

Green HRM: Cultivating Sustainability in Employees and Organizations through Workforce Transformation

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Abstract

As stated by Mahatma Gandhi, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed." Industrialization across the globe has led to an increase in business production and technologies. This has put pressure on the organizations, which, in turn, resort to practices that may interfere with the environment. This has led organizations to practice green in all their fields and activities to promote environmental sustainability. Green Human Resource Management helps restore the ecological balance of the environment by integrating a green approach in all processes and activities. Greening the employees from top to bottom is not an easy task, but the need for it has risen, and organizations to highlight its importance by implementing it. The paper focuses on the importance of Green Human Resources and the HR activities linked to green programs and practices in the organization. A descriptive analysis of different Human Resource processes has been conducted in relation to environmental management. A small survey also highlights the awareness of the Green HRM in the Siliguri area of West Bengal. The paper further provides remedies and suggestions for implementing Green HRM in organizations.

Keywords

Green human resource management, Ecological balance, Sustainability, Awareness, and Green initiatives.

1. Introduction

"Green" - a ubiquitous term across scientific, political, and corporate realms - embodies notions of cleanliness and renewability (Pandey et al., 2013), traditionally intertwined with environmental considerations. As population growth and industrialization surge, organizations are surpassing mere developmental requirements, inadvertently straining the environment and catalyzing global crises such as global warming, acid rain, ozone depletion, and various pollutants. A recent World Bank study revealed India's alarming

statistics, with 13 out of 20 most polluted cities globally and environmental factors contributing to 23 percent of child mortality (Mallet, 2013). Consequently, businesses must embrace the triple bottom line concept, amalgamating social, environmental, and financial dimensions. Enter Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), the fusion of Environmental Management with Human Resource Management. In response to escalating awareness of environmental concerns, company HR departments champion the GHRM ethos, deploying HR policies to foster sustainable resource utilization and advance environmental stewardship (Mandip, 2012). With globalization reshaping corporate landscapes, there is a paradigm shift from traditional financial structures towards eco-friendly economic frameworks. In essence, GHRM cultivates a workforce versed in, appreciative of, and dedicated to green initiatives throughout the HRM lifecycle, advocating for environmentally friendly products, services, and technologies.

Green HR encompasses two fundamental components: environmentally conscious HR practices and preserving knowledge capital. Environmentally friendly HR practices entail a range of measures such as reducing carbon footprints, opting for telephones or video calling for interviews, minimizing paper usage while maximizing technological resources, implementing recycling programs, managing waste efficiently, and promoting car-sharing initiatives. These practices contribute to ecological sustainability and aid in retaining top talent within the organization by curbing unnecessary expenditures and safeguarding resources during challenging periods. By embracing Green HR initiatives, companies can explore alternative cost-cutting strategies without compromising their ability to retain and nurture their most valuable personnel.

GHRM is considered to be a part of Corporate Social Responsibility. CSR is defined as the extent to which an organization will strive to improve the overall welfare of the society. It can be said that Green HR initiatives help employers and employees reap maximum benefits without threatening the environment and future generations of their needs. This paper focuses on the green HR initiative, which highlights the steps taken by different processes of HR -recruiting and selecting, training and development, performance appraisal and management, employee involvement and participation, and pay and reward that, in turn, will help in creating an eco-friendly environment in the corporate world.

2. Review of the Literature

Sudin S. (2011) and Mandip (2012) both emphasize the importance of integrating environmental management into human resource management

(HRM), often referred to as Green HRM. Sudin suggests that employees must be motivated, empowered, and environmentally aware to implement green management initiatives effectively. Meanwhile, Mandip defines Green HR as utilizing every employee touch point to promote sustainability and increase awareness and commitment to sustainable practices.

Mandip acknowledges that integrating HR and environmental management is a challenging task. This involves changing the HR staff's mindset toward green issues and addressing long-standing unsustainable practices among existing staff.

In the context of the business industry, green buildings have become the new standard. Implementing Green HR policies and practices promotes sustainability and contributes to safeguarding and enhancing worker health and well-being.

