

# Green HRM: Origin, Practices and Implications.

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## Abstract

In recent times across the globe, organizations have become more conscious about the growing importance of integration of environmental Management and Human Resource Management i.e. Green HRM Practices. The Green Human Resources Management (Green HRM) has emerged from companies engaging in practices related to protection of environment and maintaining ecological balance. The source of such initiatives, referred to as green management, is the green movement with its agenda of Protection of Environment and saving the planet Earth from future man made disasters. Green HRM is the use of HRM policies and practices that encompasses all activities –boarding and acquisition of human resources, their induction, performance management, learning and development and compensation 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 practices. 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. It is high time People need to adopt Green practices to save the environment. Greening employees from top to bottom is not an easy task, but pro environmental plan and implementing Green human resource management (GHRM) practices practically has produced a positive result toward the Green environment. The paper focuses upon the GHRM, various Green Human Resource Practices and explains the role of green human resource practices in going green. Finally, the paper suggests some social implication of Green human resource practices for green organization.

**Keywords:** Green environment, Green HRM, Green HRM practices,.

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## The emergence of green HRM

### The ‘green movement’

From the early 1960’s through to the mid 1970’s, the social movement and a public advocacy agenda (i.e. civil rights, women’s rights and the environmental movement) were comprehensively established (Carroll & Shabana, 2010 [1]). This movement was started by social activists and scholars in response to the perception of corporate manipulation within the domains of environmental recklessness and political engagement (Waddock 2004 [2]). From the advent of these socially motivated movements, arose an increased awareness by the public of the effects of environmental degradation caused by corporate operations.

It was these socially driven movements and ensuing environmental agendas that influenced multinational companies and domestic firms’ willingness to respond with policies and practices designed to protect the environment, employees, consumers and the public. As a result, not only are firms seeking ways to reduce the direct impacts of their operational activities (example - excessive waste, energy usage) but also alternative ways of managing and building the capabilities of their human capital, encouraging and implementing corporate best practices and further improving operational efficiencies.

### Defining green HRM

Different terms have been used to discuss the environmental consequences of HRM, with green HRM examined as part of a strategic HRM focus that targets employees green behaviours. However, to date the fundamental task of evaluating and clearly defining the contemporary management construct itself has been neglected, and it remains rather ambiguous as to how green HRM fits into the broad concepts of EM, CSR and strategic HRM, or how green HRM differs from sustainable HRM or socially responsible HRM (SRHRM). While the environmental implications of HRM have been widely discussed in the literature (Daily & Huang, 2001[3]), there is no clear-cut definition of the term green HRM. Some researchers have used the term without explicitly defining the concept (example Jackson et al., 2011[4]) with other researchers using it interchangeably with sustainable and strategic HRM (Jackson & Seo, 2010[5]; Lis, 2012[6]). Among those scholars that have sought to explicitly define the term, the definitions range from general, ‘HRM aspects of environmental management’ (Renwick et al., 2013, p. 1[7]), to more specific interpretations such as: ‘use of HRM policies, philosophies and practices to promote the sustainable use of resources and prevent harm arising from environmental concerns within business organisations’ (Zoogah, 2011, p. 118[8]).

Green HRM is unlike other contemporary management constructs. Human resource management focuses on general people management strategies (Shen, 2011[9]), CSR focuses on the moral and ethical basis of corporate social policy (Dahlsrud, 2006[10]) and EM's key goal is to reduce environmental impacts through integrating business and environmental practices (Cramer, 1998[11]; Ormazabal & Sarriegi, 2012[12]).

However, the application of green HRM is aimed at developing processes and activities designed to influence employee skills, knowledge, motivations and behaviours to achieve organisational environmental objectives and green goals (Prathima. M & Misra, 2012[13]; Renwick et al., 2013[7]).

### **Green HRM practices**

To meet the demands and environmental objectives of company executives and other stakeholders, HR managers need to ensure that the firm's proposed green HRM strategies and programs address key environmental objectives by:

- positively responding to emerging societal and social trends.
- delivering on its sustainable targets.
- developing a process whereby an employee's green performance can be accurately assessed
- keeping abreast of constantly changing environmentally related government policies, programs and legislation.
- promptly responding to regulatory requirements and stakeholder concerns.
- influencing corporate and public policy agendas (where possible) and
- meeting organisational sustainability goals (Garavan & McGuire, 2010[14]; Jackson & Seo, 2010[5]; Renwick et al., 2013[7]).

