

## GREEN HRM: A STRATEGIC FACET

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### Abstract:

*There is a great deal of increase in the adoption of environment management systems by the corporate sector. Literature has given importance to adoption of environmental practices as a key objective of organizational functioning making it important to identify with the support of human resource management practices. Today there is debate and uncertainty associated with how green management principles can be implemented effectively amongst the workforce of the organization.*

*Green HRM means using every employee interface in such a manner in order to promote and maintain sustainable business practices as well as creating awareness, which in turn, helps organizations to operate in an environmentally sustainable fashion. Hence, Green HRM encompasses two major elements: environmental-friendly HR practices and the preservation of the knowledge capital. HR of the organization plays a major role in making environmental responsibility a part of the corporate mission statement.*

*This review article identifies how corporations today develop human resource policies for promoting environment management initiatives.*

### KEYWORDS:

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Green Business Practices, Green HRM (GHRM), Human Resource Management (HRM), Human Resource Practices, and Sustainability.

“The wealth of the nation is its air, water, soil, forests, minerals, rivers, lakes, oceans, scenic beauty, wildlife habitats and biodiversity... that's all there is. That's the whole economy. That's where all the economic activity and jobs come from. These biological systems are the sustaining wealth of the world”.  
-- Gaylord Nelson

### INTRODUCTION

The Green HRM is the requirement of 21st Century as day in and day out, it is reported in the news paper that because of the excess consumption of natural resources as a raw material by the industries and other commercial organization there is tremendous pressure on the natural resources of planet Earth. The situation is so alarming that the scientist and the environmentalist are discussing the issues of ecological imbalances and the bio-diversity. In every International Conference on environment the nations are discussing about the carbon credits, global warming and the changes in the climate, resulting into earthquakes, frequent floods and vanishing of certain species and animals.

Employees are generally forming the organic component of a company. There is a growing need for the integration of environmental management into Human Resource Management (HRM) practices; such effort is known as Green HRM initiatives. Green Human Resource Management (HRM) is the use of HRM policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within business organizations and, more generally, promotes the cause of environmentalism. It is aptly said that, green HRM initiative using every employee interface to promote sustainable business practices and increase employee awareness. Green HRM is relatively new development in the management thought. It is rightly conceptualized by Jyorden T.

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Misra, founding member and managing director of Spreadhead InterSearch points out that, "Eco-consciousness or colour of green" is rapidly emerging in every dimension of our lives and workplaces are increasingly displaying an organized response to this challenge by bringing in „professional consciousness" at an institutional level as well as individual employee level." The kinds of action taken within green HRM initiatives include educating employees about climate change and other environmental issues, training in working methods that reduce the use of energy and other resources, promoting and inculcating more sustainable means of travel to work and auditing of employee benefits to eliminate those that are not environmentally. Hence, Green HRM encompasses two major elements: environmental-friendly HR practices and the preservation of the knowledge capital. HR of the organization plays a major role in making environmental responsibility a part of the corporate mission statement.

The responsibility of the present generations, HR managers is to create awareness amongst the youngsters and among the people working for the organization about the Green HRM, Green Movement, utilization of natural resources and helping the corporate to maintain proper environment, and retain the natural resources for our future generation i.e. sustainable development.

### Some Green dimensions: Literature Review

A green firm is an organization that provides products and or services that are aimed at utilizing resources more efficiently, providing renewable sources of energy, lowering green house gas emissions or otherwise minimizing environment impact. A Green Job is an occupation that (1) directly works with policies, information, materials and /or technologies that contribute to minimizing environmental impact, and (2) requires specialized knowledge, skills, training or experience in these areas.

Green or Clean is any activity or service that performs at least one of the following:

Generating or storing renewable energy.

Recycling existing materials.

Energy efficient product manufacturing, distribution, installation and maintenance.

Education, compliance and awareness

Natural and sustainable product manufacturing.

Breno Nunes and David Bennett's paper "Green Operations Initiatives in the automotive industry, an environmental reports analysis and benchmarking study", focuses on automotive industry. The environmental implications of the automotive industry set the stage on whether their practices can indeed be considered sustainable.

Green human resource management (GHRM) is directly responsible in creating green workforce that understands, appreciates and practices GVA. Such green initiative can be maintain its green objectives all throughout the HRM process of recruiting, hiring, training, compensating, developing and advancing the firm's human capital. It is also pointed out that if the employees are exposed to the green culture of the firm right from the very beginning, it is easy to develop a green workforce that will form the backbone of GVA. (Ndubisi & Nair, 2009).

They considered that the role of HR in translating Green HR policy into practice. (Renwick et al., 2008, p. 1).

Green human resource management (GHRM) is considered to be a holistic view in order to align employees with a company's environmental strategy. It is often argued that companies that adopted environmental management system are particularly dependent on elaborated Green HR policies. (Daily & Huang, 2001; Wee & Quazi, 2005)

However, such statement may not always hold true. Green human resource activities do not necessarily have to take place within the scope of environmental management system.

