



COLLECTIVE WORKER RESISTANCE TO GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT POLICIES: DIFFERENCES IN AGE, GENDER, STATUS, AND SUBCULTURE SOLIDARITY

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Abstract

This research examines collective resistance to Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) through the perspective of conflict sociology, focusing on differences in age, gender, and employment status, as well as subcultural solidarity mechanisms that reinforce rejection. This qualitative literature study utilizes a thematic analysis framework. Findings indicate that senior workers resist through organized apathy, middle aged workers through pragmatic calculation, and young workers through the contradiction between ecological values and personal autonomy. Male workers express rejection openly, while female workers utilize passive-aggressive strategies. Subcultural solidarity strengthens resistance through shared narratives, counter-knowledge, hidden spaces, coded language, social sanctions, humor, rituals, exploitation of system loopholes, external alliances, dispersed leadership, transformation of meaning, and continuous adaptation. Theoretical implications enrich GHRM literature with a conflict perspective, while practical implications offer guidance for management to design green policies that are responsive to workplace social dynamics.

Keywords: collective resistance, GHRM, conflict sociology, subculture solidarity, workplace demographics, organizational change, power

Introduction

The transformation toward environmentally friendly organizations has become a mainstream trend in contemporary human resource management. Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices are designed to foster ecological awareness, reduce carbon footprints, and create sustainable work systems (Din & Khan, 2025). The implementation of this environmentally oriented management holds a strategic role in building new competencies while bridging workers' skill gaps toward the green economy era (Essa & Mardikaningsih, 2023). However, various green initiatives often encounter obstacles when implemented on the production floor, in offices, or in operational units. Resistance does not stem solely from technical inability, but from complex social calculations. Some workers perceive green policy changes as a threat to routines, status, or benefits they have long enjoyed. This viewpoint is formed from collective experiences, not merely individual rejection. In observations of several manufacturing companies, long-tenured workers showed a higher tendency to resist the reduction of single-use plastic usage. They feel that such changes disrupt work methods that have already proven efficient. This pattern of resistance reveals that GHRM cannot detach itself from the social dynamics within work groups.

When green policies are introduced, workers' reactions are not homogeneous. Some work units respond positively because they see opportunities for skill enhancement or social recognition (Zappalà et al., 2023). A positive acceptance of this work system change essentially contributes directly to overall organizational effectiveness through the alignment of environmentally based governance (Mardikaningsih, 2024a). Conversely, other groups build collectively organized informal defenses. This resistance is often manifested in forms such as work slowdowns, minor sabotage, or the spreading of negative narratives about the benefits of green programs. Interestingly, such resistance is often triggered by the perception that changes are driven by top management without involving field workers. In organizational structures, older workers feel their positions are increasingly marginalized when green policies demand adaptation to new technologies. Meanwhile, female workers perceive an additional burden due to already dense domestic tasks. Each demographic category brings different experiences regarding change. Therefore, understanding collective

resistance requires dissecting how age, gender, and status groups build subcultural solidarity that strengthens rejection. Without this understanding, GHRM implementation will remain stagnant.

Generational differences are one of the most apparent axes of resistance in the workplace (Jonathan, 2025). Senior workers who have served for two decades or more possess long organizational memories. They have witnessed various change programs come and go, making them prone to skepticism toward promises of green transformation. For this group, new policies are often interpreted as management's attempt to cut operational costs under the guise of environmentalism. Bitter experiences from previous change programs form a distinct lens through which they evaluate GHRM. This skeptical assessment ignores the fact that the alignment between green organizational culture and GHRM is crucial in shaping workers' collective environmental behavior in the workplace (Essa & Mardikaningsih, 2024). On the other hand, younger workers entering the workforce generally appear more open to ecological values. They grew up in an era of higher environmental awareness, so resistance emerges less frequently from younger age groups. However, concluding that age is the sole determinant should not be done hastily. In some sectors, younger workers actually show resistance when green policies are considered to disrupt work flexibility or eliminate certain facilities (Verma & Suri, 2025). Clearly, this intergenerational conflict does not stand alone but is related to the distribution of authority and access to organizational resources.

Gender dimensions also reveal distinct patterns of resistance toward GHRM. Male workers in the heavy industry sector often associate their work with physical performance and production speed. Green policies that demand emission reduction or waste recycling are viewed as inhibitors of established work rhythms. Conversely, female workers tend to be more responsive to health and safety issues related to the work environment. However, resistance from female workers emerges when green policies add responsibilities without equivalent compensation. For example, waste-sorting programs in offices are often burdened upon cleaning staff, who are predominantly female, without additional training or incentives. In such situations, subcultural solidarity is formed among female workers who feel an unfair distribution of burdens. They organize themselves quietly to resist full compliance with green policies. This form of resistance

is difficult to detect by management because it does not appear as an open conflict (Nguyet, 2025). This latent non-compliance reflects a failure in value internalization, even though the comprehensive integration of human resource quality is a primary prerequisite for encouraging optimal work performance and building long-term employee loyalty (Darmawan et al., 2020). Thus, conflict sociology analysis is needed to uncover the hidden mechanisms that strengthen collective rejection of GHRM.

Employment status whether permanent or contract and one's position in the organizational hierarchy also shape patterns of resistance. Contract workers, lacking the guarantee of job security, tend to be more compliant with new policies due to the fear of losing their livelihoods (Kalandia, 2022). However, external compliance does not always equate to the internalization of green values. They perform procedures in a minimalist fashion without sincerity, which ultimately undermines the goals of GHRM. Conversely, permanent workers with the protection of strong labor unions are bolder in voicing their disagreement openly. They utilize formal forums, such as work meetings or collective bargaining, to reject specific aspects of green policies. Resistance from these high-status groups is often cloaked in technical language and rational argumentation, making it difficult to categorize as pure rejection. Yet, behind this professional rhetoric lies an effort to maintain privileges threatened by change. Efforts to maintain a secure position are related to the possession of individual strategic competencies that constitute human capital, where the management of such human capital plays a vital role in boosting the company's total value in the market (Mardikaningsih, 2018). Subcultures among middle managers, for instance, build solidarity to slow down the implementation of green policies that reduce their department budgets. This phenomenon shows that collective resistance to GHRM is a complex power game, where various work groups struggle to defend their interests.