Despite the claims of the importance of employees to a firm's performance and organisational outcomes, most organisations have ignored the contributions and the potential of key HRM practices to achieve a firm's green goals (Carmona-Moreno et al., 2012[15]; Luthans & Youssef, 2004[16]). According to Muster and Schrader (2011[17]), it is important for organisations to transform green aspirations and mere good intentions to genuine organisational policy and workplace behaviour reform, if organisations expect to improve the firm's environmental performance.

Put simply, HR practitioners must make the green HRM message:

- 1) Simple enough to tap into individual cognitive abilities
- 2) Attractive enough to encourage individual employee motivation and
- 3) Unmistakably structured so that the message optimises the likelihood of the message being successfully processed (Hallahan, 2001[18]).

### **Green HRM in Recruitment and selection**

With regards to recruitment and selection, Renwick et al. (2013[7]) suggest that firms should:

- be specific in their advertised job descriptions.
- include green criteria in job advertisements.
- brand the company as a green and socially responsible employer and company (i.e. employer of choice).
- target and hire employees who are very knowledgeable about environmental sustainability and are green aware and
- be transparent and disclose green strategies, objectives and initiatives during employee interviews, induction and workplace socialisation.

As already established, few studies exist that have empirically tested HRM practices within the parameters of green HRM. However, to provide some level of perspective, there are a few available EM (Environmental Management) and CSR related studies, which suggest that employees are attracted to firms who have a strong environmental and CSR image (Backhaus, Stone & Heiner, 2002[19]; Jones, Willness & Madey, 2013[20]). In addition, organisations that have a green strategic focus and a strong CSR reputation are able to use this as a form of organisational leverage during recruitment and selection processes. Bansal and Roth (2000[21]), Kane (2011[22]) and Renwick et al. (2013[7]) support this assumption and claim that firms can procure a competitive advantage by using their socially responsible green reputations. This is because employees with high levels of skills, abilities and education are unambiguously attracted to working for ethically diligent and environmentally responsible organisations.

There are a number of conceptually developed green HRM recruitment and selection practices, which are expected to contribute to the achievement of organisational green outcomes (Renwick et al., 2013[7]). To benefit from green HRM, HR recruitment and selection processes and programs, organisations should:

1. target and select job candidates that have the skills, abilities and motivation to participate in green initiatives.

2. select employees who have similar (green) values as the organisation to ensure a level of congruence.
3. ensure that the company externally promotes its CSR platform to stakeholders and potential employees.
4. include and promote the firm's green credentials, CSR reputation and environmental objectives in job advertisements and
5. overtly display these credentials during the employee induction process (Harvey et al., 2013[23]; Paillé et al., 2014 [24]; Renwick et al., 2013[7]).

Recruitment practices can help to improve environmental management systems by ensuring that environmental culture and values are very well clear to the new recruits. Surveys show that job applicants are very conscious about the organization's environmental management practices and their decision for employment depends on it (Wehrmeyer, 1996[25] and Stringer, 2009[26]).

### **Training and development**

Of all the HRM and green HRM activities highlighted in the literature thus far, training has been identified as a crucial factor to achieving organisational green outcomes (Cantor, Morrow & Montabon, 2012[27]; Madsen & Ulhoi, 2001[28]; Teixeira et al., 2012[29]). Lee (2009[30]), Renwick et al. (2013[7]) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) (2014[31]) suggest that green training and development programs are likely to:

- increase knowledge, expertise and skills.
- induce an employee's emotional involvement in green initiatives through increased awareness of the effects of poor behaviour and attitudes toward the environment.
- develop high level skills and attitudes for managers and supervisors and tap into an employee's implied environmental knowledge. No studies have implicitly explored the effects of green HRM training and development practices on employee workplace outcomes. However, there are notable papers that highlight the importance of training to organisational green outcomes (Paillé et al., 2014[24]; Renwick et al., 2013[7]; Teixeira et al., 2012[29]).

Consistent with the literature (Lawrence & Morell, 1995[32]; Lee, 2009[30]; Paillé et al., 2014[24]) and the green HRM practices as highlighted by Renwick et al. (2013[7]), it is concluded that for firms to benefit from green HRM, organisational training and development processes should be designed to:

- 1) develop programs that build the technical and management capabilities and skills of employees associated with green management.
- 2) ensure that employees acknowledge their ability (or inability) to undertake required tasks. If the employee is adequately trained, this should positively affect individual motivation, engagement and drive to achieve organisational green goals. Conversely, if an employee has not received adequate training they are less likely to be motivated to achieve the organisation's green goals.
- 3) develop employee knowledge about the effects of individual behaviour on the environment to induce an employee's emotional involvement, engagement and contribution to organisational green initiatives.
- 4) increase the green knowledge of leaders, managers and supervisors as they are effective messengers of organisational policies to frontline employees and
- 5) by having managers and supervisors overtly display green behaviours, this demonstrates to employees what are the behaviours and attitudes desired by the organisation, and what is expected of employees in the workplace.

