

# Green Human Resource Management Practices: A Review of Literature

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## ABSTRACT

*Meticulous approaches of world organizations towards saving this earth and keeping it green have led to the emergence of a relatively newer concept in the field of business and management, referred to as Green human resource management or simply 'Green HRM'. This concept can be understood as the process of greening organizations along with their people. In this process of greening, organizations must take certain initiatives and follow certain practices to fulfil their own specific goals as well as make their contribution towards the broader objective of environmental protection. The present study, therefore, intended to explore various practices that must be undertaken in order to make the organizations green. In addition, an attempt was made to explore the status of these activities in various Indian organizations. To achieve these objectives, archival method was used to review the existing literature. As such, the present study is an endeavour to contribute to the pool of knowledge by highlighting the significant works of different researchers in a very simplified manner and by providing an overview of Green HRM practices' current state in Indian context. Suggestions for better implementation of such activities have also been provided at the end.*

**Keywords:** Environment, Green employee, Going Green, Green HRM, Green practices, Organization.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary era is an era of environmental mindfulness and awareness. All over the globe people are displaying their keen interest in enduring this earth as a beautiful place to dwell in. Sustainable efforts for its preservation and conservation are being emphasised on by the environmentalists, researchers and governments. International conferences on issues like global warming, climatic changes and carbon credits have resulted in the formation of specific treaties like Kyoto 1997, Bali 2007, Copenhagen 2009 and Paris Agreement 2016. These treaties have epitomized meticulous determination worldwide towards this end. In such prevalent conditions, the business organizations' can no longer distance themselves from their environmental responsibilities. Businessmen have to give due cognizance to this facet of their responsibility, otherwise the whole world will suffer. In essence what actually differentiates this planet from rest of the celestial bodies in the universe is the presence of life. Pertinently, "Going Green" is need of the hour as it is indispensable for the survival of life on this earth. Nothing will remain intact if Green gets wiped out.

Towards this end, organizations aspire to include a newer concept in their work culture commonly referred to as “Green Human Resource Management”. Prasad (2013)<sup>[1]</sup> defined it as the contribution of human resource policies to protect and preserve the natural environment. In other words, the policies, practices and systems that aim at making the employees of an organization green for the benefit of the individuals, society, natural environment and the businesses comes under the radar of Green HRM (Opatha and Arulrajah, 2014)<sup>[2]</sup>. These researchers further identified four roles viz. preservationist, conservationist, non-polluter and maker, for an employee to become a Green employee. Accordingly, the purpose of Green HRM is to create, enhance and retain green insights within each employee so that he can give his best on each of these roles. Mathapati (2013)<sup>[3]</sup> clearly stated that in Green HRM, various human resource practices like recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, compensation and training are devised in such a manner so as to create a workforce that comprehends and endorses green behavior in the organization. Ahmad (2015)<sup>[4]</sup> voiced that Green HRM not only includes mindfulness towards environmental affairs but also stands for the social and economic well-being of both the organization and the employees within a wider outlook. It can be used to reduce carbon footprints as well as costs, better efficiencies, make green awareness among the employees and initiate green work life balance programs (Nijhawan, 2014)<sup>[5]</sup>. Taking cue from the extant literature, the present study is an endeavour to provide simplified insights on some familiar Green HRM practices and their implementation on the basis of the extant literature.

## **II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To bring to the fore various Green HRM practices;
- To analyse the status of Green HRM practices in various Indian organizations on the basis of other researchers' work;
- To provide suggestions to the organizations for successful implementation of these Green HRM Practices.

## **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study has employed the archival research method to achieve the above stated objectives as it is widely used in various fields for building a trustworthy knowledge base. Here it has provided insights on the extant Green HRM practices by assembling the studies of different researchers available on databases like Emerald, Taylor & Francis, Science Direct and Jstor. As such, articles published on green HRM between 1996 and 2018 have been reviewed to achieve the given purpose.

## **IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The concept of Green management was initiated as a part of business strategy during 1990s (Lee, 2009)<sup>[6]</sup>, however it started to gain popularity in 2000s. Basically it is Wehrmeyer (1996)<sup>[7]</sup> who

coined the term 'Green HRM' that can be understood as the systematic and planned alignment of conventional HRM practices with the organization's environmental goals (Jabbour, 2011)<sup>[8]</sup>. Ahmad (2015)<sup>[4]</sup> emphasized on the dire need for developing correlation between human resource practices and green principles for sustainable development. Sustainable development is not a synonymous term to environmental protection rather a newer concept of economic growth wherein trade and foreign policies, economic and fiscal policies, agricultural and industrial policies, all aspire to stimulate such development paths that are economically, ecologically and socially sustainable (Shaikh, 2010)<sup>[9]</sup>. Extant literature has frequently analysed the extent to which HRM is green on a continuum of all conventional HR practices, viz., job analysis, recruitment and selection, induction, training, performance evaluations and rewards (Jabbour, 2011; Mathapati, 2013)<sup>[8][3]</sup>. Similarly, Shaikh (2010)<sup>[9]</sup> also talked about green corporate social responsibility as an integral part of Green HRM. In their paper, Renwick, Redman & Maguire (2013)<sup>[10]</sup> acknowledged that GRHM research, outlined as the HRM aspects of environmental management, is comparatively diverse and progressive. These researchers developed a theoretical model wherein the conventional HR practices are considered a powerful mechanism for harmonizing employees with company's environmental strategy. Consequently, several HRM practices to embrace green concept have been discussed hereunder:

**Green Job Design and Analysis:** Designing and executing novel jobs and positions so as to focus solely on environmental management facets of the organizations can be referred to as Green Job design (Opatha, 2013)<sup>[11]</sup>. It involves incorporating several environmental protection related tasks, duties and responsibilities in each job (Wehrmeyer, 1996; Renwick, Redman & Maguire, 2008)<sup>[7][12]</sup>. In other words, inclusion of environmental dimension as a duty in job description and simultaneously incorporating green competencies as an intriguing component in job specification comes under the preview of green job analysis (Opatha, 2013)<sup>[11]</sup>. Nowadays, many companies have started to incorporate such green practice to protect the environment. These have begun to include at least one duty related to environmental protection in each job description and also specifically include environmental responsibilities (Arulrajah, Opatha & Nawaratne, 2015)<sup>[13]</sup>.

**Green Recruitment and Selection:** Using eco-friendly approaches for hiring such as online means and limited paper usage during recruitment process and measuring green attitudes at the time of selection are the practices that comprise the process of green recruitment and selection (Mishra, 2017)<sup>[14]</sup>. Individual's green aptitudes are vital for pro-environmental performance (Subramanian et al., 2016)<sup>[15]</sup>. Hence considering people who value green practices and follow basic environment-friendly activities such as recycling, carpooling and conservation of energy are really worth towards this end. On the other hand, even candidates who value environmental responsibilities are likely to be attracted toward organizations that are environment-friendly and branded as "Green employer" (Phillips, 2007)<sup>[16]</sup>.

**Green Induction:** Opatha (2013)<sup>[11]</sup> expresses that green induction involves making new employees familiar with greening efforts of the organization and encouraging them to exhibit green interpersonal citizenship behaviour. It is required to ensure that new employees understand and approach their corporate environmental culture in a sincere manner (Wehrmeyer, 1996)<sup>[7]</sup>. Organizations can have two approaches towards this end, that is, general green induction and job specific green induction (Wehrmeyer, 1996; Revill, 2000; Renwick, Renwick, Redman & Maguire 2008 & 2013)<sup>[7][17] [12] [10]</sup>. Under general green induction, organizations provide basic information to new entrants regarding environmental management policies and practices. While under specific green induction, new recruits are oriented about environmental programs specific to their jobs. Nowadays, both these approaches are proving their worth in organizations.

**Green Training and Development:** Creating environmental awareness among organizational employees at all levels can be regarded as a prerequisite for achieving good environmental performance. Hence providing environmental education that can lead to a change in attitude and behavior of organizational members is very essential (North, 1997; Jackson et al., 2011)<sup>[18][19]</sup> laid emphasis on providing such training to employees that can encourage recycling and waste management habits among them. Further, training staff to produce green analysis of workspace and energy efficiency, execution of job rotation to train green managers for future; and development of green personal skills can be considered as useful green training and development practices (Renwick, Redman & Maguire, 2008 & 2013)<sup>[12] [10]</sup>.

**Green Performance Appraisals:** Evaluating employees' performance according to green-related criteria and including a separate component for progress on greening in performance feedback interview is referred to as Green Performance Appraisal (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014)<sup>[2]</sup>. Such green practice may prove its worth because when a behavior is measured to assess an individual, its perceived value grows and attempts to comply with the same are increased. Thus, including green behaviors in the performance appraisal system can accelerate their adoption among employees (Mishra, 2017)<sup>[14]</sup>. Renwick, Redman & Maguire (2013)<sup>[10]</sup> also supported the integration of environmental management goals into performance appraisal system as it ensures regular feedback of employees' advancement in their accomplishment.

**Green Pay and Reward System:** Tailoring packages to reward green skill acquisition; using monetary and non-monetary based environmental management rewards like bonuses, cash premiums, sabbaticals and gifts; linking green suggestion schemes to reward system are some of the practices covered under Green Pay and Reward system (Renwick, Redman & Maguire, 2008)<sup>[12]</sup>. There should be emphasis on providing rewards for promoting green behaviors in the workplace and reducing carbon footprints. This can be assumed as a potential tool for supporting environmental activities in organizations (Ahmad, 2015)<sup>[4]</sup>.