Collective resistance to GHRM cannot be understood merely as a failure of communication or a lack of socialization by management (Kurdi-Nakra & Pak, 2022). The root of the problem lies in the clash between the ecological values one wishes to instill and the values already embedded within the work group's subculture. Each age group brings different historical experiences regarding organizational change. Senior workers, for example, often construct a narrative that green policies are merely a

temporary managerial fad that will be abandoned after a few years. Such social constructs are reinforced through daily interactions in the breakroom, during lunch hours, or on the ride home together. Stories about the failure of previous programs become symbolic capital that binds their solidarity. Meanwhile, younger workers do not share the same collective memory, but they develop resistance when green policies are perceived as relying on excessive control over personal lifestyles, such as the prohibition of single-use plastic water bottles. This issue is increasingly complex because resistance is rarely expressed as overt rejection of environmental goals. Instead, resistance is manifested in subtle daily practices, such as ignoring recycling procedures when supervisors are not present, or slowing down workflows to demonstrate the inefficiency of a new system. To reduce such social friction and rejection, management can implement a gamification approach in employee training as an innovative method to increase work engagement and the effectiveness of learning new regulations (Eddine & Darmawan, 2022). This step is crucial because management often struggles to distinguish between technical inability and intentional refusal, causing interventions to often miss the target.

The dimensions of gender and employment status add to the complexity of the issue because resistance is not always horizontal among workers, but vertical, involving power relations (Kuehni, 2018). Female workers in administrative positions face a double burden when green policies demand behavioral changes at work and at home simultaneously. If a company promotes the reduction of electrical energy consumption, female workers who are already burdened by domestic affairs feel pressured to remain vigilant in two realms at once. This accumulation of burdens triggers passive resistance, such as not turning off computers at night under the pretext of forgetting. Meanwhile, male workers on the production line tend to resist in a more explicit manner, such as complaining about the decrease in production targets due to convoluted environmental procedures. Contractual employment status makes resistance difficult to detect because workers fear reporting their discomfort openly. They choose to comply with policies in front of their superiors but violate them behind their backs. This form of covert resistance is actually the most damaging because it creates a chasm between designed policies and the reality on the ground. This phenomenon of deviation underscores the importance of

refining HR governance, where human resource management must be based on strategic competencies aligned with the direction of organizational change (Darmawan & Mardikaningsih, 2016). Labor unions, which should act as a bridge, are often trapped in an ambiguous position. They support environmental principles but must defend members who feel harmed by green policies. Without careful mapping of the dynamics of resistance based on age, gender, and status, every GHRM implementation effort will continue to repeat the same pattern: grand policies that fail at the grassroots level.

External pressure on organizations to adopt sustainable business practices grows stronger year by year. Regulators are imposing stricter environmental standards, consumers are demanding carbon footprint transparency, and investors are shifting funds to companies with good environmental performance. In this situation, GHRM becomes a key instrument for transforming worker behavior (Bhakuni, 2025). However, without an adequate understanding of collective resistance, massive resources will be squandered. Many companies have invested funds in training, infrastructure changes, and green incentive systems, but the results are far from expectations. The study of collective resistance to GHRM from the perspective of conflict sociology provides a lens that has hitherto been overlooked in management literature. Most GHRM research still focuses on individual factors such as attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Yet, in many workplaces, the decision to support or reject green policies is made collectively through informal negotiation within the group. A worker might personally support recycling, but the pressure of skeptical peers overrides their personal beliefs. Understanding the mechanisms of subcultural solidarity that strengthen resistance is critical so that management interventions do not merely touch the surface of behavior, but change the social dynamics within the work group.

Furthermore, the world of work is undergoing rapid demographic changes. Baby boomers are beginning to retire, Generation X is at the peak of their careers, and millennials and Gen Z dominate the workforce. Each generation brings a different value orientation toward environmental issues. However, interestingly, collective resistance does not always follow generational patterns linearly (Mohammed, 2025). In some organizations, senior and junior workers actually unite against green policies for different

reasons, creating unexpected coalitions (Allan & Robinson, 2022). This phenomenon requires an explanation not provided by conventional organizational change theories. The perspective of conflict sociology offers a framework for analyzing how seemingly contradictory interests are unified by a common enemy. At the same time, the gender gap in the workplace remains a hot issue, with green policies potentially deepening or actually reducing inequality. For example, if green programs disproportionately burden female workers, the collective resistance from this group reinforces the gender equality movement in the workplace. An examination of this topic has become urgent because, every day, organizations lose the opportunity to create a green transformation that is both fair and effective. Without evidence-based intervention regarding the dynamics of resistance, social conflict in the workplace will continue to undermine the good intentions behind GHRM policies.

This research aims to identify and analyze the patterns of collective resistance toward GHRM policies based on differences in age, gender, and employment status, as well as to reveal the subcultural solidarity mechanisms that reinforce such resistance through the framework of conflict sociology. The theoretical contribution of this research is to enrich the GHRM literature with a conflict perspective, which has been dominated by functional and individual psychology approaches. This research also offers a typology of collective resistance that can be used to distinguish various forms of rejection based on the demographic characteristics of workgroups. Practically, the results of this study provide guidance for human resource managers and policymakers to design interventions that are responsive to social dynamics in the workplace, rather than merely uniform training programs for all workers. An understanding of subcultural solidarity also paves the way for change strategies that utilize informal leaders within groups as agents of green transformation.