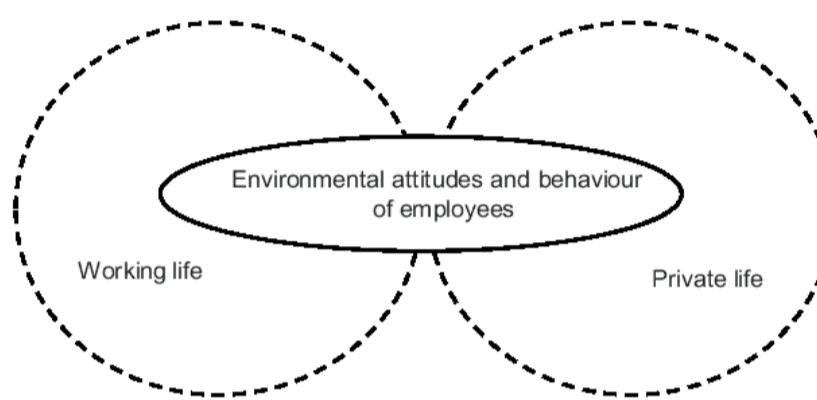
In the opinion of Anjana Nath, Regional Head, Fortis Healthcare Ltd, "Green HR can be defined as environmentally friendly HR initiative resulting in greater efficiencies, lower costs and better employee engagement.

Greening is a holistic process aimed at smarter energy usage, low costs, low wastage using sustainable resources or recyclable materials for end results that are products, targets etc. which are environmentally friendly. Studies have indicated that going green is economically useful, has a direct impact on bottom line profits where business is concerned and actually enhances return on investments.

"Going green" is seen as taking any steps available to maximize out the sustainability and vitality

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of our planet. One of the many ways people can contribute to the “Green Revolution” is by recycling paper. Green HR policies focus on collective and individual capabilities to bring about green behaviour. Such policies aimed at developing an environmental corporate culture. It has been seen that environmentally relevant behavior can be practiced by the employees in working life and private life. Hence, Green HRM focuses on employee's environmental behavior in the company, which in turn, employees can carry on such pattern of consumption in their private life. (Viola Muster and Ulf Schrader, 2011) [See Fig-1]



**FIG-1  
ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR AS COMPOSITION OF  
EXPERIENCES GAINED IN WORKING LIFE AND PRIVATE LIFE**

Sources: Viola Muster and Ulf Schrader (2011)

Basically, green HRM depends on the unique and identifiable patterns of green decisions and behaviours of HR managers (known as green signatures). The types of HR managers green signatures are either promotive or preventive. Promotive green signatures refer to the pattern of behaviours and use of HR practices that promote environmental management (EM) while preventive green signatures consider such pattern of behaviours and decisions that prevent negative environmental outcomes. Because HR managers make the integrated decisions, their green signatures are important to understanding Green HRM practices. (Zoogah, 2011)

The study completed in 2008, included a survey of 59 area employers, a series of executive interviews with green economy and regional economy professionals. In the study green firms were identified as business making money by providing products or services that use resources more efficiently, provide alternative sources of energy, or lower or minimize green house gas emissions.

**The study revealed that these firms showed following results in ensuing areas:**

**Recruitment and Retention:** 22 percent had great difficulty while 49 percent had some difficulty in Recruiting experienced employees with adequate skills and work experience.

7 percent had great difficulty whereas 44 percent had some difficulty in Retaining valuable employees who could be hired by competitors.

14 percent had great difficulty while 27 percent had some difficulty in recruiting entry level employees with appropriate training and education.

2 percent had great difficulty while 24 percent had some difficulty in providing training opportunities for advancements of current employees.

According to Deloitte, five major platforms where sustainability principles can be applied in the transforming an organization to the wholly sustainable enterprise is as follows;

“The Green products/services Portfolio” including waste and pollution management, resource replacement, sustainable design and adaptive reuse.

“The Green Workforce” including Human Resource strategies, culture, recruiting and retention, training, career path development and diversity.

“The Green Workplace” including global locations, physical plants, ergonomics, virtual workplace, green buildings, environmental discharge, waste and energy, use and source.

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“The Green Function/Process Model” including sustainability applied to traditional functions, enterprise-wide green process modelling to incorporate green practices and sustainable management.  
“Green Management and Governance Principles” including board and management accountability, sustainability test, compliance, incentives, ethics, reporting and assurance.

Each of the above platforms is a component providing defined applications of moving towards “greening the company” across each element of the organization.

#### **GREEN BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE**

HR plays an important role in Management of people, which is regarded as an Asset of an organization. The people in the organizations must realize the importance of Green Movement, Green HR and Green Audit.

The responsibility of the present generation HR Managers is to incorporate the Green HR Philosophy in corporate mission statement, HR-Policies. It should also spread it with the help of training programmes, in recruitment, etc.

Green Human Resource Management (HRM) is the use of HRM policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within business organizations and, more generally, promote the cause of environmentalism. Green HRM is increasing as a result of mounting concern over global warming and the adverse effect of much business activity on the natural environment. In business human resources professionals play a crucial role in organization's green movement.

