

Green HRM: Goal Attainment through Environmental Sustainability

P. NAGESH

Research Scholar, S.J.J.T. University, Rajasthan

ABSTRACT

The green Human Resources Management has emerged from companies engaging in practices related to protection of environment and maintaining ecological balance. The slogan is earning profit through environmental sustainability. This paper summarises the issues arising in the literature on environmental management and HRM, and discusses issues raised from it including a need to operationalize terms, advantages of green HRM and core elements of green HRM and worker willingness to participate in Green HRM.

Key Words: Green, HRM, Sustainability, Environment, Core, Performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Continuous development is concerned with meeting the needs of people today without compromising the ability of prospective generations to attain their own needs by preserving the societal values. Companies now realize that they have to develop a powerful social belongingness and green sense of responsibility where it benefits the surroundings. The HR function will become the driver of environmental sustainability within the organization by arranging in a line its practices and policies with its strategic goals reflecting an eco-friendly focus. With the growing awareness of the Green Movement across the world, management scholars from varied areas such as accounting, marketing, supply-chain management and HRM also start analysing that how managerial practices in these areas can contribute to environmental management goals. Thus, the present study attempts to narrate the functional benefits and sustainable green energies aligning with HR practices.

2. DEFINITION OF GREEN HRM

Green HRM is referred to all the activities involved in development, implementation and ongoing maintenance of a system that aims at making employees of an organization Green. It is the side of HRM that is concerned with transforming normal employees into Green employees so as to achieve environmental goals of the organization and finally to make a significant contribution to environmental sustainability. It refers to the policies, practices and systems that make employees of the organization Green for the benefit of the individual, society, natural environment, and the business. The purpose of Green HRM is to create, enhance and retain Greening within each employee of the organization so that he or she gives a maximum individual contribution on each of the four roles, i.e., preservationist, conservationist, non-polluter, and maker.

3. BACKGROUND STUDY OF GREEN HRM

Green HRM has taken prominence in the recent business practices in corporate houses and created interest to the researchers across the globe to study the various aspects. This concept 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. Several factors initiated the researcher to study about Green HRM and its background.

The huge scope of Green HR has gained attention of United Nations which collaborated with several educational institutions has developed the (PRME) Principles for Responsible Management Education, by encouraging social scientists and managers to jointly work on developing new knowledge to promote environmental responsibility (PRME,2010). Human resource management division in a firm has been a prime contributor of this initiative in the development and the execution of a corporate environmental initiative. This is done with the involvement of several units of the organization as a joint process and by doing so different roles are undertaken. The HRM does not only represent a major internal stakeholder within the company, but it is also a source for competitive advantage (Wright, Dunford & Snell, 2007).

In 2000 Dunphy, Benveniste, Griffiths and Sutton linked the implementation of ecological sustainability with human sustainability. These researchers highlighted that the training and investment in human resources goes ideally along with ecological sustainability. Currently, many corporations are implementing a proactive, strategic tool known as an Environment Management System to gain competitive advantage (Daily and Huang, 2001). This system provides a structure that allows management of the firms the ability to better control the firm’s environmental impacts (Barnes, 1996; Florida and Davison, 2001). However, it is maintained by many that the role of employee involvement in EMS implementation has one of the most fundamental influences on its effectiveness and success. Sudin (2011) discussed the positive effects of the types of green intellectual capital on corporate environment citizenship, leading to competitive advantage of firms. Thus, there is a need redefining HR role from HR executives to environmental executives who achieves employee cooperation in implementing environmental policies (Wehrmeyer and Parker, 1996).

With this backdrop it can be assumed that Green HRM is all about the holistic application of the concept of sustainability to organization and its workforce. It involves green actions focused on increasing efficiency within processes, reducing and eliminating environmental waste, and revamping HR products, tools, and procedures resulting in greater efficiency and lower costs. The results included: electronic filing, ride sharing, job sharing, teleconferencing and virtual interviews, recycling, telecommuting, online training, and developing more energy efficient office spaces. In fact, Green HRM promotes various Green processes and practices in different HR functions. Some of the practices concerning Green management in which HR is actively involved.

4. OBJECTIVES

An attempt is made to spread the awareness amongst the industries, across the country on Green HR, thereby helping the organizations and its people, to understand the environmental related issues and reduce environmental problems, hazards and pollutions.

