

Promoting Sustainable Practices at Organizational Level through Green HRM Practices

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Abstract

Green HRM aims to help an organisation carry out its agenda for environmental management to enable it to reduce its carbon footprint and earn human smiles. It has evolved into a critical business practice where Human Resource Departments play an active role in going green at work. Green methods must be used to preserve the earth and the planet's most valuable resource, namely human beings. Green workers from the top down is a difficult challenge, but following a pro-environmental strategy and putting Green Human Resource Management strategies into effect has yielded a positive outcome for the environment.

Key words: *Corporate Sector, Employer Branding, Environmental Management, Green HRM, Sustainability Culture.*

Introduction

Environmental issues are some of the most complex and significant managerial challenges of the twenty-first century. They include climate change, resources depletion and reduction of biodiversity, and ecosystem integrity. Organisations are responsible for the environmental degradation (Alshuwaikhat and Abubakar, 2008). Governments and organizations are using natural resources lavishly for the production of various goods and services needed by people who want to enhance their living standards.

A universal grant has emerged around the need for environmental management during the past two decades. The corporate sector has increased the adoption of Green management systems where these types of initiatives become an important factor in forward thinking businesses around the world.

Moreover, a much recent interest is paid to environmentalism globally, arising from specific treaties to combat climate change (**Kyoto, 1997; Bali, 2007**). Additionally, the need for pro-active Environmental Management increased worldwide and began to spread internationally. In response, scholars from management systems, including human resources, marketing, and many others, have been analyzing how managerial practices in these areas can contribute to the environment.

Focusing on the human resources phase, **Coro Strandberg (2009)** states that human resource managers are well positioned to play an instrumental role in helping their organization achieve its goals of becoming an environmentally responsible firm-one which reduces its negative and enhances its positive impacts on the environment.

In the present scenario, many companies following a greener approach inside their organization. They are experiencing a positive and friendly effect on the pattern of employee relations in the organisation. This also has a positive influence on the mind set of employees. They feel that apart from their functional contribution on the job, they have greater responsibility in preserving the environment. Green HR Practices encourages employees to work environmental friendly (**Jafri, 2012**).

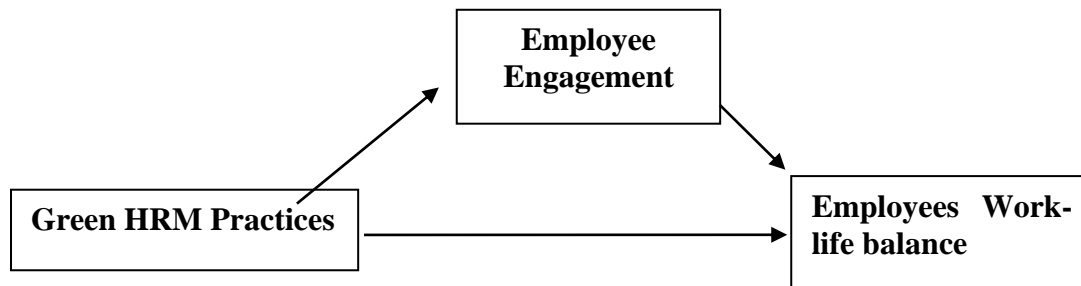
In India, with a large population, have adopted the concept of 'go green' practices with the view of the importance of the environmental sustainability. The Green HR practices educate the employees in the organisation to promote the sustainable practices and increase awareness to the employees on the issues of sustainability. The green HRM practices will help the employees in by creating awareness and new ideas about the eco-friendly practices in the organisation (**Chandrajeet, 2017**).

Green HRM: Conceptual Exposition

Companies must incorporate formal green policies to increase global environmental concerns (**Daily and Huang, 2001**). Traditionally, most corporations worldwide were unconcerned about the climate, opting to pursue green management policies dictated by laws and regulations. However, compared to the previous year, businesses worldwide concentrate on different green initiatives and environmental effects (**Govindarajulu and Daily, 2004**). They turn from regulation to prevention as a tactic. The trend of becoming green has influenced human resource management (HRM), considered the most valuable and foremost part of a firm that covers human resources, seen as essential assets (**Ahmad, 2015**).

Green HRM refers to using and implementing goods, procedures, and systems to conserve the environment. For example, such processes might engross new power resources to meet societal needs and produce creative ideas and strategies to reduce environmental degradation. According to **Lee (2009)**, green initiatives are "the workout in which an organization develops an environmental activity to manage the environment." As a result, constructive green practices are needed (**Jabbar et al., 2010**).

