



## **GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Green is the catchword today because it is the universal color that symbolizes the environment. Nowadays, the “Going Green” initiative is gaining importance because individuals and corporates understand that the consumption of resources is more than what is available. We are sharing the universe, so at any cost, the environment should not suffer. So it is our prime responsibility to save and preserve our mother nature from the natural and human-made disasters for the future generation. From this context, the sustainability and greening concepts come forth.*

*The corporate environment transmutes itself from the traditional profit motive business to a competitive business model that aims profit through Sustainability. Nowadays, the business community is giving more concern for integrating the ‘environment management’ with ‘people management’ which is possible by Green HRM. The concept of Green HRM mainly deals with promoting sustainable use of resources and engaging every employee to support sustainable and environmentally friendly practices. Green HRM helps the organization earn profit through sustainable environmental practices and enhance its goodwill within society. GHRM tries to create a green workforce that can understand and support the green culture in the organization.*

*It is in this backdrop the present chapter aims to discuss the concept of Green HRM, its provenance, growth, Benefits, and various GHRM practices followed by the corporate and challenges for its implementation.*

**KEYWORDS:** Green HRM, sustainable business, environment-friendly practices, green initiatives

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## 1. INTRODUCTION TO GREEN HRM

In the current scenario, 'Green' is the buzzword that exemplifies the environment. The world over the 'green movement' is gaining more significance because the individuals and business organizations recognize that the consumption level of resources is more than what is available. If this situation continues, the resources will be exhausted, and nothing will be available for future generations (Dingra & Padmavathy, 2019). From this realization, the concept 'green' and 'sustainability' come forth.

To incorporate green practices and ensure sustainability, business organizations need to change their existing operations into environment-friendly operations (Sharma & Gupta, 2010) (Pallavi & Bhanu, 2016). In the development of human beings, the environment plays a vital role. The sustainability of the environment leads to the growth of the employees and the organization (Saifulina, Carballo & Ruzo, 2020). So across the world, business organizations are integrating the environment management with human resource management, called green human resource management (GHRM).

*"GHRM is the use of human resource management policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within business organizations and promote the cause of environmental sustainability." (Mandip, 2012)*

Green Human Resource Management has two elements: The Environmental Preservation through eco-friendly human resource practices and Preservation of knowledge capital (Vimala & Amble, 2010). Effective implementation of GHRM practices is vital for the business organization along with financial and economic aspects. Environmental Preservation is also a determining factor of competitive advantage. Most of the business organizations are now realizing the importance of Green management practices in the company. All the organization's functional departments are conscious of the green practices, wherein the human resource department plays an active role in being the connecting link between all the departments (Patel, 2018). The Human Resource Policies within the organization ensure the sustainable use of resources without harming the business organization's external environment. 'Profit through sustainability' is the new motto of every business (Yong, Sehnam & Mani, 2020).

*"Sustainable business or a green business is an enterprise that has a minimal negative impact, or potentially positive effect, on the global or local environment, community, society, or economy." In other words, it is the process of managing the financial, social, and environmental risks, obligations, and opportunities. Sometimes these three impacts can be referred to as people, planet, and profits (Mehta, Chugan, 2015).*



Green HRM helps the organization earn profit through sustainable environmental practices and enhance its goodwill within the society. GHRM tries to create a green workforce that can understand and support the green culture in the organization. In the current scenario, to ensure the business organization's long-term sustainability, the integration of GHRM practices is essential.

In this backdrop, the present chapter aims to discuss the concept of Green HRM, its provenance, growth, Benefits, and various GHRM practices followed by the corporate and challenges for its implementation.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this paper is to study:

1. The concept of Green Human Resource Management and its origin and functions.
2. Green human resource management practices followed by the corporates for sustainable business
3. Benefits and challenges for Green HRM

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study relies on secondary data sources, collected from various journals, websites, and News reports.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF GHRM**

Green HRM gains popularity through the Green Movement across the world. The Green Movement started in the year 1972 in New Zealand and addressed the concept of Environmentalism (Kamili, 2018). It focuses on creating awareness among the people to stop further degradation and deterioration of natural resources. Green HRM turn up after Green accounting, Green marketing, and Green management. Green HRM is becoming popular because the consumption of resources is more than what is available. The world faces many issues like carbon credits, global warming, and pollution resulting from high-profile industrial accidents and climate changes. That may result in environmental problems, global warming, earthquakes, and floods. M.W.Shaikh(2010) argues for green human resource practices in the industry. The increasing need to integrate environmental management with Human resource management practices lead to green human resource management (Jayashree & Selvarani, 2019).



