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## GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES IN INDIA -AN OVERVIEW

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### **ABSTRACT**

In today's corporate world, the concepts like global competition, scientific changes and development, communication, environment, and environmental problems are getting more and more common in everyday life with the hastening of globalization.

In this sense, societies, businesses and individuals develop new dynamics to cope with this global change and have become essential to explore green practices in the business as well as in an environment.

Green Human Resources refer to using every employee interface to promote sustainable practices and increase employee awareness and commitments on the issues of sustainability. Today Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has become a key business strategy for the significant organizations where Human Resource Department plays an active part in going green at the workplace.

This study mainly focuses upon the various Green Human Resource Practices pursued by the organizations in India and suggests some potentially prolific HR initiatives for Green organizations.

**Keywords:** Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), India, Environment, Corporate World.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Now a day's organizations are using HR strategies to create environment hospitable product and services for the public. With aligning organisational goal with Human Resource Management for business sustainability is known as Green Human Resource Management. Many companies are adopting less paper, mail communication, E-meeting, E-training, video conferencing interview and also encouraging employee to switch off light and computer when they are not in use. Green HR is using environment friendly HR practice as well as the development of knowledge capital of employees which is helpful to employees for their career development as well as organisation sustainability.

This century has been showing keen interest in the environmental concerns all around the globe irrespective of related fields be it politics, public, or business. It has been observed that an increasing consciousness within business communities on the significance of going green and adopting various environment management techniques. In today's scenario of depleting natural resources 'green way' of business is hovering to be the next business differentiator. Companies have started to realize the business need for going green as a part of innovation.

As the function of a company fatefully depends on the active role played by the human resource (HR) department, there is an emergent need for the incorporation of green concepts into HRM practices. The HR function can become the driver of environmental sustainability within the organization by aligning people related practices and policies with sustainability goals reflecting an eco-focus. The prime agenda for organizations in initiating innovative practices is optimum utilization of resources with less consumption of time, ultimately leading to cost-effectiveness.

Despite the fact that most companies have been functioning on product innovation for environmental sustainability however there is a huge scope for researchers to work on the area of process innovations leading to environmental sustainability. The area of green human resource management (GHRM) is less explored and though companies in India have taken initiatives in incorporating green management yet, the application of GHRM as a concept is laid back.

Thus, the scope of the paper lies in identifying the need for initiating GHRM practices in organization of India. The study further discusses the existing green initiatives of Indian organizations and describes how green HR in an innovative practice. There is a huge scope in Organizations to initiate GHRM initiatives by integrating people, process, technology and the organization itself.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

- To know the concept of green HRM.
- To find out Green HR initiatives taken by organization

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study is primarily based on the secondary data collected from the existing proceedings on green initiatives, annual reports, CSR and sustainability reports and HR process of the organizations. The company manuals, websites, papers published in journals, magazines and newspaper articles will also

be referred to understand the existing Green HRM initiatives and green practices in the organization in India.

### **GHRMAS AN INNOVATION**

Initiating sustainable efforts involves not only technology oriented innovation but also needs focus on product, service as well as process. Product innovation for sustainability involves developing green products or focus on greening of existing products. Service innovations for sustainable development involve providing services to customers in a green way (e.g., discouraging usage of low quality plastic carry bags). The process innovation for sustainable development involves modifications to the existing organizational processes contributing to environmental concerns. One such function including people related processes in an organization is HR.

HR has an integral role to play in the initiation of environment friendly activities, involvement of individuals as a part of green initiatives and also initiating change in the existing processes. The adoption of HR practices like knowledge management, employee participation, recruitment and selection, employee training, encouraging diversity and leadership is required to be integrated to environmental improvements for the firm.

GHRM refers to practices promoting green initiatives by increasing employee awareness and commitment on the issues of environmental sustainability. The area of GHRM has high significance in organizations as it contributes to other functional areas of green management, green operations, green marketing, supply chain management, green finance and accounting. GHRM is considered to bear a holistic view in order to align employees with the company's environmental strategy.