Method

This research utilizes a systematic qualitative literature study design. Creswell (2009) asserts that a qualitative approach in literature studies aims to build an interpretative understanding of social phenomena through the review of relevant academic texts. Unlike field research that collects primary data from interviews or observations, qualitative literature studies rely on an

in-depth exploration of journal articles, books, conference proceedings, and previous research reports. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) refer to this approach as document analysis, positioning the researcher as the primary instrument in interpreting meanings from the available collection of texts. In this study, focus is given to literature discussing Green Human Resource Management, organizational resistance, workplace conflict sociology, and group dynamics based on age, gender, and employment status. The procedure followed begins with the determination of search keywords, followed by the selection of sources based on publisher reputation and citation rates, then thematic content analysis to identify patterns of collective resistance. Booth, Sutton, and Papaioannou (2012) underline the importance of transparency in every stage of source selection so that readers can assess the rigor of the process performed. This research does not limit itself to a single discipline, but rather embraces management, social psychology, and organizational sociology to obtain a comprehensive picture of collective resistance toward green change.

The data analysis technique applied is qualitative thematic analysis as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process consists of six phases: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the final report. The entire text from the selected literature was read repeatedly to capture the nuances of meaning regarding how workgroups based on age, gender, and status construct resistance to GHRM. Initial codes such as "older generation skepticism," "female double burden," or "labor union protection" were grouped into larger themes. To maintain the credibility of the interpretation, Silverman (2005) recommends the use of the trail audit technique, which is the documentation of every analytical decision so that readers can track the researcher's line of reasoning. This literature study also adopts the principle of reflexivity, where the researcher consciously examines how personal background and assumptions may influence the interpretation process. With this method, the research is expected to produce a theoretical synthesis that does not merely summarize old findings, but rather offers a new understanding of collective resistance to GHRM through the lens of conflict sociology.

Result and Discussion

Age, Gender, and Status Characteristics in Shaping Collective Resistance Patterns toward GHRM

Worker groups based on age demonstrate different resistance patterns toward green policies. Senior workers who have surpassed twenty years of service tend to build resistance through narratives of historical experience. They recall various change programs promised by management in the past, ranging from total quality management to six sigma, most of which ended without sustainability. When GHRM policies are introduced, this collective memory is immediately activated. In informal spaces such as cafeterias or smoking areas, stories about the failure of previous programs are disseminated as warnings. The pattern of resistance that emerges is not frontal rejection, but organized apathy. Senior workers still attend green training sessions and sign commitments, but they return to old behaviors as soon as supervision ends. This type of resistance is difficult to measure because they are formally compliant. What distinguishes it is the intensity of minimal compliance. A senior worker turns off office lights as instructed but leaves the air conditioning running overnight for fabricated technical reasons. Management often mistakenly interprets this attitude as forgetfulness or inability, when it is actually a form of subtle resistance against changes deemed to threaten established routines (Bensouda & Benali, 2023). This hidden rejection contradicts the organizational need to distribute key drivers evenly to enhance overall organizational effectiveness (Darmawan, 2024).

Middle-aged workers or Generation X exhibit a more pragmatic resistance pattern. They are at the peak of their family and career responsibilities, so the decision to support or reject GHRM is based on rational cost-benefit calculations (Mishra et al., 2025). This group is not allergic to change as long as the benefits are clear and the costs are not disproportionately borne by them. This rational acceptance requires mature environmental and HR policy management strategies to create sustainable organizations capable of boosting company performance (Hariani et al., 2022). Resistance arises when green policies demand extra time or effort without equivalent compensation. For instance, a paper reduction program with a digital recording system forces middle-aged workers who are less tech-savvy to learn new systems outside of working hours. They do not reject

openly for fear of appearing outdated, but they slow down the adaptation process by complaining about the system's complexity. These complaints are delivered not to direct superiors, but to team members experiencing similar difficulties. Gradually, silent solidarity forms where each group member supports one another not to be in a hurry to master the new system. Management observes low adoption rates and blames the training design, without realizing that collective resistance is being built at the micro level. This pattern shows that resistance is not always explicit, but manifests as collectively coordinated informal slowdowns. In reality, the success of such digitalization programs is highly determined by key determinants and strategies for developing solid digital teamwork dynamics within an organization (Mardikaningsih, Darmawan, & Nuralasari, 2020).

Younger workers from the millennial and Gen Z generations demonstrate the most contradictory resistance patterns (Tan et al., 2025). In terms of values, they grow up with higher ecological awareness than previous generations. Most claim to care about climate change and support sustainable practices. The emergence of resistance from a group with environmental insight is an anomaly, considering that internal locus of control and deep ecological understanding should be key roles in consistently driving pro-environmental behavior (Nuraini et al., 2022). However, when GHRM policies touch on personal aspects such as reducing single-use plastic in work areas or restricting electricity consumption for personal devices, resistance actually emerges from this group. Field facts show that environmental awareness levels and personal lifestyle preferences are not always directly proportional to the actual actions of individuals in limiting daily plastic waste usage (Issalillah, 2025). They reject these policies because they are considered a form of excessive lifestyle monitoring. A young worker proudly brings their own tumbler to the office but gets angry when prohibited from using a portable room heater at their desk. Resistance from this group is often expressed digitally through closed chat groups. In these virtual spaces, they send memes mocking company green policies, share tips on how to avoid detection while violating rules, or simply vent their frustrations. This digital solidarity is difficult for management to penetrate because it occurs outside official communication systems. More complexly, young workers who openly support GHRM in front of superiors become resistance leaders in

digital spaces. This ambiguity renders conventional interventions like internal campaigns or reward systems ineffective. To minimize this lifestyle-based rejection, organizations need to encourage sustainable behavior change through intensive education programs and participatory public awareness improvement (Gautama & Mardikaningsih, 2022).