## FUNCTIONS OF GHRM

Figure 1: Showing the functions of Green human resource management



Source: Author compilation

1. **Green human resource planning:** Human resource planning is assessing the current and future requirements of the employees within the organization. Companies wish to follow green human resource planning, searching for employees having experience in environment-related tasks and responsibilities. They need to implement various programs like Low carbon technology, cleaner production and ISO 4001 (Shaban, 2019).
2. **Green recruitment:** For recruiting new employees, the company can invite applications through online mode, which will reduce the wastage of paper and other stationery items in the organization.
3. **Green selection:** The Company should try to select the candidates who have a favorable attitude towards the green movement. The candidates who are willing to take responsibility for green initiatives chosen.
4. **Green induction:** The Induction program is conducted within the organization to welcome new employees and prepare them for future jobs. In Green HRM, the induction programs, conducted in such a way as to create awareness among the recruits about the green practices followed by the organization. The induction programs should focus on the organization's green skills, working conditions, and green policies.
5. **Green training and development:** The training and development process should include a session to make employees aware of the green practices followed within the organization and how the employees can help to achieve the green standards fixed by the organization.



Training should be given to all levels of employees to reduce the wastage of resources and their effective utilization.

6. **Green involvement:** Green involvement means encouraging and giving employees opportunities to participate in the environmental management process and reduce waste and pollution within the environment.
7. **Green performance management:** As a part of the 'go green' process, the company can set 'green performance standards' for measuring the performance of employees (Sharma, Agarwal & Utkarsh, n.d). While assessing employees' performance, the company should look into the fact that whether they fulfill the 'green goals' of the organization or not.
8. **Green payroll:** The business organizations are trying to reduce their wastage and carbon footprints into the environment. Online payroll preparation or paperless payroll preparation is a green initiative to become environmentally responsible.
9. **Green rewards:** Employees who acquire green skills and contribute to the organization's green movement got both monetary and non-monetary rewards. The Monetary rewards include an increase in salary, bonus, incentives, and the Non-monetary rewards are appreciation from top-level, gifts, and holiday trips to employees and their families.
10. **Green employee relation:** The Top Management can appraise the employees who are 'green aware' and meet the organization's 'green standards'. The appreciation and reward from top Management will help to create better relations with employees and Management.

## GHRM PRACTICES OF SELECTED COMPANIES

Some of the general practices followed by the corporate globally to support the 'Go Green initiatives' are as follows:

1. **Green building:** Tries to reduce or eliminate the negative impacts on the environment with its environmentally friendly design, construction, and operation. Green buildings improve our quality of life by way of preserving natural resources. In other words, we can say that green buildings are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient during its entire life cycle (Obeidat & Said, 2020).
2. **Green printing:** Green printing is the application of eco-efficient printing technologies, ink, and printing materials. It helps to reduce the harmful impacts on our environment. Printing methods that consume less energy and resources and produce fewer wastages. Example: use of recycled papers and Waterless printing
3. **Green manufacturing:** It is the environmentally responsible production process, the natural resources used efficiently, that will reduce pollution and waste disposal (Dingra & Padmavathy, 2019). Manufacturing technologies reduce environmentally hazardous emissions and lessen their impact on the environment. Recycling and reuse of materials are also encouraged.
4. **Teleconferencing and virtual interview:** The business meetings and interviews will conduct with the help of the internet. Rather than a face to face meeting, the participants can connect through video conferencing software, which reduces business travel.
5. **Recycling:** Recycling is the process of reducing waste materials by converting them into usable new materials and objects.



6. **Telecommuting:** Telecommuting is also known as Mobile work, working from home, remote work, and telework. Under this method, the employees do not travel to the office; instead, they use computers, laptops, and mobile phones connected with the internet and work from home or chooses a location near to their home to complete their job.
7. **Shared transport facilities:** To minimize carbon emissions, the companies on a global level promote the employees to use the public transport system or company cab facility without using their vehicles. The carpooling facility is another option in which several people travel together to reduce the cost and pollution.
8. **Flexi-work:** The employees can provide a flexible working time or work from home facilities using company portals or emails with the internet or intranet (Ahuja, 2015).
9. **Online training:** Online training or computer-based training conduct to save energy and cost.
10. **Green rewards:** Free bicycles and pollution-free vehicles can gift to the employees. Trees are given to customers and employees as a part of the going green initiative and Bonus to customers who make a green purchase.

## GREEN HR PRACTICES FOLLOWED BY THE SELECTED CORPORATES

Some of the green practices followed by the Indian corporates for sustainable business are as follows:

### Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)

The environment policy of TCS tries to integrate environmental consideration into the business process. Environmental stewardship efforts mainly focused on four material aspects.

