



RESEARCH PAPER

Sustainability-Centric Green Human Resource Management: An Imperative for the Contemporary Era

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the essence of "Green" and "Green Human Resource Management (HRM)," elucidating their significance in the context of sustainable development. Emerging from the ecological movement, Green HRM responds to environmental challenges. The 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment emphasized the need to protect and enhance the human environment. Green HRM integrates environmentally responsible practices into HR policies, symbolizing peace, growth, and vitality. Using a comprehensive approach, this research delves into Green HRM's principles, advantages, and constraints. It explores how organizations align policies with sustainable practices, drawing on literature and real-world examples. Adopting Green HRM is imperative for organizations developing eco-friendly products, managing environmental initiatives, and contributing to long-term well-being. Organizations should prioritize integrating Green HRM practices, fostering a culture of sustainability to contribute to a greener future. In conclusion, this research underscores Green HRM's significance, serving as a resource for students, researchers, and educators, cultivating understanding in sustainable HR practices.

Keywords: Eco-Friendly Management, Green HR, Green HRM, Green Management, Human Resource Management

Introduction

The escalation of ecological imbalances and biodiversity concerns is an ongoing issue. In national and international conferences, numerous scientists and researchers deliberate on pressing matters such as carbon credits, global warming, and climate change, which can lead to natural disasters. The extensive exploitation of natural resources by factories, industries, and various commercial enterprises has led to elevated environmental pollution and substantial pressure on the Earth's finite resources, which are also essential for the well-being of future generations. In response to these challenges, companies are increasingly acknowledging their societal responsibilities as consumers of these resources. This ethical approach is known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and is typically managed by a company's Human Resources (HR) department. An emerging method for companies to fulfill their CSR goals is through Environment Management or Green Management. The amalgamation of environmentally conscious practices with HR policies to foster a sustainable culture is referred to as Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM). Below, we delve into various concepts related to Green HRM.

The color green symbolizes serenity, affability, expansion, joy, vitality, and vitality, and in contemporary times, even style. Consequently, enterprises are progressively recognizing the significance and requirement of embracing ecologically mindful policies,

procedures, and practices. The New Oxford Thesaurus 2000 offers alternative interpretations, including terms like "verdant," "eco-conscious," "unripe," "unseasoned," and "inexperienced," all of which convey a sense of relevance to the environment. In the context of businesses, "becoming environmentally friendly" involves safeguarding natural resources, nurturing their ecosystems, mitigating atmospheric contamination, and cultivating a more eco-friendly landscape.

According to Lee (2009), "Eco-Friendly Management is characterized as the approach by which an organization handles environmental concerns by devising strategies for environmental control." Eco-Friendly Management involves the systematic oversight of an organization's operations and assets with a strong emphasis on ecological considerations and sustainable existence. It encompasses all commerce-related undertakings geared towards fostering the advancement and preservation of an eco-conscious planet.

The perception of Eco-Friendly Management varies across different global regions. In developed nations, Eco-Friendly Management has evolved into a contemporary doctrine that plays a substantial role in the fundamental functions of entities. Conversely, in developing nations, Eco-Friendly Management is still in its initial stages, offering ample potential for expansion and enhancement.

According to Flippo, "Human Resource Management (HRM) entails the strategic, structuring, staffing, steering, and overseeing of the procurement, growth, remuneration, assimilation, sustenance, and regeneration of the workforce, with the ultimate objective of realizing individual, organizational, and societal objectives. HRM involves the governance of the human capital continuum, spanning from recruitment to retirement, with the aim of achieving the organization's intended outcomes and upholding societal and environmental responsibilities."

Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) pertains to all the tasks and responsibilities associated with the development, pursuit, and perpetuation of a system aimed at encouraging employees within an organization to adopt environmentally conscious behaviors in both their personal and professional lives. Green HRM involves the formulation of strategies to promote awareness of eco-friendly practices, with the overarching objective of fostering and sustaining environmentally sustainable business operations. Consequently, Green HRM encompasses two vital facets: the adoption of HR practices conducive to the environment and the cultivation of intellectual capital.