The gender dimension brings very different resistance patterns between male and female workers. Male workers in operational sectors such as factories, warehouses, or transportation tend to resist green policies in an overt manner. They complain that environmental procedures slow down production targets, add administrative burdens, or reduce freedom of movement in the work area. These complaints are voiced in meetings using technical language regarding efficiency and productivity. On the surface, they do not reject environmental values but question implementations deemed unrealistic. This technical-argument-based rejection often hinders the integration of green technology in management, which is actually crucial for social sustainability and long-term environmental conservation (Mardikaningsih & Wardoyo, 2024). However, behind this rational rhetoric lies resistance to changes that disrupt work masculinity. In male work cultures within industrial sectors, speed, physical strength, and the ability to make quick decisions are symbols of status. Green policies requiring layered inspections before waste disposal or convoluted emergency procedures are viewed as the castration of their authority. Subcultural solidarity among male workers is reinforced through jokes about ridiculous green rules, silent challenges to violate procedures without getting caught, or collective defense when one member is reprimanded by a superior. This resistance pattern is very difficult to break because it is attached to deeply embedded gender identities. This phenomenon also reflects major challenges in sustainable human resource development when faced with technology disruption and new regulations (Oluwatoyin & Mardikaningsih, 2024).

Female workers in the context of resistance toward green policies demonstrate a more hidden yet systemic pattern. Because organizational culture penalizes women who speak out as uncooperative, they rarely reject policies frontally. Instead, resistance is manifested in the form of over-compliance that actually defeats the policy's purpose (Schredl & Lipinsky, 2025). For instance, when required to sort waste into three categories, female workers in the office kitchen comply strictly but do so inefficiently

that other tasks are neglected. This over-compliance serves as an implicit message that green policies burden workers without adequate resource support. To break this cycle of passive resistance, organizations are required to implement fair green performance appraisals as an instrument to reinforce a transparent green organizational culture (Mardikaningsih & Wardoyo, 2024b). This structuring step is urgent to align the diverse backgrounds of workers with the sustainable development agenda. Through the integration of inclusive diversity and sustainability, management can positively impact work performance, boost corporate competitiveness, and simultaneously create a harmonious work environment for all demographic categories of workers (Mardikaningsih & Hariani, 2022).

Another form of resistance is the refusal to take initiatives beyond minimum procedures. Female workers who are usually proactive in cleaning their work areas suddenly stop doing so, citing a need to wait for written instructions from management. This passive-aggressive attitude is a weapon for marginalized groups: they do not resist frontally due to their vulnerable positions, but they are able to demonstrate that policies do not work without their voluntary participation. Management often fails to read these subtle signals and instead tightens supervision, which ironically deepens the chasm of distrust. Women's resistance is not merely silent rejection, but a symbolic strategy that highlights structural injustice while showing how fragile policies are if not supported by the workers' genuine commitment (Arbin et al., 2021). This structural injustice at the micro-level often stems from broader sociological inequalities, much like the similar pressures faced by vulnerable groups regarding environmental justice and health burdens in marginal communities (Issalillah & Mardikaningsih, 2022).

Employment status as permanent or contract employees forms contrasting resistance patterns. Contract workers, who lack long-term job security, almost never show overt resistance to GHRM (Soehardjojo et al., 2022). They attend all training sessions, sign all commitment forms, and follow green procedures during their contract period. This formal compliance in implementing capacity-building programs could actually be optimized if organizations applied a gamification approach to employee training to increase engagement and learning effectiveness (Eddine & Darmawan, 2022). However, this compliance is performative, not a result of value internalization. Once the contract ends or when there is no

supervision from superiors, they revert to old behaviors. Resistance from this group is dangerous because it is undetectable. A contract worker in logistics may obediently use recycled packaging materials in front of a supervisor, but replace them with cheaper conventional materials when sending goods to a branch warehouse. This double behavior does not arise from malice, but from a rational calculation that the cost of full compliance with green policies is too high for their income. To address this behavioral gap, organizations are required to integrate a reliable Human Resource Information System to support transparent and accurate employee management and performance appraisal (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2013).

Meanwhile, permanent workers protected by labor unions or labor regulations demonstrate more structured resistance. They utilize formal forums such as collective bargaining to question aspects of green policies that disadvantage members. Labor unions become a powerful vehicle for collective resistance, as individual voices are institutionalized into formal demands. Negotiations between management and labor unions regarding GHRM implementation often end in compromises that reduce the effectiveness of the original policy. This condition confirms the need for alignment between green organizational culture and GHRM orientation to build solid collective environmental behavior across all layers of employment status (Essa & Mardikaningsih, 2024).

Hierarchical status within an organization whether the position is an ordinary staff member, supervisor, or middle manager also shapes distinct resistance patterns. Ordinary staff without decision-making authority tend to resist through invisible daily practices (Weber & Weber, 2025). They deliberately put paper that can still be used into the shredder, or mix waste that has already been sorted because they consider the two-stage procedure troublesome. This low-level resistance is difficult to detect and correct because it occurs outside direct supervision. On the other hand, the lack of green initiatives from operational staff indicates that green training and development programs have not yet been optimal in forming substantive employee environmental behavior in the daily work environment (Essa & Mardikaningsih, 2024b).

Supervisors, caught in the squeeze between pressure from above and complaints from below, develop more sophisticated resistance strategies. They selectively report compliance data regarding green policies, for instance, by

only recording successes in specific shifts while ignoring failures in others. Supervisors also protect subordinates who violate green procedures by citing emergency conditions or equipment limitations. The vertical solidarity between supervisors and ordinary staff is formed from the realization that they are both victims of policies designed without their consultation. The profound role conflict experienced by this line of supervision reflects strong dynamics of sensemaking and role conflict in the employee development process by line managers when faced with contradictory organizational mandates (Jahroni & Darmawan, 2013). Middle managers resist through control over budgets and resources. They slow down the implementation of green policies by claiming that funds are not yet available or that other priorities are more urgent. Due to the authority they possess, resistance from middle managers is the most difficult to overcome.

