

## **GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT “A STEP TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS”**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Our environment is in danger. If the current state of the environment remains, life on this planet cannot remain unaffected and immune. Degradation of the environment is a matter of global concern and is in dire need of a global remedy. Amidst all this, a relatively new concept has gained momentum known as Green HRM. Green HRM has gained importance in the business organizations these days because of the increasing concern towards Environmental Social Governance. Green HRM is the use of HR policies in such a way that it results in the more sustainable use of the resources in the business organizations thereby promoting environment sustainability. The establishment of HR policies and practices that lead to the protection and preservation of environment is termed as Green HRM. The organisations have adopted Green HRM practices along with the HRM function in order to look forward towards environmentally sustainable business. These new practices is seeking the attention of the business executives, governments, consumers, and management scholars. Among the stakeholders challenges and opportunities from environmental concerns, Green HRM practices joins the ongoing discussions and debates by helping in paving a way towards achieving this goal of environmental sustainability. Under this environmentally friendly initiative are taken by the human resource department in order to reduce cost and indeed to increase the efficiency of the employees. The main goal of green HRM is to use the available resources and enhance the efficiency of the employees to reduce the carbon footprints for making the environment clean. This goal can be achieved by increasing the awareness and involvement of the employees towards the ongoing process. This paper discusses the current trends of green HRM practices in companies based on findings from a few studies, survey reports and secondary data from companies, web resources, journals and articles published. It also brings out the functioning of HRM towards developing a sense of greening the organisation by putting little steps towards this rising concern. In addition to this the organization should encourage their employees to assist organization to reduce the causes of environmental degradation through following green policies and procedures. This will help in saving resources for the future generation.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Green HRM, Environment Sustainability, Global Issue, Degradation, Natural Resources.*

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### **Introduction**

HRM is a crucial function of business management. It deals with the most useful and valuable assets i.e. Human Resources. The globally growing concern for environment compels businesses to move towards sustainable operations and formulate green policies for Going Green. With everyone, from

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customers to employees to investors all are becoming more and more environment-conscious, hence 'Green Human Resource Management (referred as green HRM or GHRM)' is emerging as a significant area in management. Under this environmentally friendly initiative are taken by the human resource department in order to reduce cost and indeed to increase the efficiency of the employees. It indirectly has a positive impact on the employee commitment, engagement and employee retention. The HR practices in this are carried out in a way that helps in the sustainability of the environment by internally managing Human Resources.

Sustainable development is about conserving the available resources and meeting the diverse needs of our present generations without compromising with the needs of future generations thereby leaving enough resources for them. Sustainable development is much more than just the environment. It aims at having a strong, fair and healthy society. A little effort by each one of us can bring about a big change of Greening our environment and hence will contribute to Green HRM. The international standards for environment protection and preservation call for businesses advises to devise environment-friendly strategies. It indirectly has a positive impact on the employee commitment, engagement and employee retention. There are many initiatives which are taken by the human resource department to save the environmental resources. Few of them are virtual interviews, job sharing, online training, car sharing, teleconferencing, online training, etc. The utmost aim of green human resource management is to implement eco -friendly policies/ environmentally friendly policies that help in saving the environmental resources and at the same time boosts the commitment of the employees and motivates them to stay in the organization.

#### **Purpose of Green HRM**

The main purpose of Green Human Resource Management is to adopt eco -friendly techniques in the HRM. This can be accomplished by implementing Green HRM policies and practices, issuing laws related to the protection of environment and providing training to the people. ISO 26000 is strictly implemented by green HRM and this will indeed help in building organization with good brand and image. Environmental audit can also be performed and this will also improve the thought process of the employees towards waste management and eradicating pollution. The term Green HRM may sound simple, but it involves many functions. Mainly eco-friendly techniques are adopted in the organization to reduce paper usage. And the technique is also used in planning, recruiting, selecting, training, employee management and maintaining employee relationship. There are two main elements of Green HRM. One is to preserve the knowledge capital and the second is to preserve environment. Over the past few years the Go Green concept has increased. Now-a-days the eco-friendly concept has great impact in our daily activities on the environment and the desire to go green has expanded from individuals to organizations. Many business enterprises are hence showing keen interest in shifting towards green policies. All these help in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization in going green for achieving its environmentally sustainable goal.

