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## "Green HR Practices – Step Towards Sustainable HRM"

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### **Abstract**

Green HRM – awareness among employees and employers about environment and implementing various eco-friendly practices to promote sustainable HRM known as Green HRM. Human resource of an organization would play crucial role creating a culture of sustainability. To imply the sustainable HRM we should accept and implement different environmental friendly functions of HR like recruitment, induction, training and development, conducting performance appraisal, and also determining employee compensation. Green HRM plays a useful role for businesses entities in promoting environment related issues by adopting and implementing Green HR policies and practices. Green HRM is the one which can boost corporate image and brand of the organization. Green HRM not only creates awareness about environment among employers but also helps in making the employees responsible of and concerned for conservation of natural resources and actively participates in pollution control, waste management and manufacture of eco-friendly products. The current research work focuses on green HR practices like recruitment and selection, induction, learning and development, performance management, compensation management and exit management while considering environmental concerns and also the future of green HRM.

**Keywords:** Green HRM, Green HR practices

### **INTRODUCTION**

21<sup>st</sup> century has been showing increased interest in the environmental issues all around the world irrespective of related fields or business. The recent interest in environmentalism globally has arisen from specific treaties to combat climate change, e.g. Kyoto 1997, Bali 2007 and Copenhagen 2009 (Victor, 2001; Victor, D. G. (2001). Green Human Resource Management is the use of green initiatives by the private and public entities and spare knowledge about environmental sustainability. Green HRM is an emerging field of research in the organizational studies after 1990s. It is emerging as an important key area for management which can have a great impact on stake holders of an organization. Environmentally conscious organizations will become increasingly prominent as we re-enter into a period of growth. Green HR is all about environmental friendly HR practices and the preservation of knowledge capital. Green HRM results in minimizing carbon foot print, reduction in cost, increased efficiency, employee engagement by adopting policies like electronic record keeping, car pooling, online training, cab sharing, teleconferencing, virtual interviews, recycling etc.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To understand the role of Human Resource Manager in implementing the various Green practices.
2. To review literature on green HRM.
3. To analyze future of Green HRM.

**SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The scope of this article is limited to recruitment and selection, induction, performance appraisal, learning and development, compensation management and exit management.

**LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

Green Employee relations and Green employee engagement as green HR practices are not taken under this research article .

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research paper is based on the following methodology in which secondary data is used from the secondary sources such as articles, research papers, annual reports, sustainability reports, and various company websites.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Fineman (1997:37), said that the environment belongs to everyone its damage is quite essentially a matter of broad consensual moral concern and organizations are as responsible as anyone else. So HR managers are requested to reconsider the implications of what their passive position on the environment could mean by giving them important role of shaping employees behavior in organizations and beyond.

Chad Holliday in (2001) stated that 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.

According to Stephen King (2004) the future of HRM will be built on innovation and creativity, in nutshell innovation and creativity approaches were needed towards quality of life, environmental improvements through the healthy, sustainable, vibrant community theme. In summary it was said that money and support of employees can put HRM on the road to environmental Sustainability.

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.

(Aravamudhan , 2012) says that 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. 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.

Justin Victor (2008), in his research said that 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.

According to Malt Bolch (2008), spreading the word green HRM and Sustainability initiatives may fall to more than one department but human resource plays an important role, 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 John Sullivan (2009), 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 you in a recruiting marketplace where standing out from the crowd is already extremely difficult.

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. While the study's questions and results are broad, they hint at several areas for HR practitioners to consider in the green space. Over half of the companies surveyed have incorporated environmental management into business operations and have a formal green program in place or plan to implement one in the next twelve months. As per Buck Consultants survey (2009)

As per Suhaimi Sudins research (2011), green management initiatives has become an important factor in forward thinking businesses around the world. Researchers argued that employees must be inspired empowered and environmentally aware of greening in order to carry out green management initiatives. The paper focuses on development of a new model of strategic Green HRM which includes relationship between assessments based HR interventions, environmental management system, Green intellectual capital and corporate environmental citizenship.