Green training and development train employee working methods that reduces waste, proper utilization of resources, conservation of energy and reduces the causes of environmental degradation, it provide opportunity to engage employees in environmental problem solving (Zoogah 2011[8]). Perron et al., (2006[33]) has done study by taking multiple case study approach and it identified the role of Green training and development train in promoting business value. Similarly Daily et al., (2007[34]) was conducted survey among 437 employees and the result of the survey shows that the formation of effective green management system was directly dependent on environmental training.

Numbers of companies are providing environment training to their employees The Land Rover Group is one the example that company. The Land Rover Group provides environment training to their employees according to their job. They take regular briefings and circulate newsletters to communicate with their staff about environmental issues. They displayed Environmental sustainable development policy, key objectives and environmental practice boards at all sites. They encourage employees to come up with new ideas that reduce the cause of environmental degradation.

### **Performance management and appraisal**

Renwick et al. (2013[7]) suggest that performance management is crucial to increasing the motivations and attitudes of employees to participate in organisational green initiatives. Specifically, Renwick et al. (2013[7]) suggest that firms need to:

- develop a number of performance indicators, which can be accurately measured so that they can be included in the firm's formal performance management and appraisal process.
- ensure that information pertaining to green initiatives and company environmental objectives is clearly disseminated to all employees throughout the organisation.
- clearly explain the expectations that the firm has of its managers in regards to green outcomes.
- clarify KPIs and ensure that these are specified in a manager's performance appraisal.
- ensure that employees are unambiguously advised of specific individual KPI objectives and green outcome requirements.
- make certain that the skills and capabilities of the employee match that of individual KPIs and assigned job tasks and
- ensure that rewards and benefits are available to employees who achieve green objectives.

These processes and mechanisms display the firm's explicit recognition of employee efforts to achieve the organisation's green goals.

Using the above discourse, performance management implemented within the parameters of green HRM is likely to positively contribute to organisational green outcomes (Renwick et al., 2013[7]). Firms need to consider formulating performance management processes within the boundaries of green HRM to:

- 1) encourage and motivate employees to participate in green initiatives.
- 2) ensure that managers and supervisors are trained and understand the importance of the firms green initiatives to the overall corporate strategy.
- 3) ensure that all levels of the organisation are accountable for the achievement of individual and group level green initiatives.
- 4) ensure that company expectations and KPIs are clearly understood by all employees and ensure that individual KPIs match the capabilities of the individual.
- 5) ensure that managers and supervisors deal impartially with employees who have failed to meet KPIs or targets, or exhibited non-compliant behaviours and attitudes.
- 6) ensure that employees are not publicly embarrassed or humiliated in front of his or her peers (this may be contextually specific, i.e. losing face in Asia) if they have failed to meet targets or been involved in adverse incidents in the workplace.
- 7) deal with employees in a consistent manner, in line with company policies and
- 8) use precedents and fair and balanced judgements to limit retaliatory or negative responses from employees.

### REWARDS AND COMPENSATION

Renwick et al. (2013[7]) have identified a range of green HRM activities related to employee rewards and compensation that are expected to positively contribute toward the achievement of green goals. In particular, Renwick et al. (2013[7]) claim that firms need to:

- reward employees for making suggestions for environmental improvements.
- encourage skills development and reward employees with skills-based pay.
- monetarily reward managers for meeting EM based KPIs and
- recognise employee efforts with monetary and/or non-monetary awards including incentives such as gifts and time off work.

While no empirical research has been conducted on the effects of green HRM and rewards and incentives, green management studies have edified researchers on the potential benefits of pursuing such a strategy. Merriman and Sen (2012[35]) suggest that pay incentives increase a manager's propensity to enact environmental initiatives, with direct incentives having more impact than indirect incentives that were associated with complementarity. Merriman and Sen (2012[35]) concluded that larger incentives could outweigh the value of social norms in directing managers to behave more sustainably. Ramus (2001[36]) claims that despite evidence of praise and rewards positively influencing green organisational outcomes, few organisations have managed to achieve sustainability objectives, primarily due to a lack of motivation and support from management and supervisors. Similar findings were established in a recent study by Harvey et al. (2013[23]), which found that pilots were dissuaded to achieve green goals because of the lack of support from airport ground staff.

The above studies have demonstrated that rewards and compensation can have a positive effect on organisational green performance, under certain circumstances. However, the literature is limited in its ability to apply these assumptions to frontline, production or shop-floor workers. No identified studies were found that have explored rewards and compensation outcomes specific to green HRM, to these particular groups of employees.

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