#### **Review of Literature**

The increasing awareness of sustainable development, environmental concern and HRM practices is on the social radar and being recognized as a new area for the development of society. It is also developing at a fast pace. With the growing need for corporates to adapt to environment friendly Green HRM practices, the general HRM functions becomes the potential contributor in bringing about the requisite organizational change.

Although there have been many definitions of Green HRM, as stated in subsequent paragraphs, however, the precise definition of 'Green HRM' for the purpose of this paper, may be taken as given by Prasad which describes "the contribution of HRM policies and practices towards the broader corporate environmental agenda of protection and preservation of natural resources".

According to the research papers (Opatha, 2013; Opatha and Arulrajah, 2014) the meaning of the term "Green" or "Greening" has four aspects firstly the natural environment is to be preserved, secondly the natural environment is to be conserved, thirdly the pollution of the natural environment is to be avoided or minimized, and finally the gardens and the natural places are to be created.

"The dictionary definitions (the Oxford Paperback Dictionary, 1979; Collins Birmingham University International Language Database English Language Dictionary, 1987: the New Oxford

Thesaurus of English, 2000) with regard to the term „Green" include relevant descriptions like: a human quality of being environmentally friendly, and a human being who is an environmentalist".

A person who needs to be a green person is required to play "four roles, i.e. preservationist, conservationist, non-polluter, and maker; and this person is identified as nature-lover or ecoactivist" (by Opatha, 2013, Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014; Opatha, 2019). According to them we should expect that every employee needs to be seriously an environmentalist or eco-activist in order to achieve environmental sustainability.

According to Chad Holliday (2001), CEO DuPont says shrinking your environmental footprint is more than just the right thing to do, it also generates tremendous business value. This is the challenge of Sustainable growth and to meet it, the primary motivation for any company should be improved business performance of course, environmental societal benefits will follow.

Malt Bolch (2008), in his research has focused on spreading the awareness about sustainability initiatives to be taken by the department but the human resource plays an important role. Hence it is important for human resource professionals to have conversations with employees and the community at large about the implications of environmental initiatives.

As per the survey done by Buck Consultants (2009), the Greening of HR Survey examines the types of environmentally friendly "green" initiatives that companies are utilizing involving their workforce and human resource practices. The results confirm that companies are incorporating and working towards integrating a number of green practices. Over half of the companies surveyed have incorporated environmental management into business operations and have a formal green program in place or they have a plan to implement one in the coming time.

Authors providing an insight into Green HRM have pointed out that human resources may significantly contribute to the establishment of ecological organizations. They argue that environmental policies with regards to recruitment, performance management, training, development, and remuneration are powerful tools for engaging employees in the practical implementation of environmental protection strategies. Green HRM tools and practices may equip in putting forward the employee participation in the process of ecological innovations by reducing environmental waste, improving products, increasing process efficiency, and helping in cutting costs. Green HRM, therefore, will help in constituting a part of Green Management alongwith greening operations, greening accounting and finance, greening retailing and greening marketing. Moreover, for organizations to embrace sustainability, it is not just about the technical and scientific factors but as much about the human element too. So the human resource plays a key role in the success or failure of an organization's efforts towards adopting ways to go green. It is the 'HR function' (HRM function) that enables to align the policies of the organization to the green goals and drives green practices to be imbibed in the organization's culture.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this paper is to explain the significance of green HRM, impact of Green HRM, the Green HRM policies and practices adopted by the organisations in achieving the goal of organizational sustainability. It will focus on how the Green HRM functions benefits and contributes towards environmentally sustainable business and how the relevant practices could be followed.

### **Research Methodology**

The study is primarily based upon the secondary data. For this extant literature related to the topic from different databases, websites, articles, write-ups and other available sources were collected. A systematic review of collected literature was done in detail. Hence the study for this research has resulted into a desk research rather than a questionnaire survey or any other form.