1. **Carbon footprint reduction:** By ensuring energy efficiency and use of renewable energy
2. **Water management:** Efficiently using and recycling the water and harvesting the rainwater
3. **Waste management:** 3R's concept. Reduction, reuse, and recycling.
4. **Supply chain sustainability**

TCS has 3 LEED-certified green building

Per capita, Carbon footprint reduced by 52.5%

Renewable source electricity usage 8.45%

3.55 MW on-site rooftops solar capacity

100%, hazardous & E-waste is disposing of through government authorized recyclers.

34.7% of biodegradable waste recycled on-site.

The company follows paperless HR functions as a part of the go green initiative and promoting sustainability, which includes:

Recruitment of employees,

1. Administrative functions of the workforce
2. Compensation to Employees



3. Employee Performance Assessment
4. Payroll Preparation
5. Work-life balance. (TCS, 2018)

### **Reliance Industries Limited**

The vision of Reliance Industries Limited is to create value for the nation, enhance the quality of life across the entire socio-economic spectrum through sustainable measures. The business model of Reliance aligns with sustainable development goals and helps the company to overcome sustainability challenges. On the operational side, they are working to maximize clean energy use and minimize the carbon footprints in collaboration with the best available technology licensors. Their energy and petrochemical business follow the philosophy of not only the Green economy but also the circular economy because they care for the environment, which is the most precious asset of humanity.

The societal value followed by Reliance are:

1. Energy efficiency operations,
2. Carbon abatement and offsetting,
3. Water management,
4. Waste management,
5. Renewable and alternative energy,
6. Ecosystems and biodiversity,
7. Managing environmental impact,
8. Digital inclusion,
9. Community development.

As a part of Green human resource function, the company introduced E-HR, online assessment, management of performance, 360-degree feedback system, Employee self-service, and training through e-learning facilities. (Reliance Industries Ltd.,2018)

### **Infosys**

The key corporate values of Infosys is sustainability that inspires the employees every single day as they go about their work. Through digital transformation, they try to build sustainable value across industries and geographies.

1. The Company is in Prestigious 'Dow Jones' sustainability indices.
2. LEED certification for Infosys Mysore, Chennai, and Chandigarh campuses green building
3. They try to manage the footprints on carbon emissions, including greenhouse gases.
4. To manage the waste generated due to its operations through a focused approach.
5. Aim to make the campuses water sustainable
6. A vision to implement a resource-efficient Greening Strategy
7. 50% of the electricity needs met from renewable sources like solar energy.
8. Freshwater per capita consumption has reduced by 60%. Investment in technology, along with rainwater harvesting and employee cooperation, has been key to this success.
9. Sustainable waste management technologies used across campus.





10. They are on their way to becoming carbon neutral.

Environmental impact assessment is done for their operations and new projects to reduce the environment's negative impacts. (Infosys, 2019)

### **ONGC**

The corporate sustainability report of the ONGC entitled Time to act now for a green future.

1. ONGC is conscious of its responsibility towards the environment and takes regular measures for minimizing the footprints.
2. Wherever possible, the company uses renewable energy
3. Efforts to reduce Greenhouse gas emission from their operation
4. Using the latest technologies that foster energy conservation
5. Dual fuel technology, Gas flaring reduction, Energy-efficient lighting, Energy management system, Energy audit, Renewable energy are the energy conservation methods adopted by the company
6. ONGC and Indian oil joins hands to reduce carbon emissions
7. ONGC promotes the use of clean fuel in its operation as well as transportation. They promote the usage of electric vehicles

ONGC has an active participant in the Clean Development mechanism to address the climate change challenge. (ONGC, 2019)

### **State Bank of India**

State Bank of India added Sustainability as a value in the financial year 2017-2018 on Digital India banking solutions used for a sustainable tomorrow. The impact of digital innovation on the environment is a consideration in SBI.

1. The company made significant investments in artificial intelligence, Robotics, Branch server consolidation, and the internet of things, reducing the carbon footprints and enhancing energy efficiency.
2. One of the CSR activities of the bank is environmental protection.
3. The Solid Waste Management system developed in 14 villages
4. Establishing a board approved sustainability policy that will govern the bank's sustainability practices.
5. Investment in renewable energy .
6. Issuing green bonds.
7. Carbon neutrality strategy to fulfill by 2030.
8. They are joining the initiative to promote the electric vehicle. One electric vehicle is procured by the corporate office to be used by its employees.
9. The Replaced Generators on a pilot basis at the Rural and semi-urban branches with solar backup batteries.
10. Captive windmills of 15 MW capacity and Solar Rooftop capacity of 17 MW
11. SBI is the only Indian bank to join the EV-100(SBI, 2019)