5. 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

6. ABOUT GREEN WITH RESPECT TO HRM

What do you mean by the term Green? The term "green" is used as an adjective and a noun in the normal context of our usage. The New Oxford Thesaurus of English (2000) presents several meanings such as verdant (grassy, grass-covered, leafy, verdurous, rural, pastoral (opposite: barren); environmentally friendly; unripe; unseasoned; raw; inexperienced; naive; vivid; vigorous; and pale (in combining form) to the term green. The same defines "green as a noun" as environmentalist, conservationist, preservationist, nature-lover, or eco-activist. The Collins Birmingham University English Language Dictionary (1987) defines "green" as the colour of grass or leaves or leafy or verdant. Also, the same treats "a green" as an area of land covered with grass, plants, and trees and with not houses or factories (used showing approval). The Oxford Paperback Dictionary (1979) defines "green" as the colour between blue and yellow; the colour of growing grass; covered with grass or with growing leaves; unripe, not seasoned; immature, inexperienced, easily deceived; pale and sickly-looking. Thus, the term "green" has different meanings. However, mostly it means something relevant to nature or natural environment. Green means environmental. "Green" or "Greening" has at least four meanings in the context of managing people at work/Human Resource Management (HRM).

1. Preservation of the natural environment: all the things in the world which are neither caused nor controlled by human beings and they include land, forests, plants, animals, and other natural phenomena are referred to as the natural environment. To keep it in its original form and protect it from harm, loss, or negative change.
2. Conservation of the natural environment: to be very careful in the way of using it in order to let it last as long as possible, to use it at the minimum level so that future generations will be able to utilize it.
3. Avoidance or minimization of environmental pollution: to stop contaminating the water, air, atmosphere, etc. through unpleasant and poisonous substances and wastes. To guard against outcomes that will ultimately endanger the planet/earth where humans and non-humans are living.
4. Generation of gardens and looking-like natural places: to create parks and places which have plants, trees, and grass.

7. LITERATURE REVIEW

Green HRM involves addressing the company carbon footprint by cutting down on usage of papers, reducing unwanted travel. Green HRM is about the holistic application of the concept of sustainability to organization and its workforce (Aravamudhan, 2012). It has been found out in various researches that HR department in many companies are increasingly greening their processes to gain competitive advantage over others.

In 1990s it became an accepted slogan globally that green management is core of every business which cannot be ignored and has to be associated with Human Resources practise. Green management is defined as the method whereby organizations manage the environment by developing environmental management strategies (Lee, 2009). This conception becomes a strategic principal concern for businesses, mainly multinational activities operating their business internationally (Banerjee, 2001). In summary, green management refers to the management of organization contact with, and impact upon, the environment (Lee and Ball, 2003), and it has disappeared further than regulatory fulfilment and needs to include theoretical tools such as pollution prevention, product stewardship and corporate social responsibility.

According to Justin Victor (2008), one half of HR professionals indicated that their organizations have a formal or informal environmental responsibility policy. Top Three green practices reported by HR professionals were encouraging employees to work more environment friendly, offering recycling programs and donating / discounting used furniture supplies.

John R. Rathgeber (2007) has said in his research that many business leaders are embracing Corporate Sustainability and Green Business practices as a way to improve their operations and enhance their competitiveness.

According to Candice Harris and Dr. Helen Tregidga (2008), many organizations have quick to Jump onboard the Sustainability bandwagon, little appears to have been done to consider the role of, and effect on, the HR function and managers. How are HR managers defining and enacting Corporate Sustainability? All participants felt that HR function has a role in fostering environmental practices within an organization due to their role as stewards of value, and as skilled communicators in the organization. Findings indicated the HR managers espouse private moral positions around concern for the environment, however environmental action in their personal lives appears limited.

On other hand John Sullivan (2009), in his paper has stated that environmental issues are on most every one's mind so if your firm has a competitive advantage in this area will create an employment brand. Green recruiting is a chance to differentiate yourself in a recruiting marketplace where standing out from the crowd is already extremely difficult. Moreover, Genesis focusing on the Green Recruitment.