HR professionals try to reinforce the green culture within the business systems. Becoming a green employer may produce HR benefits, such as:

- Increased staff motivation and /or staff involvement
- Reductions in labour turnover
- Increase workforce morality and ethics concerning ecological issues
- Create new breed of Ecological entrepreneurs

Some major aspects consider by HR managers while considering Green HR policy are explained below:

##### **Green Recruitment**

Job descriptions can be used in order to specify a number of environmental aspects. These include environmental reporting roles and health and safety tasks, which staffs are exposed to harmful substances / potential emissions, and match the staff attributes according to the environmental competencies.

##### **Green Performance Management**

Using Performance Management (PM) system in Environmental Management (EM) presents the challenges of how to measure environmental performance standards across different units of the firm, and gaining useful data on the environmental performance of managers. One way in which PM systems can be successfully initiated within an organization is to develop performance indicators for each risk area in environmental awareness and education.

##### **Green Performance – Related Pay (GPRP)**

Monetary-based environmental reward systems have been developed, where for example, an important proportion of monthly managerial bonuses are dependent upon performance outcomes in EM, and company practice has examined the Greening of Performance Related Pay (PRP).e.g. Corporate India is also „going green” while deciding the top managers’ remunerations, companies like PepsiCo, Paints major AKZO Nobel, Dutch drug makers DSM and logistics giant TNT are among some of the firms that have made “green buildings”, carbon emission standards and renewal sources of energy as a major parameter for executive remuneration for their executives.

##### **Green HRM Practices**

In a survey conducted among HR professionals by SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management) found that No.1 reason companies implement green policies is to contribute to society. But that view is just opposed by the professional. According to them, No.1 reason companies implement green policies are to improved employee morale.

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### Corporate Social Responsibilities and Green HR

CSR is also known as Responsible Business or Corporate Social Performance. It is a form of corporate self regulation integrated into a business model. CSR policy emerges from the corporate vision, mission and objectives. Corporate does not operate in a vacuum; they are part of society, responsible to different stakeholders. Business would put responsibility for the impact of their activities on the environment, consumer, employees, community's stakeholders and all other members of public spheres. There are different approaches for CSR by corporate, community based development projects are regarded as CSR – Programmes.

### Towards Clean HR

a)ISO 14000 environmental management standards exists to help companies to minimize the operational affects on natural resources and environment, to comply with pollution laws and improve, organizations applying for ISO 14000 series, conducting environmental audits and using eco-friendly technology and producing eco-friendly products. It is a step towards Clean HR e.g. in many manufacturing companies are shifting from old packing material like tin containers, plastic bags to eco-friendly packing material.  
b)Paperless Office: Banks and other service sector were major consumer of paper, but today with introduction of IT, the consumption of paper has come down. E-business, e-learning has changed the methods and procedures at offices.  
c)Wastage-Disposal: This recent development in disposal of industrial waste, domestic waste, the sewerage system, bio-medical waste is an example of "Protective Environment" or we care for environment.

### Some Green HR practices are provided below:

Use of recycle paper, cans and bottles in the office & recognize departmental efforts.  
Encourage turn off lights; computers and printers after work hours and on weekends for further energy reductions.  
Turn off your office lights while you attend meetings and at night and over the weekend.  
Put your computer and printer on energy saving settings when you know you'll be away for a while.  
Turn lights off in restrooms, conference rooms, libraries, and so forth when the room is not in use.  
Promote web or teleconferencing to reduce travel.  
Promoting reduced paper use  
Implementing wellness programs to foster employees' proper nutrition, fitness and healthy living  
Use air conditioning with discretion.  
Suggest lighting changes and use more energy efficient bulbs.  
Email advisories about how employees can use less paper.  
Purchase large or refillable containers of creamer, sugar, salt, pepper, and butter instead of individual containers.  
Work with IT to switch to laptops over desktop computers. (Laptops consume up to 90% less power).  
Increase the use of teleconferencing, rather than on-site meetings.  
Promote brown-bagging in the office to help employees reduce fat and calories to live healthier lives and reduce packaging waste, too.  
Played green-themed games-to promote environmentally friendly behavior and staff togetherness.  
Provide green promotion which includes loan discounts on fuel-efficient cars and energy saving home improvements, discounts at local green merchants.

### CONCLUSION:

Green HR efforts to date have primarily focused on increasing efficiency within processes, reducing and eliminating environmental waste, and revamping HR products, tools, and procedures resulting in greater efficiency and lower costs. The results included: electronic filing, ride sharing, job sharing, teleconferencing and virtual interviews, recycling, telecommuting, online training, and developing more energy efficient office spaces. With society becoming more environmentally conscious, businesses are starting to incorporate green initiatives into their everyday work environment. Environmentally friendly HR initiatives resulting in greater efficiencies, lower costs and create an atmosphere of better employee engagement, which in turn helps organizations to operate in an environmentally sustainable fashion.

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