GHRM is an environmentally profit centric approach which undertakes environment-friendly HR initiatives resulting in greater efficiencies, lower costs and better employee engagement and retention. Green HRM involves people related technology advancements and majorly includes initiatives like car-pooling, job-sharing, teleconferencing and virtual interviews, recycling, tele-commuting, online training and optimally utilising the energy-efficient office spaces etc.

GHRM is a process which focuses on greening of organisations (an old concept) with identification of new ways and techniques involving 'people' to have greater greener impact. Activities with green focus are difficult to initiate as it involves changes and any new change has to be initiated, implemented and accepted by 'people' and GHRM ensures the same. Thus GHRM can be termed as a process innovation at organizations marching towards a greener tomorrow.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The concept of Green HRM has come forward with the opening of Green Movement. Green Movement is a political movement which advocates four important principles: Environmentalism, Sustainability, Non-violence and Social justice. Different Authors have defined GHRM in different ways:

**Renwick et al. (2008) and Muller-Carmen et al. (2010)** have explained that GHRM involves an incorporation of company's environmental management objectives to the HR processes of recruitment

and selection, training and development, performance management and evaluation, rewards and recognition etc.

**Lee (2009)** is of the opinion that the green management was initiated as a part of business strategy during 1990's and became widely popular in 2000's. Although green management and greener initiatives were in existence from more than two decades, yet not many elaborated researches in the area of Green HRM are available.

**Kim (2009)** in the survey investigated that how employees of the hotel industry alleged green practices. The information was collected from 220 employees working in eight green certified hotels in Orlando where results found that performance levels of green practices implemented by hotels were lower than the importance levels of those same green practices as perceived by hotel employees. The study also reveals that there is positive correlation between organizational commitment and green practices.

**Mandip & Mishra et al. (2012)** defined GHRM as the implementations that support environmentalist activities and improve employee consciousness and commitments for environmental sustainability. Besides providing improved efficiency like reduced cost and employee commitment, and improved organizational outcomes, the green human resource management practices include the implementations that reduce the carbon footprint of the business. They further defined green human resource management as an innovative process that includes human-related technological innovations and developments. GHRM involves human-related technology advancements and mainly includes initiatives like car-pooling, job-sharing, teleconferencing and virtual interviews, recycling, telecommuting, online training and optimally utilizing the energy-efficient office spaces, etc.

**Margaretha and Saragih (2013)** has stated that organizations focus on environmentally sustainable business practices by initiating greener corporate culture resulting in greater efficiencies, lower costs and creating an atmosphere of better employee engagement. The formation of a green brand depends on culture of the organizations. There are seven levers to green culture which are talent development for greening of organization, designing of green jobs, top manager following green modeling, information sharing techniques and empowerment, measurement of green parameters and performance and green recruitment and retention. The levers ensure bringing in changes in the desired green behavior of employees. The main objective of green HRM is to make the employees aware of the intricacies of environment management i.e. what action is needed, how it functions, and how does it help the environment.

The literature also reveals that there is a gap in researches in the area of Green HRM in organizations in India. Though, researchers have worked on identifying the relation of environmental initiatives and business practices and performance yet. Not much has been referred to the Green HRM initiatives with respect to organizations in India.

**Jabbour et al. (2013)** studied the affiliation between human resources and environmental management of 75 Brazilian companies and came to the conclusion that HRM relates positively to environmental management.

**Marhatta&Adhikari, (2013)**“Green HRM is the use of HRM policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within organizations and, more generally promotes the causes of environment sustainability.”

**Mathapati, (2013)**GHRM is directly responsible in creating green workforce that understands, appreciates, and practices green initiative and maintains its green objectives all throughout the HRM process of recruiting, hiring, training, compensating, developing, and advancing the firms human capital.