8. ORGANIZATIONS ADOPTING GREEN HRM PRACTICES HAVE SEVERAL ADVANTAGES.

- **Healthy work environment:** The practice of Green HR will lead to healthy work environment by saving the precisions resources. A more focused work and ethical practices will be nourished among the work force. This in return will have progressive and service-oriented surroundings which makes the organizations to reach the targets with minimal resources.
- **Green business decisions:** Employing a green workforce or employees who understand and practice environment-friendly practices helps the organization take business decisions that have a wider perspective and thereby adopting innovative strategies and techniques to arrive at an optimal solution solve environmental related issues.
- **Preferred employer of choice:** Green organizations are 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.
- **Higher retention of employees:** A survey by SHRM (Society for Human Resources Management) Green Workplace Survey found out that green organizations have lesser attrition rates as compared to their non-sustainable counterparts. In the survey about 61% of the respondents working for an organization known to be an advocate for green human resource management practices said that they were "likely" or "very likely" to continue working in the present organization because of their green policy and practices

- **Better Sales:** Cone Communications, a marketing, and public relations company in the year 2013 conducted a survey on the Green Gap Trend where about 71 % of Americans shoppers said they are conscious of the environment impact when they purchase a product. This survey finding is critical to the belief that companies that adhere to green practices can improve their sales and cut costs by achieving higher volume of sales.

9. THE CORE ELEMENTS OF GREE HR

Recruitment & Selection:

- ✓ The recruitment and selection process should consider the long-term competency requirements of the company. The corporate environmental culture of a company should be integrated with the recruitment process. In these regards, Wehrmeyer recommends the following:
- ✓ The job descriptions should specify the environmental reporting role, health and safety tasks and other environmental impact related roles.
- ✓ The interview should be tailored to gauge the potential compatibility of the candidate with the company's green goals.
- ✓ The induction programme should be designed to provide new recruits with information about sustainable development policies and commitments, EMS and green goals of the company. In this way, new recruits are able to inculcate and get familiarized with the culture of the organization, right from the beginning.

Performance Management

System measuring the environmental performance of people in an organization is challenging. A Performance management system to supplement green HR practices is therefore, required to develop environmental performance standards and indicators. This can be initiated by linking performance evaluation to green goals and tasks specified in the job description. For example, Infosys has moved to performance-based contracts, effectively forcing project teams to practice integrated design by withholding fees if performance goals¹⁰ are not met. If the work is not done as required by the contract, they lose 25% of their fee. Green goals of Infosys include 100% of its energy from renewable sources by 2017, 50% reduced energy consumption, carbon neutrality and net-negative water consumption by 2018.

- **Training and Development**

Training and development programmes developed for employees at all levels should touch upon social and environmental aspects. The induction training for new joiners should include green orientation program which enables the employees to understand the green policies and practices of the company and also align to the green goals of the company. Such a training program can inform them of the green initiatives undertaken by the company like minimizing the emission of greenhouse gases etc. Zoogah suggests training new employees for systems and processes in place to enable waste reduction and energy conservation. Moreover, training modules to educate them in environmental management should be designed and imparted. At the Body Shop in the UK, environmental awareness is part of induction/orientation training, especially for new employees. Furthermore, to promote awareness in environmental management, "green teams" can be established in each department. Training need analysis by assessing the environmental knowledge and skills can help identify the training required in environmental management and thereby devise focused training modules.

- **Employee Involvement and Participation**

Employee Involvement is defined as “creating an environment in which people have an impact on decisions and actions that affect their jobs”. The involvement of employees at the level of formulating environmental strategy, would equip them better to market green products. Employee involvement contributes to optimize work processes by better co-ordination. It also helps manage the health and safety concerns of workers better. As Phillips writes, “The use of employee participation in green HR has been noted to help prevent pollution from workplaces.” Employees who pursue programmes like ‘car-pooling’ should be encouraged by offering benefits. Such green commuting habits should be lauded so that more and more employees engage themselves in green commuting behaviour. Allowing for flexible work weeks would also constitute green commuting habits. In some organizations, the revised HR policies towards Green HRM allow for ‘e-working’, a system whereby employees can work from being linked to the employer via telecommunication link and subsequently reducing commute. Such forms of green ideas should be invited and implemented as feasible.