In line with Mandip (2012), Green HR pertains to leveraging every interaction with employees to advocate maintainable initiatives and enhance worker awareness and dedication to sustainability issues. Green HR is essential in organizations because it helps address environmental issues. This involves recognizing these issues, implementing HR policies, training people, and enforcing environmental protection rules from a management perspective. Hence, Green HR signifies an employee who possesses a strong environmental awareness, is dedicated to addressing environmental challenges, and actively engages in eco-friendly behaviors both personally and professionally.

Literature Review

A key revelation from "The Greening HR Survey" demonstrates that 54% of companies have integrated ecological management into their business operations. Additionally, 74% have harnessed the internet to reduce travel, 76% actively advocate for decreased paper usage, and 60% have instituted well-being and physical fitness initiatives for their employees. DNA newspaper article published on March 27, 2010, underscores the pivotal role of HR in championing environmentally friendly business approaches, contributing to the preservation of the environment, recruiting and nurturing a workforce dedicated to sustainability, and enforcing eco-aware practices while discouraging environmentally detrimental behaviors.

Green management, as characterized by (Lee & Ball, 2003) pertains to overseeing a company's interactions with the environment. It transcends mere adherence to regulations and should encompass conceptual approaches for instance preventing contamination, ensuring product responsibility, and embracing corporate societal obligation as endorsed by (Hart, 2005; Pullman et al., 2009; Siegel, 2009). The utilization of innovative technologies holds the potential to ameliorate environmental deterioration. For instance, biotechnological products and alternative energy sources can curtail the depletion of finite natural resources. As a result, organizations should intensify their efforts in researching and adopting cutting-edge technologies to mitigate the adverse consequences of environmental degradation. This includes crafting products that are environmentally benign and minimize pollution, as underscored by (Liu, 2010; Ozen & Kusku, 2008)

Incorporating environmentally conscious HR procedures can yield enhanced effectiveness, reduced expenditures, and the fostering of a motivated workforce, ultimately enabling organizations to operate in a manner that is ecologically sustainable.

The term "green" or "greening" encompasses a minimum of four interpretations when it comes to managing people within the context of human resource management:

Preservation of the natural environment: This relates to the safeguarding of elements in the biosphere that aren't influenced or controlled by humans. These include land, forestry, plant life, wildlife and various natural phenomena. The aim here is to maintain these aspects in their original state and shield them from damage, loss, or adverse changes.

Conservation of the natural environment: This entails an extremely cautious approach to the utilization of natural resources, with the objective of ensuring their long-term existence. It involves using these resources sparingly to guarantee their availability for future generations.

Prevention or reduction of environmental pollution: This signifies the effort to cease the contamination of water, air, the atmosphere, and other components by harmful and poisonous substances and waste materials. The goal is to avert consequences that could endanger the planet, where both humans and non-humans cohabit.

Establishment of gardens and natural-like spaces: This involves the creation of parks and areas that emulate natural settings, featuring vegetation, trees, and grasses.

Hence, it can be contended that an employee, whether they hold a managerial or non-managerial position, is expected to embody four distinct roles to become an environmentally conscious worker:

Preservationist: In this role, the employee is tasked with maintaining the natural environment in its original state and shielding it from harm, loss, or any adverse changes.

Conservationist: The employee must adopt a meticulous approach in the utilization of the natural environment, ensuring its long-term sustainability.

Non-polluter: It is imperative for the employee to take measures to prevent the pollution of water, air, and the atmosphere by refraining from the use of harmful and toxic substances and waste materials.

Maker: In this role, the employee contributes to the establishment of gardens and areas that mimic natural surroundings.

