

# Green HRM: An Eco-Friendly Approach towards Environmental Sustainability

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**Abstract-***In today's context of Global warming and climate changes business organizations have become more conscious about sustainability through eco-friendly practices. One of the contemporary challenges faced by HR professionals is to ensure the proper integration of environmental sustainability into HR policies. To achieve environmental sustainability, business needs to move from a sense of right to exploit the natural environment to a view of mutual interdependence and radical eco-innovation. Green HRM is the use of HRM practices and policies to promote the sustainable use of resources to promote the cause of environmental sustainability. In this paper an attempt has been made to understand Green HRM, its awareness and factors that are associated with Green HR practices in organizations. This paper proposes the development of a model of green human resource management by reviewing the literature on human resource aspects of environmental management. The study followed archival method of literature review. It focuses on why organizations should go green, its feasibility and benefits of going green. It highlights the importance of reducing the carbon footprints of each employee in the organization.*

**Keywords:** *Eco-friendly, Environmental Sustainability, Green HRM*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent times the importance of Environmental issues and Sustainable development has increased both in the developed and developing nations. Growing concern for global environment and the development of international standards for Environmental Management has created a need for businesses to adopt 'green practices'. With these concerns organizations today have become more conscious about the growing importance of the integration of Environmental Management (EM) and Human Resource Management i.e. 'Green HRM' Practices. Going green is a strategy that organizations adopt as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. Some organizations do it so as to create a competitive edge and create a brand image. CSR initiatives have been linked to employee engagement, through reduced costs due to increased employee retention as well as improved reputation in the eyes of employees. CSR programs impact the drivers of employee engagement (e.g. employee behavior and motivation); stakeholder attitudes and behaviors (e.g.

potential employees), and the business outcomes (e.g. employee productivity and retention).

## Theoretical background of Green HRM

The concept of Green HRM has emerged with the initiation of Green Movement. Green Movement is a political movement which advocates four important principles: Environmentalism, Sustainability, Non-violence and Social justice. Supporters of the Green Movement are called "Greens", adhere to Green Ideology and share many ideas with ecology, conservation, environment, feminist and peace movements. With the growing awareness of the Green Movement across the world, management scholars from diverse areas such as accounting, marketing, supply-chain management and HRM also start analyzing that how managerial practices in these areas can contribute to environmental management goals.

**Green HRM** is the use of human resource management policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within business organizations and more generally, promotes the cause of environmental sustainability.

Green HR consists of two essential elements: Environmentally-friendly HR practices and the preservation of knowledge capital. It entails undertaking environment friendly initiatives resulting in greater efficiency, lower costs, and better employee engagement and retention which in turn help organization to reduce carbon footprints.

**Environmental Sustainability:** Sustainability is often defined as the "ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In the environmental literature, the concept of green management for sustainable development has various definitions; all of which generally, seek to explain the need for balance between industrial growth for wealth creation and safeguarding the natural environment so that the future generations may thrive.

### Purpose of going Green

- To use products and methods that would not negatively impact the environment through pollution or depleting natural resources.
- To design environmentally-friendly human resource policies and practices.
- To help organizations achieve its monetary goal through environmental branding.
- To protect environment from any negative impacts that might cause by the policies & actions by the organizations.
- To use scarce natural resources efficiently and effectively, while keeping the environment free from detrimental products.
- To engage and retain top talent in the organization by green HR policies and practices.

### Factors Affecting Green HRM practices

- Organization Culture
- Top management support
- Government rules and regulations
- Lack of organizational infrastructure and resources
- Employee perception and mindset
- Cost

## II. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Environmental management system can only be effectively implemented if the companies have the right people with the right skills and competencies. Strategic HRM researchers argued that to achieve HR effectiveness, HR should be practiced as a whole and must be aligned with the business strategic goals, the primary means by which firms can influence and shape the skills, attitudes, and behavior of individuals to do their work and thus achieve organizational goals.

Previously, businesses assumed that incorporating 'green' into their business strategy would cost money, but they now realize that ignoring negative impacts on the environment will be costly in the future. The topic of the green HRM is attracting increased attention among management scholars.