#### **Recruitment and Selection**

Recruitment and selection are the duties which are performed by HR Department which consumes tonnes of papers since its initiation process we can reduce the paperwork and go green by making use of available alternatives such as digital technology to reduce the consumption of scarce natural resources. As higher level executives have to take greater responsibility for green initiatives, green goals should be included in managerial job descriptions. Those organizations which tend to develop the competency model for talent should include environmental consciousness as one of the core competencies required of employees. Green job candidates, who comprise a large section of talented and knowledgeable manpower, use Green criteria when applying for jobs, and, therefore, companies having green practices can attract good talent. This means organizations have to 'practice green' in order to build a Green Employer brand. Preference in selection should be given to candidates who are 'aware about Green', which becomes a part of the HR acquisition policy. Employers, having strong green brand are more likely to attract talent than those who do not have green philosophy. Attracting high-quality staff is a key HR challenge in the "war for talent" (Renwick et al., 2013, p. 2). Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, and Eberly (2008) in their study on turnover and retention of employees argue that the most important benefit dimensions of HR and sustainability are retention/recruitment and satisfaction. Organizations are now beginning to recognize the fact that gaining reputation as a green employer is an effective way to attract new talent (Phillips, 2007; Stringer, 2009). German firms such as Siemens, BASF, Bayer and Mannesmann use environmental activities and a green image to attract high-quality staff. The Rover Group carmaker, in Britain, makes environmental responsibilities and qualifications part of every job profile (Wehrmeyer, 1996, p. 30). According to Wehrmeyer (1996), recruitment practices can support effective environmental management by making sure that new entrants are familiar with an organization's environmental culture and are capable of maintaining its environmental values.

Green recruitment is a system where the focus is given on importance of the environment and making it a major element within the organization. Complementing this, the candidates are also enthusiastic, and to some extent, passionate about working for an environment friendly "green" company. Recruiting candidates with green bend of mind make it easy for firms to induct

professionals who are aware with sustainable processes and are already familiar with basics like recycling, conservation, and creating a more logical world. Grolleau et al. (2012) in their study on impact of environmental standards of a company on recruitment of an employee found that environmental commitment of the company adds to profile of a company. In their primary survey, they found that professionals were more concerned with respect to the environmental strategy of a company.

Contemplating these statements, we conclude that green recruitment provides the employer with an opportunity to stand ahead of the crowd and further increase their chance of attracting the candidates and retain them after induction. Corroborating the recent green trend, we propose that the recruitment process be aligned with environment-friendly issues. Further research should address questions related to the green employer's enthusiasm in achieving the environmental goals and how the potential job seekers perceive or rate them on the parameters of sustainability as claimed. For example, do the employers include green job descriptions, eco-friendly locations, paper less interviews, and such other practices in their recruitment portfolio? Are the new recruits made aware with the environmental policies and allegiance of the company at the commencement of the job itself? Research addressing these questions will help the new recruits to carry on with the green policies as well as cooperate with the management in establishing green policies to achieve the goals of the company.

## **2. Induction**

Employee orientation programs should be designed in such a way as to facilitate the integration of new employees into a culture of green consciousness. Induction programs should highlight an organization's concern for green issues of employees like their health, safety and green working conditions.

## **3. Performance management**

Green performance management is related with issues of environmental concerns and policies of the organization. It also focuses on use of environmental friendly techniques. According to the study of Epstein and Roy (1997) when HR managers incorporate environmental performance into PM systems they safeguard the environment against any damage. At present some of the organizations deal with the concerns of PM by acquiring corporate-wide environmental performance standards, and Green information systems/audits to gain useful data on environmental performance (Marcus & Fremeth, 2009).

### **Learning and Development**

Ramus (2002) in his study of managers, on best management practices states that environmental learning and education, along with creation of a desirable environmental culture for the employees where they can feel that they are the part of environmental outcomes, were the most important HRM processes that facilitate the achievement of environmental goals. Liebowitz (2010), in his study on the role of HR in achieving a sustainability culture, suggests that the HR Department can offer leadership development workshops to help managers develop their "front wheel" soft, people skills, or behavioral competencies, in teamwork, diversity, managing change, and collaboration (p. 3). Learning and development is a practice of HR department that focuses on enhancement of employees' skills, knowledge, and attitudes to prevent deterioration of environment (Zoogah, 2011, p. 17). Green learning and development teach employees about the value of Environment Management, educate them in operational methods that protect environment, reduce waste, spread environmental awareness within the organization, and offer opportunity to mitigate environmental related issues among employees (Zoogah, 2011). Green

learning and Development process create awareness among employees about various aspects and value of environment management. This aids them to cuddle diverse techniques of conservation including waste management within an organization. Furthermore, it enhances the skill of an employee to deal with different environmental issues.

Concluding the above discussion, we predict that the need of the hour is organizations need to focus on their employees on best business practices inspired with green initiatives. Along with, sustainable learning and education, employees should also be proficient to educate the customers regarding the advantages of becoming more eco-friendly and buying green products.