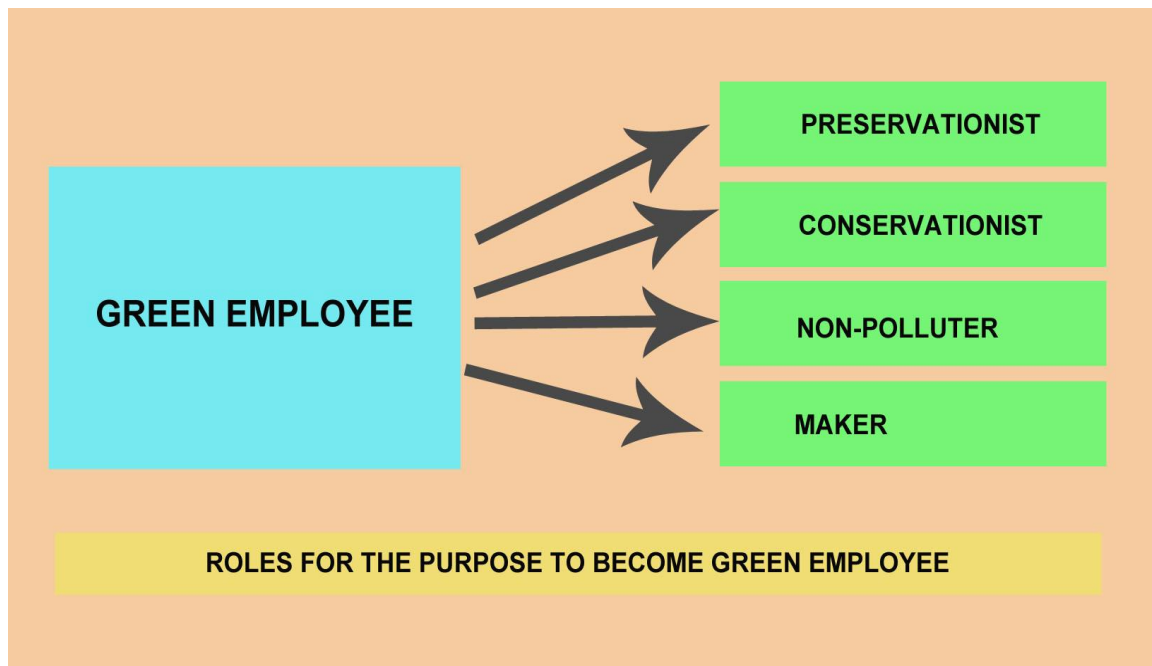


Figure 1.1 depicts the roles for the purpose to become green employee

Instead of concentrating solely on individual HR practices utilized in isolation, scholars in the realm of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) adopt a more encompassing perspective by examining collections of HR practices or HR schemes that are employed in conjunction (Paawe & Boselie,2003; 2005).

Delery & Shaw (2001) have contended that there exists an overall consensus on the following points:

- A skilled workforce can provide a substantial competitive edge
- The management of human resources exerts the most immediate influence on a company's human capital.
- The intricate design of an integrated HRM system can accentuate its distinctiveness

Research findings indicate that when organizations initiate practices such as recycling, reusing, and revamping their products, coupled with the adoption of energy-efficient production systems geared toward conserving energy or diminishing energy wastage, they encounter increasing ease in realizing numerous secondary benefits linked to adopting eco-friendly methods. At present, numerous corporations are proactively adopting a strategic tool known as an Environmental Management System (EMS) to secure a competitive advantage (Daily & Huang, 2001). This system furnishes a framework that empowers organizational management to exercise more effective control over the environmental impacts of the enterprise (Barnes, 1996; Florida & Davison, 2001). An EMS typically encompasses elements such as commitment and policy development, planning, execution, measurement and assessment, as well as review and enhancement (Hersey, 1998). Callenbach et al. (1993) have posited that for the successful execution of green management, employees must be motivated, empowered, and environmentally conscious.