### **Significance of Green HRM**

Green HRM in broader concept is defined as the portion of human resource management which is focused on efforts to transform organizational employees into green employees with a vision to attain organizational environment sustainability goals and also make a significant contribution to the environment. Green HRM is also defined as a system that uses HRM policies to promote the potential use of limited resources within business organizations to promote environmental sustainability. Reading through the theory related to the definition of Green HRM and the movement behind it, three key principles that guide the philosophy of Green HRM are the principles of environmentalism, sustainability, and social justice which plays an important role in providing competitive advantage to an organisation. Some of the factors such as the increasing business opportunities, the public image of the brand and compliance with environment-friendly policies and laws, reducing labor turnover and utility costs are helping in creating competitive advantage for the organisation.

In the last decade, sustainability has become an integral part of doing business in any industry. Sustainability seeks to balance and at the same time optimize the social, environmental and financial concerns. For companies to balance their financial, social and environmental risks, sustainability helps as being an add-on to 'the way things are done'.

It has been recognized that organizational culture plays a fundamental part in the shift toward sustainability. Organizational culture is considered a key determinant and indicator of the success or failure of environmental management programs at companies. An organization's culture embodies the main assumptions, values, symbols and activities within an organization that reflect what the employees and top management think about environmental sustainability issues. It has been recognized that there is a strategic link between Green HRM practices and policies which helps to create a change in organizational cultures and it can be said that it acts as the messenger or change agent.

Green HRM plays a critical role in incorporating the sustainability strategies of the organization for creating the skills, values, trust and motivation level of the employees to achieve a triple bottom line. It ensures long term health and sustainability of both the organization's internal and external stakeholders. Thus there is a growing need for the integration of environmental sustainability into human resource management (HRM) which points towards the significance of Green HRM.

### **Impact of Green HRM**

Green HRM promotes the sustainable use of all types of resources, which can help in attaining environmental sustainability or in simple terms it creates awareness and commitments towards the challenges of environmental social governance in particular. Additionally, the development of Green HRM also helps in utilising the concept of the three key elements of sustainability like environment, social, and economic balance to bring benefits to the organization in the long run. With the help of relevant Green HRM policies and practices such as the functional (job description and analysis, recruitment, selection, training, performance appraisal, and reward system) and competitive dimensions (team, culture, and organizational learning) the impact of Green HRM can be utilized in the maximum extent to create an edge over the other organisations.

The impact of Green HRM was measured with four factors like the employee life cycle, rewards, education and training, and employee empowerment which helps in determining the effectiveness of the organisation. Later on it was measured using four other practices including green recruitment, green training, green pay and compensation, and green employees' involvement. Recently, Green HRM is measured with the five-factor model including environmental training, investment in people, creation of work-life balance and family-friendly employment, improved employee health and safety, and employee participation in decision making processes. However, all these efforts are mainly focused on environmental concerns from the perspective of the organization. It has been identified that a little work has been done in this regard so far as to include Green HRM as a possible emphasizing factor for achieving organisational sustainability.

### **Green HR Practices and its importance in Organization**

As per the definitions of Lado and Wilson HRM is "a set of distinct but interrelated activities, functions, and process that are directed at attracting, developing, and maintaining an organisation's human resources. But as per the need of the hour in order to implement an effective green corporate culture, it is important to promote a great deal of technical and management skills among all employees of the organization as well as create awareness about the factors related to greening of the organisation. It would be ideal to have effective human resource management system including stringent green recruitment strategies, green appraisal and green reward systems to spread environmental awareness and encourages implementation in their evaluation process and training and empowerment programs, which will ultimately enable the development of relevant set of skills and competencies amongst the employees of "pro green" firms. Green HRM can adopt various green processes and practices in different HR functions like acquisition of human capital, their induction, training, performance management and reward management which will have an impact on the overall reduction of carbon footprint of a company. This study thus focusses on the need to adopt environmental practices as primary objectives towards the achievement of organizational functioning. It also gives an insight of the different Green HRM practices that different organizations need to implement in order to achieve sustainability.