### **Compensation Management**

Performance of employees is boosted by using the tool of rewards and compensation which is one of the most efficient tools of HR department to increase productivity and efficiency of employees. We also emphasize that incentives and rewards can influence employees' attention to the maximum at work and motivate them to apply maximum effort on their part to achieve organizational goals.

In the framework of Green HRM, rewards and compensation can be understood as prospective tools for supporting environmental activities in organizations. In harmony to a premeditated approach for reward and management, modern organizations are mounting reward systems to encourage eco-friendly initiatives embarked upon by their employees. The statement is supported by a survey conducted in the UK by CIPD/KPMG that estimated that 8% of UK firms were rewarding green behaviors with various types of awards and/or financial incentives and these practices can be effective in motivating employees to generate eco-initiatives (Phillips, 2007, p. 9). In a parallel study by Forman and Jorgensen (2001) on the importance of employee involvement in environmental programs, it was observed that employee obligation to environment management programs was better when they were offered compensation to take up duties in relation to environmental responsibility. Berrone and Gomez-Mejia (2009) observed in a study conducted on 469 US firms operating in high-polluting industries the efficiency of green rewards and compensation was best. According to them the firms having eco-friendly performance paid their CEOs more than non-eco-friendly firms. They also accomplished that long-term company results in accordance to pay were associated with greater pollution prevention success. Literature review reveals that incentives and compensations encourage executives to use accounting and other works to achieve short-term results and enrich themselves (Benz & Frey, 2007; Denis, Hanouna, & Sarin, 2006).

Though compensation and rewards increase green initiatives in organizations, it can never be completely free from some malpractices. Employee compensation and reward programs can be modified to give bonuses based on part of the employee's appraisal ratings on the behavioral and technical competencies. In addition, employees could be rewarded with bonuses for their exceptional work on special projects (Liebowitz, 2010, p. 53). Green rewards can include the use of workplace and lifestyle benefits, ranging from carbon credit offsets to free bicycles, to engage people in the green agenda while continuing to recognize their contribution (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2014, p. 1). At last, we conclude that more emphasis should be given on researches which determine effective approaches that will help to design and implement green compensation practices and may lead to the achievement of corporate environmental goals.

### **Exit Management**

Exit is to either voluntarily or involuntarily leaving the organization. This is the last function of HR department in which the HR manager conducts exit interview of the employees those are about to leave the organization. The main objective of conducting exit interview incase Green HR

practices is to check the knowledge of the employee about environmental concerns and any dissatisfactory reasons that encouraged him to leave the organization such as working conditions or any other similar reasons. Exit interviews can provide handful information about the changes to be made in the working conditions say premises, work culture etc.

#### **Future of Green HR Practices**

- Green HRM offers promising future for all stakeholders including employees, employers, practitioners, and academicians.
- We suggest that GHRM has extensive scope for research in management field but lacks behind in practice within academic area; hence, there is a need to bridge the gap between professional GHRM practices and lecture in research and teaching environmental management.
- In future we look forward to see more research on this topic, which would throw light on role of HRM activities in promoting green initiatives and to some extent influencing environmental management strategies.
- Organizations would help to reduce degradation of the environment and become healthier both physically and financially and, make the world a cleaner and safer place to live.
- On finishing note, we would like to add that HR is the major role actor in implementing GHRM practices and policies.
- Lastly, we can say that HR has significant opportunity to contribute to the organization's green society and plays vital role in enthusing, facilitating, and motivating employees for taking up green practices for greener business.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Though the Green interest group and Green HR are still in the stages of childhood, emerging consciousness within organizations of the significance of green issues have bound them to hold eco-friendly HR practices with a precise emphasis on waste management, recycling, reducing the carbon footprint, and using and producing green products. Obviously, most of the employees feel sturdily that the environment if not protected would hamper the organization as well as society at a large and, display better promise and job satisfaction toward an organization that is ever ready to go "Green." The effects of GHRM practices are versatile and require constant monitoring to recognize their potential impact on HRM issues. The Green HRM involves definite HR's practices and policies associated with the three sustainability pillars namely - economic, social, and environment balance. (Yusliza, Ramayah, & Othman, 2015, p. 1) The liability of the current generations, HR manager is to create consciousness among the youth and among the stakeholders associated with organization. Utilization of natural resources and helping the corporate to maintain proper environment, and retain the natural resources for our future generation i.e. sustainable development(Mathapati, 2013, p. 2).

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