On the other side of the coin, for the proficient implementation of green management inventiveness and the nurturing of environmental revolutions, businesses necessitate a high degree of methodical and managerial competence (Callenbach et al., 1993; Renwick et al., 2008). Therefore, this paper contends that the effective execution of green management inventiveness, through the adoption of EMS and necessitates a tactical alignment of HR systems with the administration's philosophy.

Numerous research investigations have uncovered that HR divisions in numerous firms, and even certain other sectors, are steadily incorporating eco-friendly procedures into their functions to attain a Competitive Edge over their peers.

Methodology

This study adopts a comprehensive strategy, combining a literature survey with real-world instances to investigate the principles, advantages, and limitations of "Green" and "Green Human Resource Management (HRM)." The literature examination entails a meticulous exploration of existing research and theoretical frameworks, establishing a groundwork for comprehending the evolution and fundamental concepts of Green HRM.

Furthermore, genuine instances and case studies are scrutinized to deliver practical insights into how organizations align their HR policies with sustainable and eco-friendly practices. Analyzing these cases aims to establish links between theoretical ideas and real-world implementations, enriching the overall comprehension of Green HRM.

The methodology also encompasses a qualitative assessment of the influence of Green HRM on organizational procedures, concentrating on its role in crafting environmentally conscious products, steering corporate environmental initiatives, and addressing challenges tied to execution. Through this mixed-methods approach, the research endeavors to present a comprehensive and nuanced viewpoint on the importance of Green HRM in contemporary business practices.

Here is a table featuring some companies that prioritize environmentally friendly practices.

Table 1
Green Practice & its Impact on the Companies

Company Name	Green Practice & Impact
Apple Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since April 2020, Apple have reached carbon neutrality for the corporate emissions by adopting several measures. These include sourcing 100 percent renewable electricity for Apple facilities, implementing energy-efficient practices, and obtaining high-quality carbon offsets for any remaining emissions. Although corporate emissions account for a relatively small portion of our total emissions, this marks a significant milestone in our larger objective of attaining carbon neutrality for all our products. • In October 2022, Apple issued a strong appeal to our supply chain partners worldwide, urging them to take steps to eliminate carbon emissions associated with Apple-related activities by 2030. • In the current year, Apple have transformed the previous water stewardship strategy into a comprehensive, organization-wide approach that encompasses water availability, quality, and fairness. Apple approach is structured around five key pillars, all rooted in a deep understanding of the specific conditions within the watersheds where our operations are situated. • In the year 2022, plastics constituted just 4 percent of the packaging, which is a substantial reduction from the 21 percent recorded in 2015. This marks noteworthy advancement toward the objective of completely removing plastics from our packaging by the year 2025.
The Coca-Cola Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022, Coca-Cola went above and beyond by replenishing 159% of the water we utilized in our finished beverages. This amounted to an impressive 291 billion liters of water that was restored to the environment and local communities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 68% of the products within the beverage portfolio contain fewer than 100 calories per 12-ounce serving. Furthermore, in 2022, 29% of the sales volume consisted of low- or no-calorie options. • Coca-Cola have made significant strides in our packaging sustainability efforts. Currently, 90% of the packaging is recyclable. Additionally, 15% recycled PET (rPET) is used in the PET materials. Furthermore, Coca-Cola successfully collected 61% of our packaging for recycling. • Coca-Cola have made significant progress in reducing emissions. There has been a notable 7% decline in absolute emissions since 2015, as they work towards the ambitious goal of achieving a 25% science-based reduction target by 2030. Additionally, they have increased the usage of renewable electricity from 12% in 2021 to 21% in 2022. • Coca-Cola have made substantial efforts in sourcing priority ingredients sustainably. Specifically, 64% of these priority ingredients have been sourced to the Leader standard, aligning with our Principles for Sustainable Agriculture.
Sony Group Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sony aspiration is to work relentlessly towards achieving a complete absence of environmental impact throughout the entire life cycle of Sony's products and business operations. This commitment is rooted in our aim to contribute to the realization of a sustainable society. • The annual energy consumption rate per product has increased by 3.9% compared to fiscal year 2018. • Greenhouse gas emissions from our sites have decreased by 12.5% compared to fiscal year 2020. • Sony are utilizing electricity derived from renewable sources, with a renewable energy ratio of 29.7%. • Greenhouse gas emissions related to logistics between nations and within regions have reduced by 10.0% compared to fiscal year 2018. • There has been a 3.4% reduction in the use of virgin oil-based plastics per product unit when compared to fiscal year 2018. • The usage of plastic packaging per product unit has shown a substantial decrease, down by 22.2% compared to fiscal year 2018.
Nestle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.8% of the essential ingredients are procured through regenerative agriculture practices • 22% of the crucial ingredients are produced in a sustainable manner • A substantial 81.9% of the plastic packaging is intentionally designed for recyclability