### Green Training and Development

Training is the method of equipping the employees with skills and knowledge necessary for ensuring adequate resource utilisation for the benefit of the organisation. Zoogah defines Green training and development as the organisational development of attitudes, behaviours as well as knowledge and skills among the employees in order to help avert the corrosion of environment. An important point to note is that there is a strong positive correlation between employee training and development with the organisational performance. It is the role of the HRM department of the organisation to impart the necessary training and developmental skills and knowledge among the employees in order to make them enough competitive for the betterment of their organisation. It is in this context while going through the different work done in this area Boromisa, Tisma, and Lezaic, found that organisations have the ability to acquaint the employees with relevant knowledge regarding the concepts of "going green" by providing Green training. Some of the employees may possess these basic concepts of "going green" during the recruitment and selection process while others may not, so here this training plays an important role. However, regardless of the employees' status regarding the concept of sustainability, it is mandatory process of the particular organisations to train the employees on the "going green" concepts and also advance the knowledge and skills of those employees who are already familiar with environmental management techniques like Green HRM in order to attain sustainability for the organisation.

### Green Performance Management and Appraisal

Many organisations has undertaken the practice of green performance management and appraisal system in regular intervals to help align individual employee performance with the expected optimal organisational performance. The primary objective of undertaking this assessment is to ensure that there is a reduction in the level of the performance gap so that the individual and collective employees work towards the attainment of the organizational performance levels that has been determined. Earlier, the performance management and appraisals were undertaken with the primary objectives of focusing on the organisation's capabilities to achieve its income, profitability, and employee satisfaction levels. And these appraisals helped to enhance the abilities of the particular organisation to remain sustainable in the long-run. It is in this context that the green performance management and appraisal helps in giving an extra edge to assess an organisation's abilities towards achieving the goals and objectives of becoming sustainable. Hence, the employees must be in a position to demonstrate the activities and strategies they are putting in place in order to help an organisation achieve its environmental management goals and objectives.

### **Green Compensation and Reward**

Several studies reveals that compensation and rewards are the means through which the employees are appreciated for their performance. They are considered as the most powerful and influential tools through which individual's interests are linked to those of the organisation. Through incentives such as accolades, the employees ensures full commitment towards their work as well as they work with more enthusiasm to deliver their best for achieving the organisation's goals and objectives. In connection of Green HRM, the green compensation and rewards are considered as latent elements that can be used in the support and promotion of the environmental activities in the particular organization or business entity. It has been found that in order to push for ecofriendly initiatives, different modern organizations are focussing on strategic reward and management approaches to be integrated with their strategic approaches in order to motivate the particular employees to continuously work towards achieving the organisation's goals of augmenting the environmental management practices. Eventually, different organisations have been able to implement their green initiatives through the adoption and implementation of attractive compensations and rewarding for those employees who demonstrate extraordinary performance in order to deliver the above-mentioned organizational goal.

### **Green Employee Empowerment and Participation**

Employee empowerment and participation, through their engagement, is a very vital element in pushing forth and increasing the levels of an organisational performance. Engaging the employees in different capacities, such as in the decision-making process, is central in the sense that the employees will feel as being part of the organization, hence it helps in developing the "ownership" culture among them. In other words, they feel valued by the top management of the particular organisation which eventually helps in increasing their morale and motivation. In context of the above views, different organisations should focus on engaging their employees in practising of the green initiatives. For instance, they need to inform the employees on the reasons as to why these green initiatives are important and as such why the particular employees should be working towards achieving them. This will help align the employees' capabilities, goals, motivations, and perceptions with the environmental management techniques and hence eventual optimal achievement of the green initiatives.

### **Green Management of Organizational Culture**

Creating awareness and developing Green HRM practices, is not necessarily enough in achieving the optimal green initiatives. Rather there is a need for an organisation to imbibe these initiatives and policies into its organisational culture through continuous appraisal. It has been studied that organisational green culture and organisational commitment are two key tools that different organisations must utilise in order to remain sustainable. It is in this context, the different studies focusses on the need for the organisations to come up with appropriate strategies of measuring the two determinants from the perspective of the employees. This will assist them to have a better understanding of the different needs of the employees so that they are able to satisfy them accordingly. This will also help such organisations to identify the appropriate strategies to adopt in order for them to maintain the green culture and ensure that the employees are committed towards following the green initiatives and hence are focused towards the achievement of the set green goals.