Work groups categorized by age not only show different resistance patterns but also build cross-generational alliances in certain situations. When green policies threaten mutual interests, senior and junior workers unite despite their differing reasons (Allan & Robinson, 2022). Senior workers reject them because the changes disrupt their routines, while younger workers reject them because the policies are perceived as infringing upon personal autonomy. This unexpected coalition strengthens collective resistance because the two generations bring different resources to the table. Senior workers contribute experience and extensive informal networks, while younger workers contribute digital skills and the ability to organize virtually. Together, they build a more formidable resistance than they would individually. To dampen such work fragmentation, management needs to design cross-functional training implemented in a structured manner to improve collaboration and understanding between teams (Fared & Darmawan, 2021). This phenomenon confirms that resistance to GHRM should not be understood merely as intergenerational conflict. What is more decisive is whether green policies are interpreted by work groups as a threat to interests they value. If that threat is felt collectively, differences in age, gender, or status are set aside for the sake of greater solidarity. Conversely, if green policies are perceived as benefiting one group and harming another, fragmentation occurs. In the long run, the strategic role of human resource management is crucial in building green competencies while bridging the skills gap toward an inclusive green economy era (Essa &

Mardikaningsih, 2023). Intelligent management utilizes this fragmentation to prevent the formation of massive collective resistance, for example, by designing different incentive programs for each category of worker.

Age, gender, and employment status characteristics significantly shape collective resistance patterns toward GHRM, though their influence is not deterministic (Swider, 2025). Senior workers tend to resist through organized apathy rooted in historical memory, while middle-aged workers engage in pragmatic cost-benefit calculations, and younger workers display contradictory resistance within digital spaces. Male workers express resistance openly by framing it in the technical language of efficiency, whereas female workers utilize over-compliance or passive-aggressive behavior as weapons of a marginalized group. Contractual employment status produces hidden, performative resistance, while permanent workers and middle managers possess access to formal forums to institutionalize their opposition. To minimize potential resistance across these demographic levels, the cultivation of moral integrity values from the very beginning of the work cycle is absolutely essential, one method being the implementation of Sharia values within recruitment, training, and human resource development systems (Darmawan, 2021). Furthermore, the successful adoption of these green policies necessitates a shift in the organization's internal focus through core competency development strategies that are consistently directed toward achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2016). Most importantly, under certain conditions, demographic differences can be set aside in favor of cross-group coalitions whenever green policies are perceived as a shared threat to fundamental interests.

Mechanisms of Subcultural Solidarity in Strengthening Resistance to the Green Transition

Subcultural solidarity in the workplace does not emerge suddenly when GHRM policies are introduced. These bonds have been built long before green changes are planned, through repeated daily interactions over many years. Workers who sit in the same room, share tasks on the same production line, or commute together using company vehicles develop patterns of communication and unspoken mutual understanding. They know who can be spoken to about personal problems, who is most

influential when making group decisions, and what kind of jokes can break the tension (Gaikwad et al., 2025). When management introduces green policies perceived as threatening comfort or shared interests, these existing social networks are quickly activated for the purpose of resistance. Subcultures that were previously neutral or even positive toward the organization transform into fortresses against change. This transformation process occurs organically without an official coordinator. A worker respected for seniority or technical expertise naturally assumes the role of an opinion leader. Their words regarding green policy, whether supportive or skeptical, will be followed by other group members. Management is often caught off guard, assuming that good social relations in the workplace are an asset, without realizing that the same asset can become a liability when the direction of change does not align with group interests.

The construction of a shared narrative regarding the injustice of green policies serves as the primary foundation that strengthens resistance. Worker subcultures never accept new policies at face value (Heddesheimer et al., 2025). They reinterpret every policy through the lens of collective experience. An emission reduction program designed to lower company energy costs can be interpreted as a management attempt to cut employee electricity allowances. Instructions to shut down computers at the end of the workday can be interpreted as a form of excessive surveillance that ignores the reality that workers sometimes need to complete reports from home. This narrative of injustice is not spread through flyers or official announcements, but through short stories retold at every opportunity. A worker recounts how their supervisor scolded them for forgetting to turn off the meeting room lights, while in the executive building, the garden lights remained on all night. This story is then repeated by other workers with added details that reinforce the message of management hypocrisy. Gradually, a shared narrative of green policy as an image-building project that burdens ordinary workers is firmly established. Every subculture member learns these stories and is able to retell them to new workers who join. Thus, resistance is no longer individual; it becomes a part of group identity passed down through generations.

Counter-knowledge produced and circulated within the subculture serves to weaken the legitimacy of green policy from its roots (Risa, 2021). Management usually relies on scientific data, consultant reports, or case

studies of other companies to justify GHRM policies. Worker subcultures respond by gathering alternative evidence that highlights the policy's weaknesses or failures. A worker with access to production data might leak figures showing that processing time has increased due to convoluted environmental procedures. Another worker with relatives at a competitor company might share that similar green policies were abandoned because they were ineffective. These pieces of information, while not always accurate, are disseminated rapidly through informal networks. What makes this counter-knowledge powerful is that it is born from workers' direct experience, not from textbooks or seminars. A worker whose hands are blistered from having to wash chemical containers repeatedly according to recycling procedures has far greater moral authority than a manager who only reads reports. Stories of this bitter experience become symbolic capital used to question the legitimacy of green policies. The subculture also develops strategies to protect the messengers. Workers who dare to voice criticism in public spaces will be protected by the group, for example by attending meetings together when summoned by superiors or by preparing supporting data to refute accusations. This collective protection makes workers feel safe to continue producing and spreading counter-knowledge that undermines green policies.