Despite its importance to managers, employees, customers and other stakeholders, however, there are very few research studies that consider a complete process of HRM in organizations striving to achieve environmental sustainability. There is, thus, a growing need for the integration of environmental management into HRM. Research on how business may structure their facilities to enhance for sustainability through Green HRM initiatives seems paramount.

## III. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of this study is to

- a) Provide with a basic understanding of green HRM.
- b) Highlight different significant works on green HRM by various authors.
- c) Elaborate on various green practices that can be incorporated for building a Green workplace.
- d) To suggest some green initiatives for HR.

## IV. METHODOLOGY

The study is primarily based upon the secondary data. For this extant literature related to the topic from different databases, websites and other available sources were collected. A systematic review of collected literature was done in detail.

## V. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Aravamudhan (2012)** describes Green HRM is all about maintaining the organizational and workforce sustainability in a holistic manner.

**Bohdanowicz, Zientara, & Novotna (2011)** It is identified that the greater the strength of green human resource policies, the greater is the intensity of adoption of environment management systems (EMS) and policies by the different companies.

**Cherian & Jacob (2012)** Literature has given importance to adoption of environmental practices as a key objective of organizational functioning making it important to identify with the support of human resource management practices.

**Harmon, Fairfield, & Wirtenberg (2010)** The Human Resource Department of an organization plays a significant role in the creation of their company's sustainability culture.

**Iraldo, Testa, & Frey (2009) and Yang, Lin, Chan, & Sheu (2010)** A great extent of empirical research highlights the impact of environment management practices on performance of the organization using different parameters.

**Mandip (2012)** explains the importance of Green HRM by the help of illustrating the case of Bank of America provides tax benefits to its workforce that purchases hybrid cars, employees of Google are paid cash by the company on purchase of cars that consume less fuel per gallon and Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) in the UK allowed their employees to bring their daily garbage from home s to the workplace and recycle them so as to decrease the amount of carbon footprint.

**Muster and Schrader (2011)** believes that Green Human Resources Management brings out strategies and policies that work in bringing about a change in the employee's behavior towards the environment through their job so as to imbibe this culture in their personal life as well.

**Muhammad Hassan and Muhammad Abid (2015)** The application of GHRM enables organizations to reduce their costs and invest their resources for the betterment of the

environment. Organizations that recruit employees with the objective to enhance environmental outcomes have gained customer satisfaction and eventually increased their performance.

**Paille (2013)** says that in order to motivate the employees in order to achieve the objectives of environment sustainability, organization use suitable and effective HRM practices. To achieve sustainability, organizations need to associate and partner with every employee so as to create awareness and commitment thereby promote sustainable practices that meet the objectives.

**Sathyapriya (2013)** simply put it that in order to promote environmental sustainability, implementing policies suitable according to business purview, Green HRM is essential. It has its own unique characteristics that differ from traditional Human resources management subsystems.

**Sudin (2011)** discussed the positive effects of the types of green intellectual capital on corporate environment citizenship, leading to competitive advantage of firms.

## VI. GREEN HRM PRACTICES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Green HRM encompasses all activities aimed at helping an organization carry out its agenda for environment management to reduce its carbon footprint in areas concerns on boarding and acquisition of human resources, their induction, performance appraisal & management, training and development and pay and reward management. Green HRM practices are the set of activities that direct at an organization's human resources with the aim of achieving organizational goals through ensuring environmental sustainability.

### VII. A PROCESS MODEL OF GREEN HRM

The Process model summarizes the HR practices involved in Green HRM. The process begins with recruiting prospective green employees into the organization followed by green training and development, green performance management and appraisal, environment-friendly employee-employer relationships that focus on employee involvement, green performance based pay and rewards and ends with conducting exit interviews those who leaving the organization voluntarily or involuntarily and using the survey results to improve the employee management systems (shown in Figure-1). The major goal of green human resource management is to achieve the organizational financial goals through environmental sustainability.