Discussion

Significance of Green HRM

Green HRM holds considerable significance as it serves as a linchpin for embedding sustainability principles within organizations. It encompasses HR practices and strategies tailored to align with environmental objectives, offering a multitude of vital advantages:

Advantages for Employers

Elevated Environmental Performance

Green HRM serves as a catalyst for organizations to decrease their ecological impact through the promotion of eco-conscious measures like waste reduction, energy conservation, and sustainable procurement. This results in a noteworthy enhancement of overall environmental performance.

Financial Savings and Operational Efficiency

The integration of green HR practices frequently leads to substantial financial savings by diminishing resource consumption and enhancing operational efficiency. For example, the implementation of remote work policies can significantly reduce energy consumption within office spaces.

Talent Attraction and Retention

Organizations that prioritize sustainability through Green HRM have a distinct advantage in attracting environmentally conscious job seekers. Moreover, they can retain talent by providing a work environment that resonates with the values of their employees.

Regulatory Compliance and Risk Mitigation

Green HRM ensures that organizations adhere to stringent environmental regulations, thereby mitigating the risks associated with legal and reputational issues stemming from environmental non-compliance.

Fostering Innovation and Competitiveness

Encouraging employees to actively contribute to sustainability initiatives stimulates innovation. This, in turn, augments an organization's competitiveness within the market.

Stakeholder Engagement

Demonstrating a steadfast commitment to sustainability through HR practices bolsters an organization's reputation among stakeholders, including customers, investors, and the broader community.

Long-Term Sustainability

By firmly embedding sustainable principles and practices into HR processes, organizations can secure their long-term viability in a world that increasingly emphasizes environmental responsibility.

Advantages for Employee

Elevated Employee Contentment

Green HRM practices elevate job satisfaction among employees.

Heightened Employee Engagement

In organizations practicing Green HRM, employees are more inclined to engage in pro-environmental actions.

Enhanced Work-Life Balance

Through Green HRM, workplaces become more environmentally conscious, potentially improving work-life balance for employees.

Professional Advancement

Employees may acquire fresh skills related to sustainability and environmental management through Green HRM initiatives, facilitating their professional growth.

Positive Workplace Ethos

Green HRM fosters a culture of environmental responsibility, contributing to a positive workplace atmosphere for employees.

Health and Well-being

A green workplace, as advocated by Green HRM, can lead to better health and well-being outcomes for employees.

Enhanced Job Security

By adopting sustainability practices, organizations are more likely to prosper, ensuring greater job security for employees.

Alignment with Personal Values

Green HRM allows employees to align their personal values with the organization's environmental objectives, providing a sense of purpose.

Opportunities for Innovation

Employees in organizations practicing Green HRM may have chances to participate in innovative, environmentally friendly projects, stimulating creativity.

Recognition and Incentives

Some organizations recognize and reward employees actively involved in green initiatives, boosting motivation.