Douglas WS Renwick et al. (2012) surveyed the intersection of human resources and environmental management, outlining key HR elements and identifying potential research areas in Green HRM. They found that environmental rewards and recognition significantly influence employee engagement in eco-initiatives, emphasizing the importance of integrating such practices into organizational strategies for sustainability.

Jabbour et al. (2013) emphasized the intrinsic connection between environmental management and Human Resource Management (HRM), highlighting HR's vital role in facilitating the seamless integration of environmental initiatives within organizations.

Pandey et al. (2013) focused on Green HRM, examining the essential factors for sustainable practices within organizational settings. They underscored the significance of Employee Mindset and Organizational Culture in fostering a green organizational ethos.

Rai and Mishra (2014) defined a green organization as prioritizing environmental responsiveness, resource efficiency, and social responsibility. Their research advocated for Green HRM practices, emphasizing the importance of eco-friendly HR initiatives and knowledge preservation. They also promoted various Green HR efforts, such as telecommuting and energy-efficient office spaces.

In their study, Md Hassan Jabbar and Md. Abid (2015) investigated 200 employees from green organizations, highlighting the positive correlation between environmental awareness and employee satisfaction in decision-making processes. They also noted the beneficial impact of training on employee performance. However, they identified a scarcity of primary data due to organizations' limited adoption of Green HRM practices.

In their study, Pallavi and MVV Bhanu (2016) noted that the top 25 green companies worldwide boasted impressive green scores ranging from 72 percent to 89.2 percent. However, specific scores were not provided while comparing these figures with the top 10 green companies in India. Given the nascent stage of Green HRM adoption in developing countries like India, it is expected that Indian companies may have significantly lower green scores, potentially falling below 40 percent.

Mishra P. (2017) highlighted the under-researched nature of Green HRM in India. Their study explored the status and challenges of Green HRM practices within the country, covering environmental training, green recruitment, performance appraisal, employee involvement, and compensation. The study was conducted in two phases: a comprehensive literature review to understand existing GHRM practices and data collection to assess the current implementation status in Indian organizations. The findings revealed a gap between the full utilization of GHRM practices and their current implementation. Mishra stressed the importance of initiating and expanding green initiatives in developing nations, particularly given the urgent environmental concerns and insufficiently enforced government regulations. They suggested that organizational-level changes are essential to address this gap effectively.

Studies show that GHRM has a positive impact on the green behavioral outcomes of employees, which ultimately leads to better environmental, social, financial, and innovation performance. (Kim et al., 2019)

Past research consistently shows a correlation between adopting Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) and Green Innovation. Organizations that integrate GHRM practices are better equipped to innovate products and processes with minimal environmental impact, as evidenced by studies conducted by Bahmani et al. (2023), Singh et al. (2020), and Song et al. (2021).

Li. et al. (2023) examines how green HRM practices impact employees' in-role green behavior post-Covid-19. It also explores the role of the psychological green climate as a mediator and investigates how spiritual leadership acts as a buffer in enhancing this relationship.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To provide a basic understanding of green HRM
- To identify HR activities related to green programs

- To enumerate existing green initiatives taken by the companies
- To understand the awareness about Green HRM in the Siliguri area

4. Green HR Process and Practices

4.1. Green Recruitment

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) revolves around choosing individuals whose skills, attitudes, and actions align with an organization's environmental aspirations (Aranganathan P., 2018). According to John Sullivan, GHRM utilizes environmental initiatives to attract talent, particularly emphasizing paperless recruitment techniques and identifying environmentally-conscious "ecopreneurs" within the organization (Mandip, 2012).

Key aspects of GHRM, such as recruitment, retention, and employee satisfaction, are crucial for organizational success (Holtom et al., 2008). Studies show that many job seekers rely on job portals to explore opportunities, and the younger Generation Y prioritizes organizations with green practices. The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India. (Kiruthiagaa & Viswanathan, 2014).

The rationale for adopting Green Recruitment, particularly paperless methods, is supported by alarming statistics: for instance, it takes 24 trees to produce one ton of non-recycled paper, and India's paper consumption has surged in recent years The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM). Additionally, the environmental impact of paper usage, including water consumption and carbon emissions, underscores the need for sustainable practices (www.worldatlas.com).