A Conceptual Frame Work of Green HRM Practices



Green HRM includes all the activities, practices, and policies that are involved in development, implementation, and on-going maintenance of a system that is aimed at turning employees of an organization green. It is the side of HRM that aims to achieve environmental goals of the organization and finally to make a significant contribution to environmental sustainability.

Many companies are taking a greener approach inside their organization. They are considering two essential elements: environmentally friendly HR practices and the preservation of knowledge capital. In addition, they are experiencing a positive and congenial effect on the patterns of employee relations in the organisation. This also has a positive influence on the mindset of employees as they feel that apart from their functional contribution on the job, they have an important responsibility in preserving the environment.

Green practices positively impact organizational performance and financial results (**Darnall et al., 2008**). In addition, green practices can boost company performance, improve corporate culture, reduce costs, increase efficiency, and improve company goodwill (**Molina-Azorin et al., 2009**). Businesses must adopt a corporate green policy, initiative, or event in departments such as human resources, marketing, finance, research and development, and information technology to discourse the current situation.

Need for Green HRM

There are two ways to secure talent i.e. develop it from inside the organization and recruit it from outside. It is necessary to think creatively to outcompete other organizations in attracting talent. At the same time, organizational leaders should review their job postings and other internal recruitment programs to ensure that the best qualified people are being recruited for each vacancy.

Last two decades of this century have witnessed a unanimous consensus for the need of a realistic environmental management drive all over the world. This effort was undertaken since the damaging effects of different pollutants among which the industrial wastes being the major culprit that has been deteriorating and depleting our natural resources very fast has been evident. The “Magna Carta” on Human Environment was declared in the first United Nation’s (International) Conference on Human Environment held in June 1972 in Stockholm declared that to defend and improve the human environment for present and future generation have become an imperative goal for mankind (**Shaikh, 2010**). The Green HRM literature is largely a western one and, given the importance of Asian economic development for environmental management, this is an important gap for future studies to reduce (**Renwick, Redman and Maguire, 2013**). Scholars of management around the world are now analyzing various managerial practices that can facilitate the achievements of the goals of Green HRM and also have a significant impact on the environmental competitiveness of the organizations.

Green HR actions help companies find substitute ways to decrease costs without losing their talent in green economy. Organizations have tremendous growth opportunities by going green and creating a new environmental DNA which can bring in great operational savings by reducing their carbon footprint. As part of compensation management, companies can offer green rewards to employees such as a nature-friendly workplace and lifestyle benefits. Hence, this may include carbon credit offsets, free bicycles and pollution-free vehicles for commuting to and from the workplace in order to engage people in the green agenda.

Since it adds to the feel- good factor at work, the greening philosophy in organisation has made green work-life balance a way of life in most organisations. Furthermore, talented employees are looking for self-actualization in their jobs in order to stay devoted to their companies.

Green HR can help in the creation of this by following green values and practices. Other green activities can include the minimum use of paper and printed materials in recruitment, performance appraisals, and learning and development. In addition, green business can include increased recycling, reusable grocery and lunch bags, and prohibiting the use of bottled water and plastic and Styrofoam cups in the workplace. Work stations can have fluorescent light bulbs and other energy saving and green devices.

Green HRM is essential for the below mentioned reasons:

- To avoid or minimize global warming.
- To avoid or minimize natural disasters.
- To avoid or minimize health diseases owing to pollution.
- To avoid or minimize harm to animals and other natural creatures.
- To ensure balance in relationships between life and environment.
- To ensure survival of humans and business organizations.

The technique of incorporating sustainability into corporate operations is gaining traction, and it is now considered one of the most important organisational activities (**Chillakuri and Vanka, 2020**). The increased awareness of corporations to environmental issues is one of the most significant developments in sustainability issues (**Zawawi and Abd Wahab, 2019**).

Impacts of Green HRM

Green HRM becomes a necessity in order to provide environmentally friendly products and operations to manage corporate environmental programs successfully, and to overcome implementation challenges of corporate environmental programs (**Milliman and Clair, 1996**).

Organizations which are able to line up HRM practices with objectives of environmental management can be successful in the corporate environmental management journey (**Jabbour, 2011**). A study conducted by **Jabbour and Santos (2010)** verified that the most evolved characteristics of environmental management of the ISO 14001 certified Brazilian companies tend to be associated with almost all of the functional and competitive dimensions of human resource management.