Challenges to Green HRM**Overcoming Resistance to Sustainable Practices**

Encountering reluctance among employees and organizations when introducing green HRM practices due to a lack of awareness, concerns about potential disruptions, or doubts about the advantages.

Bridging the Skills and Knowledge Gap

Addressing the gap in skills and knowledge among HR professionals needed to effectively implement and manage green HRM initiatives, including understanding environmental regulations and sustainability principles.

Coping with Resource Constraints

Navigating the financial and resource limitations that often hinder the adoption of green HRM practices, including investments in employee training, technology upgrades, and sustainability programs.

Handling the Complexity of Measurement and Reporting

Managing the complexity involved in defining and measuring sustainability metrics related to HR practices, as well as reporting on environmental impact, which can be intricate and time-intensive.

Addressing Globalization and Cross-Border Implementation

Ensuring consistent adoption of green HRM practices across various regions and cultures poses a challenge for organizations with global operations.

Meeting Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Staying compliant with continuously evolving environmental regulations and navigating intricate legal requirements related to green HRM practices presents a substantial challenge.

Fostering Employee Engagement and Motivation

Sustaining high levels of employee engagement and motivation in green initiatives over the long term can be a demanding task.

Identifying Benchmarking and Best Practices

Recognizing and establishing benchmarks for best practices in Green HRM can be challenging due to the absence of standardized benchmarks and the evolving nature of research in the field.

Conclusion

Implementing Green Human Resource Management (HRM) practices offers numerous benefits, facilitating the efficient utilization of an organization's facilities and infrastructure. It plays a pivotal role in enhancing leadership and fostering positive interactions among employees. This is accomplished through the collective sharing of responsibilities for promoting and managing eco-friendly practices that cultivate a sense of environmental awareness and sustainability etiquette. Green HRM significantly contributes to environmental preservation by promoting various environmentally conscious behaviors. These encompass activities such as ride-sharing, adopting video conferencing for meetings, implementing digital recruitment processes, opting for air fresheners free of harmful chemicals, championing recycling initiatives, and conducting virtual training programs. These measures collectively serve to diminish the environmental footprint.

Importantly, Green HRM transcends its role as a mere component within HRM; it introduces an entirely new perspective to the entire organization. The central focus of Green HR efforts revolves around enhancing employees' Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA), diminishing detrimental environmental impacts, and refining HR instruments and procedures. By embracing eco-friendly HR processes, organizations can achieve heightened operational efficiency, reduced expenditure, and cultivate a culture of engaged staff members. This, in turn, situates the organization to operate sustainably over the long haul. In summary, Green HRM is not merely a choice but an imperative of the present age. It is indispensable for organizations aiming to gain a competitive edge, establish a unique environmentally conscious image in the market, fulfill their corporate social responsibilities, and create job opportunities for environmentally aware and highly skilled individuals. Embracing Green HRM is essential for thriving in the modern business landscape and confronting the challenges of the 21st century.

Recommendations

- Prioritize the assimilation of Green HRM practices into organizational operations.
- Embrace principles of environmental responsibility within HR policies.
- Nurture a corporate culture deeply rooted in sustainability.
- Harmonize business practices with ecological principles for long-term sustainability.

- Extract valuable insights from scrutinized real-world instances and case studies.
- Customize successful strategies from research to suit specific organizational contexts.
- Cultivate a workplace ethos that actively embraces and enacts Green HRM principles.
- Implement initiatives such as employee training programs to enhance awareness and comprehension.
- Emphasize the practical application of Green HRM principles derived from theoretical foundations and real-world cases.
- Actively contribute to a future characterized by heightened environmental sustainability, fostering corporate well-being and broader environmental stewardship.
- Implement continuous improvement strategies based on feedback and evolving environmental standards.
- Embrace a dynamic approach to adapt and enhance Green HRM practices over time.
- Establish partnerships with environmental organizations.
- Maintain transparent communication regarding the organization's commitment to Green HRM.
- Share success stories and challenges to inspire continuous improvement.

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