#### ➤ RECRUITMENT

Induction for new recruits is seen to be needed to ensure they understand and approach their corporate environmental culture in a serious way. Therefore sustainable development issues must be integrated into the recruitment process. Further to promote Green HRM practices organizations could adopt Green Staffing procedures. Green Staffing

involves hiring individuals with Environment Management (EM) skills, mindsets, and behaviors EM-centered testing (e.g.,

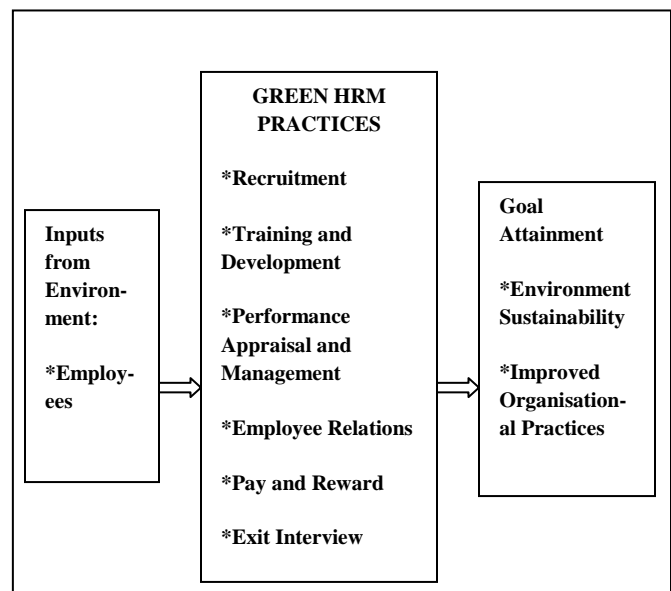


Fig. 7.1: A Process Model of Green HRM

knowledge of risks, harmful substance, potential emissions, etc.), and interviewing techniques that enable managers in identifying candidates that fit environment -centered jobs. Such practices ensure that the selected candidates should possess personality and attitudinal attributes that prevent waste, show creativity and innovative ideas vis-à-vis the environment.

#### ➤ TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Employee training and development programs should include social and environmental issues at all levels, from technical health and safety considerations on the shop floor, to strategic sustainability issues at executive management and board level. Green orientation programs for the newly higher employees should be an integral part of the training and development process. It should focus on development of employees' skills, knowledge, and attitudes about Environment conversation and EM initiatives. These activities includes training employees in working methods that conserve energy, reduce waste, diffuse environmental awareness within the organization, and provide opportunity to engage employees in environmental problem solving.

#### ➤ PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT

One way in which performance management systems can be successfully initiated in an organization is by tying the performance evaluations to the job descriptions mentioning the specific green goals and tasks. HR managers prevent harm to EM when they integrate environmental performance into performance management systems by setting EM objectives, monitoring EM behaviors, and evaluating achievement of environmental objectives.

As a basis for incorporating Environment Management initiatives in HRM, currently two major underlying frameworks are available-

1. ISO 14000 standards and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). ISO 14000 family incorporates several standards for environmental management and reporting (ISO, 2009).
2. ISO 14001 provides the key performance indicators (KPIs) for the environmental PMS.

#### ➤ EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

The positive relationship between employees and employers facilitate productivity and involves empowerment, participation, and engagement activities. Environmental involvement approach in

Environmental management motivates the workers, allows them to detect problems like leakages in the production process and that delegating responsibilities to workers is based upon team knowledge of the causes of waste and how to reduce them. Also for the successful implementation of Environment Management initiatives teamwork is essential in demonstrating the value of HR.

Employee grievance and discipline also has impact on the greenness of the firm. Environmentally unfriendly behavior may constitute a breach of contract and therefore possible grounds for dismissal. Trade union plays a vital role in the establishing and implementing of environmental management goals of the firm. They play a key role in terms of supporting environmental improvements through their traditional health and safety concerns in the workplace.

#### ➤ PAY AND REWARD

The compensation and reward systems in an organization could contribute to Environment Management. Rewards motivate and increase commitment from workers to be environmentally responsible. Furthermore, rewards sensitize employees to environmental consciousness; and discourage undesired behaviors while reinforcing preferred ones. Attainment of specific environmental initiatives should be integrated into the compensation system by offering employees a benefit package that rewards employees for green performance. Monetary –based environmental reward systems have been developed an important proportion of monthly managerial bonuses are dependent upon performance outcomes in environmental management.