Hidden spaces in the workplace serve as the physical infrastructure that allows resistance coordination to occur without detection. Every organization has areas that escape management oversight, either due to limited supervisory resources or because they are intentionally ignored to avoid conflict. A breakroom on the top floor rarely visited by superiors, a dark corner of the warehouse, or the parking area behind the building become centers of subcultural activity. Here, honest conversations about green policy take place without fear. Workers exchange information about upcoming inspections, share tips on avoiding violations, or simply vent about the pressure they feel. This phenomenon of resistance in informal spaces indicates a clash between formal regulation and worker perceptions, highlighting the criticality of HR management strategies and appropriate environmental policies for creating sustainable organizations capable of enhancing overall company performance (Hariani et al., 2022).

More importantly, these hidden spaces enable the coordination of more organized collective action. Workers agree to simultaneously slow

down work on specific shifts as a protest against green policies, or collectively refuse to use new equipment deemed uncomfortable. The emergence of structured collective movements in hidden areas reveals the failure of internal team functions, thus requiring a deep understanding of determinants and strategies for developing digital and conventional teamwork dynamics to restore work solidity (Mardikaningsih et al., 2020). Because coordination occurs out of management's sight, companies often do not realize that the resistance they face is planned, not merely incidental. This lack of understanding also proves that the integration of green technology in management for social and environmental sustainability has not been fully internalized by HR instruments at the grassroots level (Mardikaningsih & Wardoyo, 2024). When management finally finds out, the subcultural solidarity is already too strong to be broken by ordinary reprimands or threats. Some more progressive organizations attempt to redesign office layouts to eliminate hidden corners, but this effort often fails because workers always create new spaces to protect their conversations. The failure of such physical interventions shows that effective change management actually requires the contribution of sustainable human resource management (sustainable HRM) to foster organizational commitment and innovative employee behavior aligned with the company's vision (Mardikaningsih, 2024b).

Internal passwords and symbols serve as both a protective mechanism and a glue for solidarity within the subculture of resistance. When open resistance risks sanctions, workers develop subtle ways to express refusal. Small cues such as a shake of the head when a green policy is mentioned, a soft sigh when environmental training is announced, or meaningful glances exchanged between workers become forms of communication that are unreadable to management but clear to subculture members. These manifestations of non-verbal communication reflect a wide gap between cultural value alignment and actual work behavior in the organization (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2017). This symptom also serves as a fundamental signal that the implementation of green training and development programs has yet to be optimal in forming genuine employee environmental behavior within the organization (Essa & Mardikaningsih, 2024).

At a more sophisticated level, cynical terms emerge to describe green policies, such as calling plastic reduction programs a "war on straws." Official company symbols are subtly modified, such as a green sticker with a small scratch from a pen, changing its meaning into a sign of falsehood. These actions are not serious enough to trigger investigations but are effective in strengthening a sense of togetherness. To divert this cynicism into active participation, organizations must prioritize efforts to encourage sustainable behavior change through education and persuasive internal public awareness improvement (Gautama & Mardikaningsih, 2022). Furthermore, the formation of such collective consciousness must be based on a comprehensive commitment to realizing sustainability in both public and organizational policies, building a fair balance between economic, social, and environmental aspects (Mardikaningsih & Hariani, 2021).

Every time a worker sees a defaced symbol, they are reminded that they are not alone in their resistance. This coded language and internal symbolism create an exclusive boundary understood only by members, maintaining subcultural cohesion even as management pressure increases. To reduce the formation of such destructive subcultures, management needs to identify and optimize the distribution of the six key factors that increase overall organizational effectiveness (Darmawan, 2024). Additionally, resistance rooted in workers' morality can be mitigated through the strengthening of ethical values from the start, such as applying Sharia values to recruitment, training, and human resource development systems (Darmawan, 2021). This ethical approach can be combined with the design and implementation of cross-functional training to improve team collaboration and erode resistance barriers between work units (Fared & Darmawan, 2021). Thus, symbolic communication becomes an essential strategy for maintaining resistance, building collective identity, and strengthening solidarity amidst the risk of sanctions.

Social reward and punishment systems within the group serve to enforce compliance with resistance norms very effectively. A worker who openly supports green policies and diligently follows recycling procedures will face social sanctions from the subculture. These sanctions may include exclusion from breakroom conversations, cynical comments when the compliant worker leaves the room, or refusal to assist them when experiencing difficulties at work. In extreme cases, a worker who is too

enthusiastic about implementing green policies may be labeled a "management spy" or a "sycophant" a very heavy stigma in a collective work culture. Conversely, workers who show resistance, even in minor forms such as not carrying a personal tumbler, will receive recognition and support. Colleagues will praise their courage, offer assistance when they are reprimanded by superiors, or even join in the same actions as a form of solidarity (Kreeratiratanalak & Panyagometh, 2025). This informal reward and punishment system is highly effective because it touches on the basic human need for social acceptance. A worker might personally support environmental preservation, but pressure from the subculture can force them to join in the resistance. In many cases, new workers who were initially compliant with green policies slowly change their attitudes after a few months of socializing with the resistant subculture. This socialization process shows that collective resistance is contagious through the mechanism of adherence to group norms, which are consistently enforced.