**Stankeviciute & Savaneviciene (2014)** found in their study that there are 3 different meaning of sustainability with respect to HRM which consist of Normative, Efficiency-oriented and Substance-oriented. The study also provides the conceptual insights linking towards sustainability and HRM.

**Goyal& Dutta (2014).**They found the various initiates that can be taken by Government to promote green practices. The study further highlighted the green HR practices are car-pooling, teleconferencing, recycling, online training, e-mailing etc.

**Pillai and Sivathanu (2014)** focused on the various Green HR Practices followed by the organizations globally. The study also highlighted the challenges and benefits of green HRM. The survey was done through interview session with HR managers in order to understand the implementation of green HR practices at the workplace.

**Rani .S & Mishra K. (2014)** Green HRM is the use of HRM policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within business organizations and more generally promotes the cause of environmental sustainability.

**Opatha&Arulrajah, (2014)**The study revealsto the policies, practices, and systems that make employees of the organization green for the benefit of the individual, society, natural environment, and the business.

**Marjan, Saeed, Zahra and Shahbazmoradic (2014).**Their study is focused to identify the barriers of green human resource management in Iran's oil industry. In the study, 12 experts & HR Managers from Oil industry were interviewed; it was found that there is lack of comprehensive plan to implement green HRM & ambiguous Green values were considered as barrier to Green HRM. Adding up to this, study also reveals that staff resistance had the lowest significance.

**Sayed (2015)**made an attempt to study on Green HR practices in compilation with analyzing latest environmental friendly solution and proposed model of green human resource management. The study also found that Green HRM is helpful in enhancing corporate image and brand image.

**Saraswa (2015)** found that employees are not are of the term Green HRM but they are aware about the environmental friendly vehicles like electricity & hybrid vehicles. The employees are also aware about that their organization is using such practices for sustainability.

**Yusoff, Othman & et al (2015)** has done an exploratory study in order to attempt a conceptual understanding of the concept of Green Human Resource Management (HRM) in multinational companies in Malaysia. The study found that most of the companies are focusing on Green HRM with special attention on five concepts namely: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Electronic HRM (E-HRM), Work-life Balance (WLB), Green Policies and Extra Care Program.

**Sakhawalkar, &Thadani (2015)** has done descriptive research on all IT companies in Pune where non-probability –convenient sampling was used & structured questionnaire was filled by employees of IT companies in Pune City. The study reveals the awareness among employees in IT companies & implementation of various green hr practices. During the study it was found that companies are going towards the environmental friendly initiatives that reduce an employee's carbon footprint. The results included: electronic data filing, Vehicle sharing, video conferencing and virtual interviews, recycling, telecommuting, online training, Work at home and developing more energy efficient office spaces. Further it was found that respondents are aware about the electric & hybrid vehicles; however people, who are not aware about - Green HRM, are aware of the practices and know that their organization is following such practices.

**Agarwal& Sharma (2015)** highlighted the concept of Green and Green HRM, along with focusing on its importance, advantages and limitations for an organization which have an impact on sustainability.

**Sheopuri and Sheopuri (2015)** also found that Green HR initiatives help companies to find alternative ways to cut the cost without losing their toptalent; part time work, etc. The study also came to the conclusion that today companies could get competitive advantage over it.

### **WHAT IS GREEN HRM?**

The term Green HRM has become the buzz word within the business field at present and its significance is increasing manifold with the passage of time. Green HRM is referred to all the activities involved in development, implementation and on-going maintenance of a system that aims at making employees of an organization green.

Today the topic Green HRM not only includes awareness toward environmental affairs, but also stands for the social as well as economical well-being of both the organization and the employees within a broader prospect. 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 function of green HRM is to generate, 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., ecologist, environmentalist, non-polluter and producer.