Common Green Recruitment practices include utilizing job portals, crafting environmentally friendly job descriptions, and implementing telephonic and online interviews.

The benefits of Green Recruitment are manifold, including significant cost and time savings, enhanced employer branding, and alignment with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) objectives. Moreover, it fosters a sense of employee pride and motivation, leading to improved performance and efficiency rates.

4.2. Green Performance Management

Performance Management involves ongoing communication between supervisors and employees to support the organization's strategic objectives throughout the year (Bangwal D., Tiwari P., 2015). Shoeb Ahmad (2015) suggests that with the influence of Environmental Management on global

business strategies, Performance Management is now positively affected by the green movement. Green Performance Management focuses on aligning performance evaluations with job descriptions, emphasizing specific goals that prioritize environmental considerations.

Arulrajah A. A., Opatha, Nawaratne N. (2016) have categorized employee green performance into three areas:

1. Employees make effective use of input resources.
2. Implementation of innovative environmental initiatives.
3. Contributions to the organization's environmental management initiatives.

Green Performance Management practices include:

- Transparent communication with employees regarding green strategies and policies.
- Integration of environmental performance indicators into the Performance Management System.
- Setting measurable targets for employees and monitoring their progress closely.
- Implementing consequences for employees who do not comply with green regulations.

Some organizations in the USA (Coors Brewing and Huntsman Chemical) have performance-related bonuses linked to meeting environmental targets (reducing waste management). Managers do not get bonuses if environmental goals are not met. (Wehrmeyer, 1997)

4.3. Green Training and Development

Green training and development fosters behaviors, skills, and knowledge that support environmental sustainability and preserve environmentally conscious attitudes and abilities (Zoogah, 2011). It entails educating employees on environmental issues and conservation methods, raising awareness, and promoting actions like energy efficiency and waste reduction.

Liebowitz (2010) proposes that HR departments conduct workshops to enhance managers' soft skills, including teamwork, diversity management, change management, and collaboration, which he terms "front-wheel" skills. Training and development are crucial for enhancing employee performance by providing the necessary knowledge and skills to achieve organizational goals (Obaid T.F., Allias R., 2015). Rolls Royce, Albion Group, and Bristol Myers Squibb include induction training for more experienced employees and training on specific green topics for staff,

especially associated with environmental operations and coordination (Bird, 1996).

Key practices in green training and development include:

- Designing tailored training programs to educate employees about green initiatives.
- Conducting analyses to pinpoint areas for developing green skills.
- Establishing environmental teams within departments to encourage collaboration.
- Cultivating employees' emotional connection to green practices.
- Fostering an environment-focused culture through diverse training efforts.
- Offering induction programs and green orientations for new hires.

4.4. Green Reward and Compensation

Green reward and compensation systems play a crucial role in acknowledging employee performance and motivating them to uphold high productivity and service standards, particularly in the expanding green business sector. These systems aim to ethically incentivize sustainable work practices, enhancing job satisfaction and environmental performance (Aravind S., Mohana Manoj K., 2017). They are instrumental in fostering a green organizational culture (Ahmad S., 2015). However, quantifying environmental behavior and performance in monetary terms presents challenges (Fernandez et al., 2003).

To effectively promote green behaviors, compensation packages should encourage acquiring green skills and attaining environmental objectives. This may involve incentivizing energy-efficient products, rewarding employees for their commitment to green practices, and demonstrating technical competencies (Renwick D. et al., 2012).

Key practices in green reward and compensation systems include:

- Implementing green pay and reward structures.
- Recognizing and rewarding the acquisition of green skills.
- Offering monetary incentives such as bonuses, cash rewards, and premiums for achievements in environmental management.
- Providing non-monetary rewards such as awards, recognitions, promotions, and praise for accomplishments in environmental management.
- Implementing penalties such as criticisms, warnings, and suspensions for non-compliance with green targets.