#### ➤ EXIT INTERVIEW

Exit means voluntarily or involuntarily leaving from the organization. As the last task of the green HRM process, the HR manager will carry out exit interview to those who are leaving. The results of the exit interview, if the exit is environmental related, need to be improved. Moreover, arrangement of outplacement counseling shall be made to those who are fired for their bad environmental performance. The goal of outplacement counseling, in this

context, is to provide the leaving employees the knowledge base particularly about the environment so that they might be able to find a job elsewhere. In terms of staff exits, where dismissal occurs, it may be that any 'general debriefing should include an environmental dimension, and if staff resign, then HR managers need to discover the reason for exit.

### VIII. GREEN HRM INITIATIVES

Some of the techniques adopted by organizations are:

- Discourage the use of paper or if required use recycled paper for filing of records and other pertinent information through the use of technology like electronic / digital filing instead of physical documents and file.
- Carpooling/ Bike pooling or sometimes provide transportation to employees for their daily commute to the workplace so as to save fuel, lessen traffic thereby ensuring faster commute and reduction in carbon emissions. Sometimes, even encourage employees to cycle to work, wherever possible.
- Minimum usage or nil usage of lights and allowing sunlight during the day wherever possible. Using energy efficient LED (Light Emitting Diode) bulbs in the night so as to save electricity.
- Use of energy efficient air conditioners and heaters
- Using recycled and refurbished products and ensure products are disposed of for recycling.
- Construct buildings, and workspaces that support a green architecture by allowing natural lighting, heating, and cooling and get it certified.
- Implementing a smoking free office.
- Rewarding employees for coming up with sustainable green ideas and strategies.
- Plant trees and conduct green awareness for employees. Recycled water can also be used for use in gardens.
- Awareness and training about electronic waste, bio-medical waste for employees.

#### ➤ BENEFITS OF GOING GREEN

Organizations adopting Green Human Resource Management practices have several advantages as listed below-

- a. **Building brand image-** Sustainable green practices become a competitive edge as well as a brand image for the Organization.
- b. **Green business decisions-** Employing a green workforce leads to lesser consumption of energy, water, and raw materials. By adopting innovative strategies and techniques helps to arrive at an optimal solution to solve environmental related issues.
- c. **Most Preferred employer of choice-** Green organization is the most desired employers and any

potential hire would like to be associated with such an employer so as to learn and add value to their profile. A Green workforce is a win-win situation for both the employer and the employee as it gives a competitive edge to both in the market.

- d. **Higher employee retention-** Green organizations have lesser attrition rates as compared to their non-sustainable counterparts. Increased employee satisfaction translates to job satisfaction, better productivity and retention (lower employee turnover ratio).
- e. **Increases in sales-** Customers are conscious of the environment impact when they purchase a product. Companies that adhere to green practices can improve their sales and cut costs by achieving higher volume of sales.

## IX. GREEN HRM PRACTICES OF TOP MOST INDIAN COMPANIES

### 1. Wipro Technologies:

**The eco eye:** an initiative that had several goals to reduce the organization's carbon footprint, manage its water and energy efficiently, recycling waste, minimize the use of hazardous substances, motivate all employees to follow green practices in their professional and personal lives.

- They extended their green mission to physical infrastructure and substitute CRT monitors with LCD monitors
- The company also had a green testing lab, practiced a Carbon Disclosure Project (to report the internal carbon footprint), and reduced employee travel.
- Wipro was the first IT company in India to launch eco-friendly desktops and notebook computers that adhered to the RoHS (restriction of hazardous substances) regulation specified by the European Union (EU).

### 2. Suzlon Energy:

The Suzlon One Earth Campus, the corporate headquarter of Suzlon at Hadapsar, Pune, India is the most energy efficient building built ever in India with insulated green roof, energy efficient, waste management and waste water treatment, green education etc. are policies practiced by the companies.

The **"green banking" initiative:** State Bank of India tied up with SUZLON to become the first Indian bank to take lead in harnessing wind energy.

### 3. ITC Limited:

It uses Ozone-treated Elemental Chlorine free bleaching technology for the first time in India replacing elemental chlorine which was conventionally used in the bleaching process during paper manufacture. An entire new range of top green products and solutions: the environmental friendly multi-purpose paper that is less polluting than its traditional counterpart.