## **NEED FOR GREEN HRM**

Previous two decades of this century have witnessed an undisputed compromise for the need of a pragmatic environmental management drive all over the world. This attempt was undertaken since the destructive effects of different pollutants among which the industrial wastes being the major culprit that has been worsening and depleting our natural resources very fast has been evident. The "Magna Carta" on Human Environment was declared in the first United Nation's (International) Conference on Human Environment held in June 1972 in Stockholm stated that to defend and develop the human environment for present and future generation have become an essential goal for mankind. The Green HRM literature review also reveals that not much work has been done on GHRM practices in India. However Organizations in India have been taking effort for environmental sustainability, yet there are hardly any researches sharing the GHRM practices contributing to environmental sustainability.

## **PRACTICES OF GREEN HRM**

Renwick, Redman, and Maguire's (2008) introduce a comprehensive compartmentalization of Green HRM practices that can be clearly understood, starting at the point of an employee's organizational entry and proceed until the point of the employee's exit. To be ecological, economical and practical at the same time is possible through by adopting Green Practices. Here are some environmentally-friendly solutions to stay Green.

- Paperless office
- Turn off lights, Computer and Printer after work and on weekends.
- Mail communication.
- Electronic filing.
- Encouraging use of laptop instead of desktop.
- Waste Management.
- Online recruitment.
- Video conferencing meeting.
- Paper less training.
- Performance management on basis of green practices.
- Car pooling
- Job sharing
- Flexi-Work
- Use of brown bagging in the office.
- Loan discount on energy saving home and fuel efficient car.

## **GREEN HRM INITIATIVES AND FUNCTIONS**

Green initiatives included in HRM policy is a part of corporate social responsibility in the long run. Today, organizations are implementing and integrating green initiatives in their agenda with the help of their human resource. Managers make sure that their HR is utilizing green human resource practices in an appropriate manner. Addition to the statement, several authors have suggested that it is

important to promote a great deal of technical and management skills among all employees of the organization in order to implement an effective corporate green management system in companies. Organizations across the world are incorporating and working toward implementing GHRM practices to gain competitive advantages among the corporate world. Complete adoption and integration of GHRM in business requires a changed approach toward the existing HR practices on part of both the management as well as employees simultaneously. Briefly describes few specific functional HRM activities which identify with the sustainability and the natural environment at the workplace and also provide opportunities for research in future. Some of the major green initiatives for HR departments are:

### **1. Green Recruitment:**

Green recruitment can be defined as the process of hiring individuals with knowledge, skills, approaches, and behaviors that identify with environmental management systems within an organization. Now organizations are giving their advertisement through their web-site. This method is very fast, cheap and easy to assess. Applications are invited through online mediums like e-mail, online application forms or the Global Talent Pool. If possible, telephone or video-based interviews are conducted to minimize any travel-related environmental impact.

Green HR provides recruiting and staffing support services to clients includes resumes searching, candidates sourcing, and screening on leading job boards, short listing resumes for potential candidates, talk with candidates and route only interested candidate's resumes to executive or technical recruiters of client companies.

### **2. Green Selection:**

Interviews are conducted by group discussion, personal interview and in online test. Candidates could be given preferences that are more environment friendly for an organization. It 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.

### **3. Green Orientation:**

Induction and orientation programmes are framed in such a way that facilitates the new comers about green practices. Green issues like health and safety, use of material and cleanness of area in work place etc.

### **4. Green Training and Development:**

Green training and development educate employees about the value of EM, train them in working methods that conserve energy, reduce waste, diffuse environmental awareness within the organization, and provide opportunity to engage employees in environmental problem-solving. Green T&D activities make employees aware of different aspects and value of environment management. Online training should be encouraged and environmental responsibility awareness should be encouraged through training.



## **5. Green Performance Management:**

Green performance management consists of issues related to environmental concerns and policies of the company. It also concentrates on use of environmental responsibilities. Today some firms deal with the issue of PM by installing corporate-wide environmental performance standards, and Green information systems/audits to gain useful data on environmental performance.

The green performance appraisal focuses on the issues such as environmental incidents, environmental responsibilities, communication of environmental policy, and green information system and audits.