### **Benefits of Green HRM Practices**

Many employers have now recognised that green practices at the workplace can promote social responsibility among workers. Many green companies have shown low employee turnover rates compared to their non-sustainable counterparts. This has also been found empirically in the results of various surveys, which state the several advantages of green workforce such as:

- **Environment-friendly Business Decisions:** Having employees who understand the importance of sustainability, enables to make business decisions with a broader perspective that helps bring innovative solutions to pressing and/or emerging environment-related problems.
- **Desirability as an Employer:** Green employers become the most preferred choice of green talent pool, i.e. potential employees who not just understand sustainability but have also put it in practice in business previously. Green workforce gives the company a competitive edge.
- **Employee Retention:** Green companies are known to have lesser turnover rates compared to their non-sustainable counterparts as found out from the SHRM Green Workplace Survey. 61% of respondents working for an environment-savvy company said they were "likely" or "very likely" to stay at the business because of the practices.

- **Improved Sales:** According to the findings of the Cone Communications Green Gap Trend Tracker Survey, 71 % of Americans think about the environment when they shop. The findings of this survey ensure that good environment management practices followed by companies go a long way; it can improve sales and reduce costs.
- **Improved Public Image:** With the use of environmentally friendly practices, implementing the Green concept it has been found that most of the persons are now much aware of the eco-friendly practices and they are attracted towards the organisation who are adopting green management practices more as compared to the organisation which are causing harm to the environment.
- **Improvement in Sustainable use of Resources:** By increasing the awareness among the individuals working in the organisation about the Green HRM concept and following the Green HRM practices it has been found that there is a proper utilisation of natural resources and hence it contributes towards retaining of the natural resources for our future generation.
- **Reduction of Practices that Cause the Degradation of the Environment:** By implementing Green HRM practices we can reduce the misuse of resources that causes degradation of the environment.
- **Reduced Utility Costs:** By using technologies that are energy efficient and generate less waste like using Energy Star rated CFL bulbs, energy-efficient windows and doors to decrease the heating and cooling costs, water conservation system, low-flow toilet and reduce landscaping watering to reduce your water usage etc can help in attaining the sustainability goal of the organisation.
- **Save Environmental Impact:** By Recycling and using long-lasting/Green products reduces the amount of energy needed to produce replacement products.
- **Rebates and Tax Benefits:** Central Government and State government give subsidy and offer tax incentives and rebates when sustainability factors are taken into consideration by the organisation.

#### **Limitation of the Study & Further Scope**

The present study deals into secondary data i.e. literature review, primary collection of data may give in-depth information to the concept of Green HRM.

#### **Conclusion**

Green movement is the basis of Green HRM. It is related to the conservation and preservation of the environment to save our Earth from natural and manmade disasters. Defending and improving the human environment for the existing and next generation has become an essential objective and mission for the mankind. The organisations who have adopted Green HRM are leaders in their respective fields of functioning and they strive towards green business management which helps them to gain competitive edge among all the other organisations. As a matter of fact, this practice is not only being followed by the corporate houses, it is also increasing in other organisations as well, Green HRM is all set to play an important role in the industry for promoting the environment related Green HRM practices to achieve organisational sustainability by adopting and also paves the way to incorporate it in the management philosophy as well.

Green HRM has emerged as a critical branch of HRM and it has a great potential to serve for environmental sustainability which is a must for sustaining the people and society and organisations. This study was attempted to present a brief introduction to Green HRM and identify related concepts, to explore and specify the key studies on Green HRM and to discuss future implications. Green ideas and concepts are beginning to gather pace within the HR space, often complementing existing sustainability-based initiatives. Increasingly they are delivering tangible benefits to the business, rather than simply adding a gloss to brand and reputation. These new processes, policies, products and tools are actually helping to ensure compliance and improve productivity too. In this regard, the paper, thus brings out how the HRM function and by its policies and practices, can contribute to environmentally sustainable business.

However, the concentration has been on the employees, with the focus on the recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management and appraisal, reward and compensation, employee empowerment and participation, and the management of the organisational culture. The research has established how these can be managed from a "green" perspective levels and offered relevant recommendations as optimal solutions to the successful implementation of the Green HRM in different organisations.

And with legislation now in place to effectively formalise the need for a new corporate approach to the environment, it is time for HRM to embrace the green agenda. Adopting environmental practices help companies save money, find new sources of business and avoid trouble. Green companies believe that it is more economical to go green than it is to continue endangering the environment in general. Going green also helps companies enhance their public relations and image which also impacts profits.

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