Du Pont bases their executive compensation and bonus system for middle managers and senior officers in part on environmental stewardship practices where bonuses can be over 10 percent for developing benign pesticides for agriculture or a nonpolluting product (May & Flannery, 1995)

5. Present Study

This study is a modest attempt to know whether the employees of the Siliguri area of West Bengal are acquainted with the term Green Human Resource Management.

5.1. Descriptive Analysis

The tremendous growth in the corporate sector has led to enormous benefits, but its environmental disadvantages cannot be overlooked. Siliguri-734001 is a city growing by leaps and bounds in the business sector and environmental degradation. Hence, a survey of the region was needed to determine the usage of green strategies, especially in human resources management.

For primary data collection, 50 respondents were chosen through convenience sampling from business organizations from three different sectors: manufacturing, trading, and digital. A small sample size was chosen because of restricted resource availability, and also, a valid comparison was to be drawn for the same. A questionnaire was prepared and filled out by a sample of 200 (employers and employees) ranging from skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labor.

Table 1:- Description of the Respondents

Manufacturing Unit	Trading Unit (15 wholesale-retail Shops)	Digital Start-up
Uni Trade Overseas Unity Trade Complex Pvt. Ltd. Siliguri-734001. State-West Bengal. Interviewees: Shubham Bansal (Owner) Employees of the Factory	Chaman Complex Baneswar More, Eastern bypass Siliguri-734001. State-West Bengal. Interviewees: Employers Employees of Chaman Complex	Social Dukan Punjabi Para, Sevoke Road, Siliguri-724001 State-West Bengal Interviewees: Harshit Agarwal (Owner) Employees of Social Dukan

Source:- Google Questionnaire

Important questions related to GHRM, its implementation, its relation with cost reduction, and so on were asked, which aided in deriving bar charts, percentages, line graphs, and pie charts.

Renowned research papers, articles, and statistical values from reliable online sources were used for secondary data.

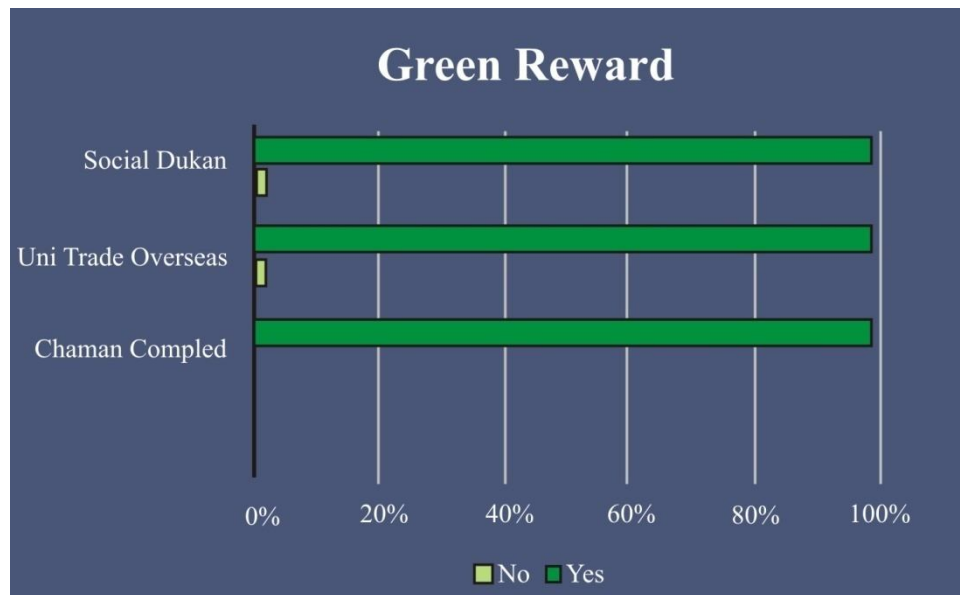
All these have been critically analyzed in order to draw the stated conclusions.

5.2. Data Analysis

The various tools used for data analysis are bar graphs, line graphs, and pie charts, which are depicting the awareness as well as the adoption of green HRM strategies by the selected sample.