## BENEFITS OF GHRM

By following the green human resource practices and policies, the business organizations having the following advantages (Sharma, 2018) (Lakhera & Sharma, 2020):

1. **Retention of customers:** Nowadays, the green concept is gaining importance. It helps the organization to retain their customers and make their investors happy. It will make the organization more efficient and environment-friendly.
2. **Retention of employees:** Employee's turnover can reduce by providing a better working culture that supports the green movement.
3. **Company reputation increases in the Public:** The corporates that follow green standards will gain more publicity.
4. **Sustainable use of resources:** Sustainable use of resources means the proper management, control, and effective utilization of resources for the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations.
5. **Rebates and tax benefits:** The government supports the go green initiative by giving tax incentives and rebates to those companies which follow green environmental practices.
6. **Increased desirability as an employer:** Prospective job seekers will prefer those companies which follow green standards in their activities than their counterparts do not follow the same.
7. **Business opportunities:** Some government companies and non-profit organizations will purchase products and services from those companies that meet the green standards.
8. **Increase in productivity:** Productivity refers to how efficiently the production process. Efficiency in Production helps less waste and efficient utilization of available resources.
9. **Attractive to better employees:** The educated and affluent employees will seek a job in those companies which meet the environmental standards. It helps the companies to pool better talents.
10. **Environment Degradation Practices reduced:** The green standards prescribed by the companies try to reduce the wastage of resources, pollution, and destruction of the ecosystem.
11. **Promoting eco-friendly products:** Companies try to bring eco-friendly products and services into the market, attracting new customers.
12. **Higher employee job satisfaction:** Increased job satisfaction of employees will increase productivity in the organization.
13. **Better working culture:** Working culture represents how the organization's values and traditions contribute to the working environment of the organization. GHRM helps to develop a working environment that tries to reduce the harmful effects on nature.
14. **Help reduce utility cost:** The use of energy-efficient and less wasteful technology will reduce the company's utility cost. Utility cost is the cost of using utilities such as electricity, water, waste disposal, sewage, and heating (Lee, 2020).
15. **Competitive advantage:** The Companies that implement green practices will get more competitive advantage than those that do not follow the same. The customers and employees will choose the former than the latter. Companies that effectively implemented green practices can reduce the wastage and use the resources efficiently. It will reduce their cost and helps to gain a competitive advantage. (Singh & Paneser, 2019)



## CHALLENGES TO GHRM

The business organizations are facing the following challenges for the effective implementation of green human resource practices (Bangwal & Tiwari, 2015) (Ahmad, 2015):

1. **Employees' reluctance:** Some of the employees think that it is not their responsibility to protect the environment. So it is difficult to change the behavior of employees within a short period.
2. **Lack of unanimity among employees:** Different employees may respond differently to Green HRM Practices. To create unanimities among employees towards the process of going green is very difficult.
3. **Recruitment of employees:** Employees who are having a favorable concern towards the 'going green' concept is challenging.
4. **HR professionals under stress:** HR employees will be in undue stress because they are responsible for implementing green human resource management practices.
5. **To develop a culture supporting green HRM** and forcing to implement the same in the organization is burdensome.
6. **Chances of creating uneven competition between the companies:** For example, a company following strict environmental protection standards may need to install new technology and employ new workers. However, another company following environmental protection standards can reduce the production cost. It will put the first company at a competitive disadvantage.
7. **Initial cost:** The challenge of Green Human Resource Management is that it involves initial capital outlay for installing new technology that is energy efficient and less wasteful.
8. **Inadequate saving:** Savings from going Green Concept is lesser than the Expected. It takes time to cover up the initial cost or make them economically viable.
9. **Lack of knowledge** to effectively implement green human resource management practices is a challenge to the company.

## CONCLUSION

The concept of Green human resource management is gaining importance increasingly. Nowadays, business organizations focus on profit maximization and fulfilling environmental obligations (Kapil, 2015) (Ahuja, 2015). The rising environmental awareness of people in society pushes the organization to adopt green practices to get a competitive advantage and sustainability in the long run. The human resource department is the organization's nervous system that needs to effectively implement greener practices by coordinating all other functional departments within the organization. Sustainable human resource practices promote sustainable use of resources and protect the environment (Kamili, 2018). Each employee's involvement in the organization is essential for its effective implementation and reducing the carbon footprints. So it is time to act for a greener future (TCS, 2018) by ensuring every employee's participation in the greener practices followed by the organization for their sustainable business life in the long run.



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