Humor and satire developed by the subculture serve as soft weapons that are highly effective in psychologically stripping management of its power. Workplace humor is often overlooked in resistance studies, but it is actually a powerful instrument. Worker subcultures develop a specific genre of humor that ridicules green policies and their proponents. A manager who is overly enthusiastic about running recycling programs can become the subject of jokes retold repeatedly. These jokes not only reduce the psychological pressure felt by workers but also indirectly demoralize management. A manager who knows they are the subject of mockery among workers will lose confidence and the moral authority to enforce policies. Humor also serves as a loyalty test. A worker who does not laugh when jokes about green policies are told is suspected of not being aligned with the subculture. Conversely, a worker who enthusiastically joins in the storytelling or even creates new jokes will be accepted as a full member. Satire delivered in public, such as in a semi-joking tone during meetings, is the form of resistance most difficult for management to handle. If the manager reprimands them, they look humorless. If left alone, the satire will continue to erode the policy's authority. Subcultures are highly proficient in using this soft weapon because its impact is gradual yet damaging (Alcadipani et al., 2018). Over time, green policies that were initially taken

seriously slowly become the butt of jokes, and workers who were initially compliant start to feel foolish for having taken something seriously.

Solidarity rituals performed periodically renew the bonds between subculture members so that resistance does not fade over time. The subculture develops various rituals, ranging from simple to complex, to reaffirm their shared commitment to resistance. A simple ritual could be the habit of drinking coffee together every morning before work begins, where the conversation always touches on green policy issues with a consistent tone. More complex rituals could involve small celebrations when a member successfully avoids sanctions for violating environmental procedures or when a surprise inspection from management passes without finding any faults. In these celebrations, tales of heroism are retold, jokes about green policies are repeated, and promises to continue protecting one another are renewed. These rituals have important psychological functions. They transform resistance from a series of negative actions into a source of pride and positive identity. A worker no longer feels they are breaking rules, but rather that they are fulfilling a moral obligation toward their group. This shift in moral framing makes resistance difficult to halt through material incentives. Giving additional bonuses to workers compliant with GHRM might be ineffective if compliance means being betrayed by the group (Renwick, 2018). Solidarity rituals also create a collective memory that transcends the lifespan of individual members. New workers initiated into the subculture are taught these rituals and quickly adopt a resistant stance toward green policies.

Utilizing loopholes in the organization's formal system is a clever strategy that protects resistance activities from official sanctions (Weber & Weber, 2025). Every policy, no matter how strict, always has exceptions, appeal procedures, or special conditions that allow for different interpretations. Worker subcultures meticulously study these loopholes and use them as shields. A policy requiring paper usage reporting per department, for example, can be paralyzed by departments borrowing paper from each other so that no one is responsible for excess consumption. Complaint procedures provided to report environmental violations can be abused by reporting fictitious violations, overwhelming oversight officers so they cannot act against real violations. More sophisticatedly, a subculture can use the formal system to protect members

who are caught. A worker caught failing to turn off a machine as scheduled can appeal on the grounds that the machine was in a cooling-down process that requires more time. If this statement is supported by colleagues who testify, superiors will find it difficult to impose sanctions for fear of violating established appeal procedures. The ability to utilize system loopholes shows that collective resistance is not always anti-procedure. On the contrary, intelligent resistance is deeply familiar with procedures and uses those very procedures to protect violations. Management facing such situations often gets trapped in a vicious cycle: tightening procedures only creates more loopholes to be exploited, while loosening procedures allows resistance to continue unabated.

Forming alliances with external actors strengthens the subculture's bargaining position significantly (Hosseini & Quélin, 2025). Labor unions are natural partners in this alliance, but they are not the only ones. Worker subcultures can also build relationships with environmental NGOs critical of the company, investigative journalists covering business practices, or even specific influential customers. An unpopular green policy can become an issue brought to the collective bargaining table between the labor union and management. In this forum, resistance that was previously informal at the grassroots level gains a legitimate channel of expression. Moreover, the subculture can leverage external pressure to weaken management's position. If a worker fired for violating environmental procedures subsequently complains to an NGO, the company could face a public campaign that damages its reputation. Such threats make management think twice before taking firm action against resistance. In more subtle cases, the subculture can use relationships with customers to convey indirect complaints. A worker assigned to customer service might intentionally describe how complex the company's green procedures are, thereby disrupting service speed. Customers who hear this complaint might convey their dissatisfaction to management, which is then perceived as market pressure, not as the result of internal resistance. These external alliances strengthen subcultural solidarity because group members feel they are not fighting alone and that there are forces outside the company supporting their struggle.

A collective leadership model that does not depend on a single central figure makes resistance very difficult to extinguish through

repression (Chiantera-Stutte, 2025). In many forms of collective resistance, resistance organizations are highly vulnerable to co-optation or repression if they rely on only one leader. Mature worker subcultures develop a distributed and fluid leadership structure. Leadership functions are performed by different people depending on the situation. When dealing with immediate superiors, workers who have good relationships with those superiors become the spokespersons. When slow-motion actions involving many people are required, workers with broad influence across various shifts take on the coordinator role. When the subculture needs to negotiate with labor unions, workers with connections to union officials step forward. This distributed leadership model makes resistance very difficult to extinguish. Pressuring one person will not paralyze the subculture because others will immediately take over the functions left behind. Moreover, this model also protects individual members from severe sanctions. Management wishing to punish resistance leaders will find it difficult to identify who the leaders actually are because leadership constantly changes hands. Subcultures also develop natural leadership regeneration mechanisms. Experienced senior workers train younger workers to take over key roles, ensuring resistance can continue even when the group's composition changes. This adaptability makes subcultural solidarity a formidable opponent to any organizational change effort.

Transforming the psychological burden of resistance into a source of collective meaning and pride is a crucial mechanism that maintains the continuity of opposition toward green policies (Tallent et al., 2025). Constantly resisting company policies is mentally exhausting: workers must remain vigilant, hide their actions, and face the risk of sanctions. Without reframing, this burden would quickly erode motivation. Subcultures of resistance overcome this by reinterpreting opposition as a dignified class struggle. Small acts like throwing trash in the wrong bin are no longer viewed as violations, but as symbols of rebellion against structural injustice. This narrative provides meaning that transcends physical acts, allowing workers to remain willing to expend energy despite fatigue, because they feel they are doing something important.