Green HR strategies help companies find substitute alternatives to cut cost. It refers to the contribution of people management policies and activities towards this broader agenda. It is an important issue for HR because it is also very important for all employees, as well as customers and other stakeholders. It is also one in which HR can have a big impact without causing much expenditure. Additionally, good environmental management can improve sales and reduce costs by providing funding for green benefits to keep staff engaged.

Many practice groups were launched recently in numerous organizations in order to counsel employers on “green” awareness in the workplace. The aim of these groups is to implement best practices that will improve the work environment through reducing, reusing, and recycling certain materials. Additionally, the practice group also advises employers on educating their workers about how their behaviours in the office and at home affect the environment. And these companies are offering a strategic communications platform to their clients and prospects as a solution for driving greater green awareness within their own organizations.

Companies needed to adapt to changing lifestyles and changing workforces. Companies that adopted this program found that a substantial number of their employees made significant changes in their daily behaviour, including increased recycling, decreased printing, elimination or reduction in the use of bottled water, plastic and Styrofoam cups, using reusable grocery and lunch bags, switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs and other energy saving and green products, and changing transportation habits.

Hence, some important impacts of Green HRM are:

- Gaining perception, reputation and good will.
- Cost effectiveness.
- Smarter performance translated into cheaper products.
- Better power utility.
- Economically useful, hence direct impact on profit and it enhances the return on investments.

Green HRM is a manifesto which helps to create green workforce that can understand and appreciate green culture in an organization. Such green initiative can maintain its green objectives all throughout the HRM process of recruiting, hiring and training, compensating, developing, and advancing the firm's human capital (**Dutta, 2012**). The Human Resource Department of a company is capable of playing a significant role in the creation of sustainability culture within the company (**Harmon et al., 2010**). HR processes play an important role in translating Green HR policy into practice (**Renwick, 2008**); therefore, human capital and its management are instrumental to the fulfillment of EM objectives (**Hersey, 1998**). **Huslid (1995)** mentions the selection processes, incentive compensation, performance management systems, the employee involvement, and training to be central for the company's success. Consequently, the argument is advanced that the HR function is instrumental in realizing organizational change aimed at acclimatizing to the new-found requirements for corporations and therefore also a potentially important contributor to such a strategic issue.

It needs to be acknowledged that the intersection of sustainability, the natural environment, and HR management are new areas in fast development and therefore, not characterized by a fully developed body of writings (**Jackson et al., 2011**). **Ulrich, Brockbank and Johnson (2009)** point out that many HR systems need to be aligned with each other in order to increase the likelihood that the organization will achieve its strategy. **Cherian and Jacob (2012)** in their study identified that recruitment, training, employee motivation, and rewards are important human dimensions which contribute to the improvement in employee implementation of green management principles. In order to make sure that the organization gets right employee green inputs and right employee green performance of job, it is indispensable that HRM functions are adapted or modified to be green (**Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014**).

When an organisation adopts green behaviour and practises and facilitates the exchange of those ideas across departments, it improves its corporate reputation. It's greatly impacts corporate reputation and employer branding, allowing businesses to attract the best people available. in addition (**Fombrun et al, 2000**)

Conclusion

In a nutshell, Green HRM is an environmentally friendly HRM programme that aims to secure and mobilise employee participation in superior green efficiency and lower costs to encourage an organisation to save and condense resource consumption wherever possible. Job sharing, teleconferencing, virtual interviewing, recycling, online training, and the construction of energy-efficient office facilities are just a few examples.

Fortunately, some governments, some organizations, and some individuals, including environmentalists and nature lovers, are currently and increasingly paying serious attention to preserve (to protect) and conserve (to save) the environment and minimize environmental pollution. Resultantly, an increased attention was created among governors, owners of the organizations, managerial employees, customers, and scholars in regards to environmental sustainability.

It is not a hidden fact that human resource is the most important asset of an organization that plays an important role in managing the employees. At the moment, the recent increased trend of corporate focus on greening the business, the modern HR managers have been assigned with additional responsibility of incorporating the Green HR philosophy in corporate mission statement along with HR policies. Changes in corporate perspectives related to the environmental initiatives can be seen in written policy statements, environmental job titles, marketing strategies, capital investments, auditing practices, new product design and development, and production processes. Green process and policies are now making their way through within the HR space complementing the existing green practices and initiatives. Green HR efforts have resulted in increased efficiencies, cost reduction, employee retention, and improved productivity, besides other tangible benefits.

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