign.

The problem of resistance to change was agreed as a constraint to green recruitment with consequential effect on green environmental behaviour. The large constituents of the respondents argued that the municipality has been confronted with two strands of resistance to change from the traditional recruitment of paper submission to a more greener and friendlier. For instance, one of the resistance include the habit and behaviour of members of the communities in terms of compliance to the green recruitment agenda of the municipality. It was argued, that despite the continuous campaigns and provisions of computer labs where people can access internet to submit their applications, a large number from the members of the communities will still prefer to bring in paper applications. This is a strong resistance to change and it is really affecting how far we can go in this green recruitment agenda such that we can have a pro-environmental green behaviour among staff. One of the respondents echoes as follows:

As you know, resistance to change has remained a problem to the progress of any policy. There are excellent policies that were made moribund with resistance to change. We have been facing that here as a municipality and I do not think that will end anytime soon. For instance, in this journey of becoming green as an organisation through our recruitment practices, we have campaigned severally that people should use the computer labs to access facilities and apply for jobs if they do not have personal one. But the reverse is the case. We still see people come here to submit CV in papers.

Another respondent talked about the challenge of resistance to change from the prism of union resistance in the eThekweni municipality.

We have also had a number of resistance from the unions and we still do. Unions are always out to protect the interest of their members and that is understandable, but not in the area of resisting change that will be beneficial to all stakeholders in the organisation. We have had unions telling us that their members are not supposed to go through the rigorous process of applying for jobs online that they should rather submit in person. With several attempt to explain that the whole agenda is to become green as an organisation, the municipality has been seeing a lot of challenge from this angle.

### **Discussion and Interpretations of Results**

The focus of this study has been to interrogate the place of green recruitment practices in the actualization of employees' green behaviour. The goal was to examine the discourse of environmental sustainability beyond the themes of pollution and climate change to a more robust GHRM issues such as green recruitment practices. This exploration no doubt offers a rich empirical laboratory for understanding the role of the human resource towards a sustainable and green work environment. Harnessing green recruitment practices to employees' green behaviour has been argued as an important measure that integrate work values and culture required for environmental sustainability. As shown from the study, several green recruitment practices were explained including the replacement of paper CV and applications with automated application systems. This green initiative support the campaign against the incessant use of paper in order to reduce the effect of paper pollution. Similarly, interviews are now green-inclined with the introduction of micro-blog applications such as Skype. Again, this measure was aimed at reducing emissions and pollution that physical or in-person interviews can generate. These findings corroborate with similar debates in the GHRM literature (Wehrmeyer, 2017; Lervik & Sutherland, 2017).

Findings also show that green recruitment measure requires the set-up of online facilities including computer laboratories as job application hubs. This argument is to ease the tension of paper application on the work environment and as a measure of imbuing green behaviour culture. One important finding is the use of psychometric test for the evaluation of applicants' green behaviour. Accordingly, this is to ensure applicants possess the appropriate green value and culture before their onboarding into the organisation. The use of micro-blogs such as LinkedIn and other e-career portals were also highlighted as a green recruitment initiative of the municipality. Put together, these findings agree with similar existing argument in the GHRM literature (Ojo, Tan & Alias, 2020; Le Roux & Pretorius, 2016).

On the challenges of green recruitment practices, findings shows the problem of political interference in recruitment processes and lack of online knowledge and skills on the part of many job applicants. For instance, the conundrums of political interference has impacted the municipality's efforts of green initiatives where politicians imposed candidates without following due green recruitment procedures. These findings aligns with other similar studies (Turner et al., 2019). Similarly, there were evidences of limited access to online facilities where job applicants can apply for jobs. This challenge has continued to promote the traditional paper submission of applications, especially from applicants from local communities lacking access to computers and internet facilities (Dal Maso et al., 2020). In other words, the agenda of green recruitment has continued to suffer some setbacks in the eThekweni municipality. Lastly, the concern of resistance to change was also highlighted. Community members and unions were shown to be resistant to the change of the traditional recruitment practice to a greener recruitment practice, thus hindering the progress of green recruitment initiative in the municipality. These highlights were backed by similar arguments (Oaya, Ogbu and Remilekun, 2017; Masri & Jaaron, 2017).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The discourse of green recruitment as a measure for environmental sustainability and employees' green behaviour has long remained of interest to human resource practitioners and policy analysts

interested in climate change and environmental pollution debates. The analysis of this debate from the prism of the public organisation offers an interesting insight into the importance of GHRM and employees' green behaviour from a nuance perspective. Thus, the interrogation of GHRM beyond the context of the private sector establishment offers a new research paradigm in the broad human resource management literature. The study concluded that while the traditional recruitment pattern continued to affect environmental sustainability and green behaviour agenda of the municipality, the importance of appropriating a more strategic and innovative measure in terms of green recruitment approach cannot be over-emphasized.

Overall, the study recommends a collaborative effort from all stakeholders in the municipality to earnestly wake up to the challenge of green recruitment, especially in the area of addressing the consistent political interference in recruitment exercise. In addition, the human resource management must be willing to address the concern of resistance to green recruitment practice. Finally, all efforts must be put to check in the area of provision of access to online facilities in the interest of local community members. This gesture is argued to promote green recruitment and strengthen pro-environmental behaviour in the municipality. On future studies, the study hereby suggest a comparative study of two municipalities in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa for a comprehensive understanding of green recruitment practices.

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