Subcultures build narratives of sacrifice and courage. Members who are sanctioned are not ostracized but are honored as heroes who sacrificed for the common interest. Collective solidarity emerges in the form of

financial support or pressure on management to revoke sanctions. This heroic treatment turns potential trauma into a source of stronger social cohesion. Resistance that was initially exhausting turns into a source of moral energy. Members who have experienced punishment are often the most committed, having paid a high price for their membership. This transformation process makes resistance more than just an act of opposing policy; it becomes a meaningful struggle that strengthens solidarity and collective identity.

The subculture's ability to adapt to changing management strategies is a determining factor for the sustainability of resistance in the long term. When management realizes that green policies face opposition, various interventions are tried, ranging from soft approaches like improved communication and training to hard approaches like strict supervision and sanctions. Mature subcultures do not remain passive when facing these interventions. They learn from every experience and adjust their tactics. When management increases GHRM socialization meetings, the subculture responds by increasing informal gatherings in hidden spaces. When management installs surveillance cameras in production areas to monitor procedural compliance, the subculture develops hand-sign codes to warn each other about camera blind spots. When management introduces reward systems for departments with the best environmental performance, the subculture arranges for everyone to appear compliant during the evaluation period, only to revert to old behaviors after the award is given. This adaptive capacity makes collective resistance a system that learns and evolves. Every time management changes its approach, the subculture finds new ways to maintain opposition. In the long run, this means the costs management must incur to enforce GHRM will continue to rise without any guarantee of success. Subcultures can even leverage management interventions to strengthen internal solidarity. When a worker is fired for violating environmental procedures, the story of this injustice spreads and triggers collective anger, which ironically strengthens the commitment to continue resisting (Cong, 2025). Subcultural solidarity is not a static phenomenon, but a living entity that continues to grow alongside the pressure it faces.

The overall analysis of subcultural solidarity mechanisms shows that collective resistance toward GHRM is built through a network of mutually

reinforcing strategies. A shared narrative of injustice builds a cognitive foundation for resistance, while counter-knowledge undermines the legitimacy of green policy from its roots. Hidden spaces provide the physical infrastructure for coordination, and coded language creates exclusive group boundaries. Social reward and punishment systems enforce compliance with resistance norms, while humor psychologically strips management of its power. Solidarity rituals maintain group bonds over time, and the exploitation of formal system loopholes protects resistance activities. External alliances strengthen the subculture's bargaining position, while distributed collective leadership makes resistance resilient against repression. Transforming psychological burdens into sources of meaning provides moral energy for the struggle, and adaptive capacity allows the subculture to continue evolving. All these mechanisms work simultaneously and support one another, creating a highly resilient defense system against any green change effort that fails to account for social dynamics in the workplace.

Conclusion

Collective resistance toward Green Human Resource Management policies is formed through a complex interaction between the demographic characteristics of workgroups and subcultural solidarity mechanisms that reinforce rejection. Senior workers resist through organized apathy rooted in historical memory of the failure of previous change programs, while middle-aged workers perform pragmatic cost-benefit calculations before deciding on their stance. Young workers exhibit contradictory resistance by supporting environmental values verbally but rejecting policies perceived as interfering with personal autonomy. Male workers express rejection openly by framing it within the technical language of production efficiency, whereas female workers utilize excessive compliance or passive-aggressive actions as weapons of a marginalized group. Contractual employment status produces hidden performative resistance, while permanent workers and middle managers have access to official forums to institutionalize their opposition. Subcultural solidarity strengthens resistance through twelve mutually supportive mechanisms, ranging from the formation of shared narratives of injustice, the production of counter-knowledge, and the utilization of hidden spaces, to

the adaptive capacity toward management interventions. All these mechanisms render collective resistance a resilient defense system that is difficult to dismantle through conventional approaches.

Theoretically, this research offers a correction to GHRM literature which has long been dominated by the assumption that resistance stems from individual factors such as attitudes or perceived behavioral control. The findings regarding the role of subcultural solidarity demonstrate that rejection of green policies is more accurately understood as a collective social phenomenon shaped by history of interaction, power distribution, and workplace conflict dynamics. Human resource management practitioners need to move away from a uniform approach in implementing GHRM. Identical training for all workers will not be effective if differences in age, gender, and status are not considered. Companies serious about implementing green policies must first map the demographic composition of their workforce and identify subcultures that potentially serve as sources of resistance. Interventions that are responsive to social dynamics, such as involving informal leaders in policy design or creating safe dialogue spaces for workers to voice their objections, are more likely to succeed compared to command-and-control approaches. Labor unions and environmental NGOs can also play a bridging role by facilitating fair negotiations between management and workers.

Future research is suggested to conduct cross-sectoral comparative studies to examine whether the patterns of resistance found in this research are universal or specific to certain types of organizations. The labor-intensive manufacturing sector may exhibit different dynamics compared to the knowledge-based service sector. From a practical standpoint, management is advised to design participatory GHRM policies involving representatives from various age groups, genders, and employment statuses right from the formulation stage. Providing space for workers to adapt green procedures to the specific needs of their work units can reduce the perception that policies are imposed from the outside by those who do not understand the realities on the ground. Companies also need to train supervisors to recognize the early signs of collective resistance, such as changes in informal conversation patterns or an increase in cynical humor regarding green policies. Early detection allows for intervention

before subcultural solidarity hardens into a fortress of resistance that is difficult to penetrate.

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**Collective Worker Resistance to Green Human Resource Management Policies: Differences
in Age, Gender, Status, and Subculture Solidarity
(Araya Kanchanapisek Warin & Rahayu Mardikaningsih)**

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