### 4. HCL Technologies:

**"Go Green":** a multi-layered corporate program running campaigns to initiate individual action towards environmental issues. It has designed and developed a comprehensive Green Edge sustainability framework that caters to the specific needs of manufacturing industries.

- They are active members of India Council for Sustainable Development.
- First company in India to launch an Antimony & Beryllium Free laptop.
- The company extends its take-back service to customers for disposing off their equipment through HCL Green Bag Campaign, and recycling collected E-waste in an environment-friendly manner.

### 5. Tata Consultancy Services:

Spotted 11th under Newsweek's annual rankings of the "Worlds Greenest Companies" with a Green Score of 80.4 globally. They focus on improving the **agricultural and community needs** of the region, where its offices are located that makes it one of India's most environmentally proactive companies. Its 16 facilities do composting, some have bio-digesters turning waste into kitchen fuel.

### 6. Oil & Natural Gas Company (ONGC):

ONGC is all set to lead the list of top 10 green Indian companies with energy efficient green crematoriums that will soon replace the traditional wooden pyre across the country. **Mokshada Green Cremation:** An initiative that will save 60 to 70% of wood and also the burning time per cremation.

### 7. Idea Cellular:

**"Use Mobile, Save Paper"** A Green Pledge campaign: at Indian cities where thousands came forward and pledged to save paper and trees

Currently is working to set up bus shelters with potted plants and tendril climbers to convey the green message.

### 8. IndusInd Bank:

The bank is running **ATMs on solar power** and has pioneered an eco-savvy change in the Indian banking sector. Has been awarded the NASSCOM IT User Award 2012 for “Environmental Sustainability”. The bank is planning for more such initiatives in addressing the challenges of climate change.

#### 9. Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Papers Limited:

Own power generating facility to make it 100% self-sufficient: installation of 61.18 MW Power Generating equipment (TG Sets) at the paper mill site. The surplus power generated is being exported to the State Grid.

- **The innovative bio – methanation project:** This project contributes to the sustainable development in terms of generating in-house renewable energy and reducing green – house gases.
- **Other initiatives:** Eco – friendly technologies in process, its proactive role in reducing the use of fossil fuels, increasing the green cover, using energy efficient systems, recycling and reuse of solid and liquid wastes in the process.

#### 10. Tata Metaliks Limited:

**Every day is Environment Day**-According to the company’s policy, working on Saturdays at the corporate office is discouraged. Lights are also switched off during the day with the entire office depending on sunlight.

### X. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Green HRM practices are vital to promote employee morale and this may help in arriving at a great deal of benefit for both the company and the employee. Apart from this it is to be identified that employees who are actively involved in environment management principles may play a vital role in arriving at better environmental strategies to be implemented. Employees may feel empowered to adopt specific environment management principles as a resulted of promoted human resource policies which present better opportunities for improvements related to reduction of waste and promotion of lean manufacturing. This also may help in arriving at greener products and green savings from waste elimination. The paper concludes as a response to the ever-changing way of doing business, organizations need to adopt new methods, technologies, and tools to create a positive impact towards the environment.

The following recommendations may be useful for organizations to further enhance the green initiatives to attain environmental sustainability.

- Organizations need to adopt new methods, technologies, and tools to create a positive impact towards the environment.
- They should focus on creating strong policies, processes and support systems so as to achieve a sustainable Green HRM in the organization.
- Top management should support and encourage Human Resources and all stakeholders to create a positive change and impact by reducing the carbon footprint at the workplace.
- Human Resources should use different technologies and communicate trust and credibility of themselves as a function, the way they do business both internally and externally.
- Human Resources should also understand that employees are likely to be more productive and work towards a green initiative only with a better awareness and learning structure put in place..
- Businesses should understand and engage with the Government bodies and Institutions to come up with environmentally friendly systems so that efficiency and effectiveness on a sustainable Green HRM is achieved.
- Finally, a comprehensive recognition and reward system, awareness, motivation and continuous training and development programs would ensure that employees participate wholly towards a sustainable Green HRM initiative across the organization.

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