**Green Empowerment:** Encouraging organizational workforce to take ecological decisions and empowering them to assume responsibility for their behavior that results in cost awareness, sense of belonging and better environmental performance can be referred to as Green Empowerment (Bombiak and Marciniuk-Kluska, 2018)<sup>[20]</sup>. Such green practice raises employee engagement in environmental initiatives as well as increases the satisfaction they experience after accomplishing their ecological goals (Davies & Crane, 2010; Ramus & Steger, 2000)<sup>[21][22]</sup>.

### **Status of Green HRM practices in India**

At the international level, several leading companies like Google, Honda, Starbucks, General Electric, Timberland and Goldman Sachs have successfully integrated environmental management with their HRM practices. However, Green HRM is still at its budding stage in Indian context. Organizations have, only in recent years, begun to identify greening concept as a part of their HR policies and practices. As such Green HR awareness is growing and employees are gradually getting acquainted with this very concept. In their study on existing Green HRM initiatives and green practices in central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) in India, Mishra, Sarkar & Kirmani (2014)<sup>[23]</sup> found these companies having only few GHRM initiatives and yet these initiatives not being formally implemented. Nevertheless, these companies do accept the need for greening and also support the concept of green employee involvement which is evident with 82.5% of the respondents believing that encouraging employees' responsibility towards environmental management is vital. In contrast, various companies in IT sector have taken considerable green measures towards environmental management. Such organizations have initiated green initiatives like less use of paper, double-sided paper printing, switching off the lights, fans and air conditioners after office hours, urging their employees to carpooling. In addition, these organizations also emphasise on receiving online job applications and operating interviews through video conferencing (Ruchismita et al, 2015; Mousumi & Sengupta, 2015)<sup>[24] [25]</sup>. Menon (2016)<sup>[26]</sup> conducted a similar study in large-scale manufacturing organizations in Kolhapur district of Maharashtra. The results revealed that most of these organizations don't have proper green HR policies. Although a few of them have adopted green recruitment practices, still no formal green training programs and reward systems are there to encourage employee green behavior. Further, Mishra's (2017)<sup>[14]</sup> study on six leading manufacturing organizations' Green HR activities have also revealed the presence of certain green practices; however these have neither been formally organized nor wholeheartedly followed. Though there are instances of all these organizations attempting to raise usage of online portals and social media, no consideration is made for accessing green personality and skills in the selection process. Similarly while appraising employee performance, no particular point about green behaviors is included. However, all these organizations avoid wastage of paper by way of avoiding unnecessary printouts and encouraging recycling of used paper.

Nevertheless, there are many organizations carrying out Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives which also have green projects. Major giants like ITC and ACC Ltd. have since long practised CSR with main focus on environmental management. This has facilitated to generate interest and awareness about Green HRM in India (Lather, Garg&Vikas, 2014)<sup>[27]</sup>, for CSR is mostly executed by human resource department of an organization (Mishra, 2017)<sup>[14]</sup>. Some of the initiatives that companies can undertake to contribute towards this end include finding ways to reduce carbondioxide emissions, planting of trees etc. During the year 2017, major Green CSR projects like Creating oxygen hubs, Save bird campaign, Animal welfare, Forest based Sustainable livelihood projects and Plantation and Afforestation were undertaken by different organizations in India. Similarly the Jammu and Kashmir Bank Ltd donated 100 bicycles for in-campus commuting to the University of Kashmir under its “Go Green” initiative in the year 2018, thereby facilitating the reduction in carbondioxide emissions.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The above review significantly delineates the potential of HRM functions right from job design to employee empowerment, in making the organizations green. Apart from reducing their negative impacts on environment, these green organizations can simultaneously improve their image and brand building. Today organizations in India are quite aware about green HR practices but most of them are not able to implement them properly in different functional areas like selection, performance appraisal system, rewards and training. Such situation demands sheer attention and support of top management. There should be formal implementation of green activities because employees generally take something seriously when enforced by higher authorities. As indicated by the review, employee selection process in these organizations seriously lacks analysis of green personality criteria, thereby placing more emphasis on its formal implementation. Similarly, Green job designing and analysis is also found to be seriously missing. No environment specific requirement is looked for any job. Some officials in defence organizations have commented on green HRM as an abstract concept having no place in such organizations (Mishra, Sarkar & Kirmani, 2014)<sup>[23]</sup>. This attitude needs to be modified through proper training and development. The organizations should provide formal training in raising more awareness among its workforce with ultimate objective of developing green employees. Although adopting green training sessions may appear costlier to top management in the short run, however these measures are likely to pay back in the long run. Being Green employer adds to brand name which can lead to more publicity and profits in the long run. In addition, it can also provide inner satisfaction to employees for they have also contributed their share towards the save earth mission. Organizations also require including some points on green employees' performance during appraisal process. There must be some formal rewards for encouraging employees towards this end. All these steps can prove their worth in successful integration of environmental management with HR



activities. In line with Mishra (2017)<sup>[14]</sup> Green HRM is a less researched area in India; therefore the present study urges the future researchers to conduct more empirical studies so as to gain better insights into the phenomenon.

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