Source: Survey data collected by the author through Google Questionnaire.

When inviting potential candidates for employment, does the employer specify the requirement of knowledge regarding sustainability measures?



Source:- Google Questionnaire

Figure 1:- Green Reward

Figure 1 shows that none of the three sectors, be it the manufacturing sector, wholesale sector, or the digital sector, ask such questions during employment, which clearly portrays the importance given to sustainability measures is almost negligible in the recruitment process as of now and demands for a change.

- Is the recruitment process paperless?



Source:- Google Questionnaire

Figure 2:- Paperless Recruitment

Figure 2 shows that it was paperless most of the time for Chaman Complex as the recruitment process mainly depended on interviews and personal contacts. However, some documents are required; hence, it stood at 82 percent. However, for Uni Trading, many proofs are required along with documents, and the recruitment process involves a lot of paperwork for contracts. Digital Dukaan stood out in the recruitment process as it was completely paperless because of the online business mode. Thus, paper may be avoided by online documentation in the form of Word files and PDFs.

- Does the employee get training for adopting common green measures like substituting paper, unnecessary printing, storing and maintaining etc by electronic devices?

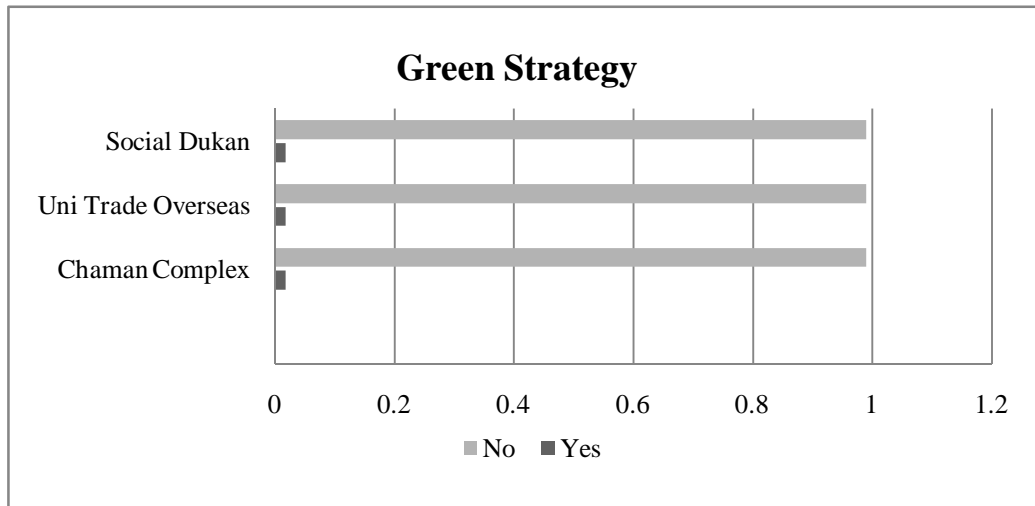


Source:- Google Questionnaire

Figure 3:- Green Training

Figure 3 depicts the varied results according to the skills of the employees. Chaman complex has semi-skilled employees; hence, 78 percent of the time, training was possible and given, mainly for cost reduction and organizational purposes. At Uni Trading, most of the employees are unskilled and hence, training could be given only to 63 percent of the employees. At Social Dukaan, everything was maintained digitally, and the employees were highly skilled; hence, no such training was required.

- Does the employee motivate the employees to follow green strategies by providing financial and non-financial benefits?