## **6. Green induction:**

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

## **7. Green Compensation:**

Rewards and compensation are the major HRM processes through which employees are rewarded for their performance. In the context of Green HRM, rewards and compensation can be assumed as potential tools for supporting environmental activities in organizations. Green rewards initiating green rewards to departments and individuals for innovative initiatives and green contribution through reduction of wastes, green resources and energy.

## **8. Saving Electricity:**

Taking innovative initiatives of saving electricity by encouraging volunteering to switch off lights and fans where and whenever required and Installation of Solar panels.

## **9. Green Building:**

The organizations round the globe are considerably opting for green building as their workplace and offices as an alternative to traditional offices. The phenomenon is quite trend setting as Green buildings fulfill certain criterion for reducing the exploitation of natural resources that are utilized in their construction. Furthermore, green buildings include some enhanced features related to green practices such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, and storm water management.

## **10. Paperless Office:**

Most of the work in the office is managed on paper but, with introduction of IT, the consumption of paper has been reduced. Today E-business and learning have changed the methods and procedures at offices converting them into paperless offices. Paperless office is a work place where the use of paper is either restricted or eliminated by converting important official documents and other papers into automated workflows by reducing the use of paper, we can directly conserve natural resources, prevent pollution, and reduce wastage of water and energy.

### **11.Conservation of Energy:**

Conservation of energy in the office has the potential for a great environmental impact. In an effort to provide more efficient and eco-friendly services, offices around the world have implemented several energy conservation initiatives to reduce the environmental impact. Organizations are also promoting the extensive use of energy star-rated light bulbs and fixtures which undoubtedly consumes at least two-thirds less energy than regular ones.

### **12.Recycling and Waste Disposal:**

Recycling is the methodology of processing used up materials (waste) into new and useful products. Recycling reduces the use of raw materials that would have been otherwise used to produce new products. Many HR professionals ascertained that green initiatives were a necessary aspect of overall corporate social responsibility. At present, the whole corporate world is reciting the old mantra of three Rs-Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle to save the environment.

### **CHALLENGES OF GREEN HRM**

No policies and practices are free of challenges. Green HRM faces certain challenges. They are as follows:

1. In every organization all the employees are not equally motivated to adopt green HRM practices.
2. Developing and maintaining a culture of green HRM is a long-lasting and time consuming procedure.
3. At the initial stage of implementation, it requires a high investment and may bring a low return.
4. Recruiting and training employees about green HRM is a difficult job to do.
5. It is very difficult to evaluate the green performance of employees' behaviour.
6. It is difficult to change employee attitude to green HRM from traditional HRM in a short epoch of time.
7. HR professionals faced problems of being expected to provide the essential green structures, green processes, green tools, and green thinking to make the best selection and develop the future green leaders of the organization.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The Green Human Resource Management has the responsibility to create green awareness among the new talent and the existing employee working in the organization, encourage their employees for helping the organization to reduce the causes of environmental degradation through green movement, green programs and practices, retain the resources for future generation. Green HRM can develop willingness, inspiration and commitment to employees to contribute their efforts, ideas to the greening of their organization. Companies are required to encourage product, process, design, and technology

innovation which will relate to devising strategies for society that will enable healthy, peaceful, damage free society with adequate natural resources availability to human prospects.

The future of Green HRM appears promising for all the stakeholders of HRM, be it the employers, employees, practitioners, or academicians. Apart from this, they have a crucial role to play in recruitment of new employees who are more responsible toward green business practices thus, indirectly saving the Earth. Human Resource has significant opportunity to contribute to the organization's green movement and plays important role in enthusing, facilitating, and motivating employees for taking up green practices for greener business.

Green HR initiative results higher productivity and build a developmental climate for business. By doing so, organisations would add value to their brand image. The green recruitment, green selection, green induction, green performance appraisal, green compensation and rewards system are powerful tools in making employees more ecofriendly for business sustainability.

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