- **Pay and Reward**

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 (Milliman & Clair, 1996). In the U.S., companies such as Du Pont base their executive compensation and bonus system for middle managers and senior officers in part on environmental stewardship practices, where bonuses can be over 10 percent if they develop an environmentally benign pesticide for agriculture or a non-polluting product (May & Flannery, 1995; Snyder, 1992). In Europe, companies like Neste Oy in Finland include environmental performance goals as a standard part of their bonus system and line managers have licence to allocate rewards to motivate employees at Neste Oy in Sweden (Ramus, 2001). In Britain, at ICI environmental targets would form part of senior managers’ PRP assessment (Snape, Redman, and Bamber, 1994).

- **Exit**

Exit means voluntarily or involuntarily leaving 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 counselling shall be made to those who are fired for their bad environmental performance. The goal of outplacement counselling, 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, wheredismissal occurs, it may be that any ‘general debriefing should include an environmental dimension, and if staff resign, then HR managers need to discover why’ (Wehrmeyer, 1996 as cited in Renwick, et al., 2008).

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In a nutshell creating a green World where consumers and employees force change. In fact the HR function can be renamed as “People and Society”. The Green Human Resources Management has emerged from companies engaging in practices related to protection of environment and maintaining ecological balance.

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 can play a useful role in business in promoting environment related issues by adopting and following Green HR policies and actions. Green HRM can enhance corporate image and brand. Green HR will play an important role in making the employees aware of and concerned for preservation of natural resources and contribute in pollution control, waste management and manufacture of eco-friendly products. The proposed process model will help the practicing managers and future researchers follow green HRM techniques. The present study also proposes future researchers to fill the gap in the existing literatures by conducting empirical studies such as Green HRM practices in the manufacturing or service organizations (particularly the organizations that are polluting environment, Comparing Green HRM practices between developed and developing countries, Green perceptions, attitudes of employer and employees, barriers in the green HRM implementation etc.

11. References

1. Beard, C., & Rees, S. (2000). *Green teams and the management of environmental change in a UK county council. Environmental Management and Health, 11(1), 27-38.*
2. Bird, A., (1996). *Training for environmental improvement in Wehrmeyer, W. (1996), 227- 246.*
3. Brockett, J. (2006). *Change agents people management. 23rd November, pp.1-19.*
4. H. H. Opatha & A. A. Arulrajah, *Green human resource management: simplified general reflections. International Business Research, 7(8), 101-112, 2014 doi:10.5539/ibr.v7n8p101*
5. T. Boone, *Creating a Culture of Sustainability. Healthcare research collaborative, 1-32, 2012. Retrieved June 02, 2015, from noharm.org/lib/downloads/others/Creating_a_Culture_of_Sustainability.pdf*
6. S. Bertels, L. Papania, & D. Papania., *Embedding sustainability in organizational culture. Network for Business Sustainability, 2010. Retrieved June 02, 2015*
7. J. M. Cramer & B. Roes, *Total employee involvement: Measures for success. Environmental Quality Management, 3(1), 39-52, 2006, doi:10.1002/tqem.3310030105*
8. E. S. Jackson & J. Seo, *The greening of strategic HRM scholarship. Organization Management Journal, 7, 278-290, 2010. Retrieved June 02, 2015*
9. J. Cherian & J. Jacob, *A study of green HR practices and its effective implementation in the organization: A review. International Journal of Business and Management, 7(21), 25-33, 2012, doi:10.5539/ijbm.v7n21p25*
10. W. Wehrmeyer, *Greening people: Human Resources and Environmental Management. Greenleaf Publishing, 1996, cited in Renwick et. al., 2008*
11. May, D. R., & Flannery, B. L. (1995). *Cutting waste with employee involvement teams. Business Horizons, 28-38.*
12. Mandip, G. (2012). *Green HRM: People management commitment to environmental sustainability. Research Journal of Recent Sciences, ISSN, 2277, 2502.*
13. Rani, S., & Mishra, K. (2014). *Green HRM: Practices and strategic implementation in the organizations. International Journal on Recent and Innovation Trends in Computing and Communication, 2(11), 3633-3639.*
14. Prasad, R. S. (2013). *Green HRM-partner in sustainable competitive growth. Journal of Management Sciences and Technology, 1(1), 15-18.*