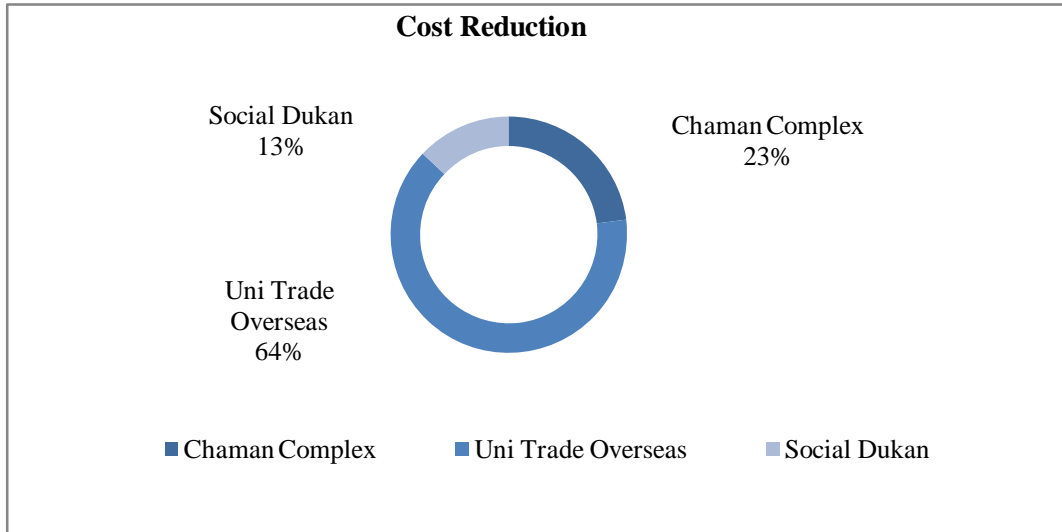


Source:- Google Questionnaire

Figure 4:- Green Strategy

When it came to green rewards and compensation, none of the companies were interested in giving any. In fact, in the entire country, there are only a few multinational companies that do provide green rewards; when it comes to manufacturing or a retail outlet, they do not feel that it is necessary to provide their employees with any rewards for maintaining green habits as shown in Figure 4.

- What is the cost spent on paper filing, file maintenance, etc.?



Source:- Google Questionnaire

Figure 5:- Cost Reduction

The survey shown in Figure 5 depicted that 23 percent of the total cost by Chaman Complex, 64 Percent by Uni Trade Overseas, and 13 Percent by Social Dukan is spent on the above requirement. This comparison itself is clear to prove that Social Dukan. This digital platform conducts most of its operations via digital application; hence, the cost is reduced to a great extent compared to the other two sectors following traditional methods.

- What happened when we asked employees and employers about the carbon footprint concept?

Where only 10 percent of the Chaman Complex was considered incidentally for cost reduction, unskilled laborers of Uni-Trade Overseas were vague about the question itself. The social Dukan survey was positive regarding awareness, but they were not very concerned about it. This clearly shows the need to spread awareness of carbon footprint and strategies to reduce it.

- As an employer, do you feel that going green will help reduce costs?

The employer of Chaman Complex followed a few green techniques like double-sided printing and minimizing electricity usage but never related it to the concept. In contrast, the employers of Uni-Trade Overseas said yes to the question but also stated that it depends a lot upon the

employees. Social Dukan employees felt it would to some extent, as they already operate digitally.

6. Conclusion

Green HRM aims to create a positive impact on the environment and thereby build the reputation of the firm by attracting and retaining young talents who look for green opportunities. The rising concept of Green HRM plays a significant part for the firms as it leads to development for the organization, people, and the environment. Green HRM leads to creating green awareness among existing and new employees and encourages them to participate in reducing the cause of environmental degradation by moving to greener initiatives. With people becoming increasingly attracted to greener objectives and putting in a substantial effort to conserve and maintain the environment, organizations have to revise their policies and framework to integrate environmental management into HRM. Organizations should inculcate environmentally sustainable concepts in the core functions of HRM - Green Recruitment, Green Performance Management, Green Training and Development, Green Rewards, and Compensation. Companies must encourage products, processes, designs, and technology to comply with the Green HR practices. They can include - green printing, recycling processes, carpooling, green payroll, flexible work schedules, e-filing, online training, etc. The limitation of the study includes the lack of a quantitative approach. Also, very few Indian companies take green initiatives into account.

7. Recommendation

A systematic procedure should be introduced to examine and study the diverse approaches and practices the managers to take green initiatives.

Provide more focus on the role of employees in contributing to environmental management, which in turn has a positive impact on the firm's operating performance.

The concept of Green HRM should be more popularized in developing countries like India to combat the growing environmental issues.

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