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## Green HRM and the Sustainability Revolution: Bridging People, Planet, and Profit

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### Abstract

Sustainability is the need of hour. The future of organizations no longer depends solely on profit, but on their ability to sustain people, planet, and performance. Sustainability has become a defining precedence for long-term organizational growth and resilience. In this changing scenario Green HRM has emerged as a very important managerial strategy that integrates environmental sustainability in human resource functions. Green Human Resource management can simply be defined as the incorporation and integration of the concepts of environmental sustainability into human resource functions such as Green hiring, Green training and development, Green performance appraisal and so on. Incorporating Green HRM not only helps in environmental sustainability but also helps the organisation in attracting and retaining good talent, enhances reputation and positions the organisation as a responsible citizen. This paper is an attempt to study and gain deep understanding in the dimensions of Green HRM and gaining insights as to its role leading to corporate sustainability. Further, an analysis and study of real life case studies has been presented to confirm the impact of Green HRM transformations on corporate sustainability. Although the integration of sustainability through Green HRM is still at a developing stage in India, it is gradually gaining prominence as businesses become more conscious of environmental sustainability. This paper is a descriptive and conceptual study of the assistances of Green HRM policies leading to sustainability thus, helping to bridge people planet and profit. The paper aims to highlight as to why it is not only prudent but essential for organisations to move from policies and practices of human resource management to adopting the policies and tools of Green HRM.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Green Human Resource Management, Green HR Practices, Organizational Sustainability.

## **Introduction**

Environmental degradation, climate change and many such adversities in the current scenario has forced governments and corporates to rethink their policies and managerial strategies. There is a significant need to move away from the traditional practices of fast growth at the cost to environment and select those policies and practices that lead to progress with preservation of our natural and ecological resources.

Growing consumer awareness, governmental pressures and overall degradation have pressured corporates to implement practices that leads to sustainable behaviour Green HRM is a movement in that direction. It simply aligns the human resource practice in an organisation with the principles of sustainability.

### **Objective of the Study**

This study is an attempt to gain insights on the concepts and dimensions of Green human resource management and see how to leads to corporate sustainability. In all the study has the following objectives-:

- To gain insights on the concept and dimensions of Green Human Resource Management.
- To explore the role of Green Human Resource Management in achieving organizational sustainability.
- To identify and classify the Present Trends and practices of Green Human Resource Management.
- To examine the real life Case studies about the real time impact and practices of Green HRM policies on their sustainability measures.

### **Research Methodology**

The study adopts a descriptive and conceptual research methodology. The data has been collected through secondary data sources. The secondary data sources include information collected from books, academic database, various online sources, financial reports, Business sustainability and responsibility reports (BSRS), some government reports and publications in journals and other data bases. This study is an attempt to reinforce the importance of implementation of such policies and practices by corporates which shall lead to sustainability. Green HRM is one such corporate strategy that integrates the concept of sustainability in the day to day human resource functions. This paper aims at highlighting the importance of the same. A corporate is made by its human capital, thus, if the human resource is recruited and trained in the concepts of sustainability than it may lead to formation, application and implementation of such practices which balances growth with sustainability.

Now let us understand in detail:

### **What is Green Human Resource Management?**

Green human resource management is simply the integration of the concepts of sustainability in the functions and practices of Human Resource Management. It include aligning human resource functions of recruitment training and development, reward system with the principles of sustainability. The main objective is to create an environmentally responsible work force and to train them so as to ensure environmental friendly decisions, behaviour and initiatives embedded in the organisation culture.

The main components of Green Human Resource Management are:

- **Green Recruitment:** Green recruitment is aimed at identifying the potential candidates that demonstrate the knowledge of environment and requisite skills to contribute towards sustainability values. In Green recruitment companies appraise the applicants on the basis of their willingness and sustainability knowledge to participate in Environment friendly initiatives. Furthermore, Green recruitment also involves initiatives- like online recruitment which involves online applications, Google meet interviews, and emails for all communications this reduces the consumption of paper and helps in lowering the carbon footprints.
- **Green Training and Development:** Green HRM policies under Green training and development involves providing such training to the employee as to teach them the most environment friendly method of doing their day to day work. organisation conduct workshops and environmental awareness session so as to train employees on the concepts of sustainable resource utilisation, environmentally responsible behaviour, energy conservation etc. Systematic and continuous training help employees generate and understand the importance and emphasis of Sustainable practices in organisational day to day decisions
- **Green Reward System:** Compensation and rewards are the major stimulus with regard to and employees performance and behaviour in an organisation. The Green Human Resource Management system attributes adequate rewards on Green initiatives and practices taken by an employee. New and innovative ideas for recycling or reuse of resources. waste reduction initiatives, energy conservation all rewarded and thus encourage the employees in adopting the techniques of Green HRM.

### **Green Performance Management**

Green performance management is a technique to integrate sustainability practices as a performance benchmark for employees. The employees are thus evaluated on the basis of their job performance and their initiatives leading to

achievement of organisational environmental goals. Thus, an employee contributing towards reduction in waste management, water conservation or contributing in any sustainability measures maybe ranked higher than an employee taking no sustainability initiative

### **Green Organizational Practices**

Green HRM also include Green organizational practices such as promoting paperless office, water conservation, recycling office waste, reducing electricity consumption, encouraging transport through public modes or bicycling to office.

### **Some of the key trends and practices in Corporate Sustainability through Green HRM are:**

- **Hybrid Work System and Remote Work:** Green HRM promotes decisions that lead to preservation of natural and ecological resources. One such decision is to follow hybrid work system where different teams on different projects work partly from home and partly from office. Thus, saving on extra electricity consumption, transport and fuel wastage in travelling to and fro office and overall reduction use of resources.
- **Paperless Office:** Many Human resources have converted their office into paperless offices, where all communications happens through the intranet or all important information is given on the central notice board. Paperless offices have on one hand significantly reduced environment wastages and on other have increased operational efficiency by all information being available on the click of a button.
- **Combining Green HRM Practices with AI:** Artificial intelligence not only helps in saving time but it improves efficiency by measuring employee performance on the scale of sustainability initiatives. Increase performance, enable virtual officers, enable virtual meetings and thus quick decision making removing the need to travel to long distances for meeting thus, reducing the carbon footprints.
- **Improving Employee Welfare:** Green HRM policies tend to improve employee welfare by promoting work life balance, reduce the stress of travelling to work everyday. Flexible work timings also helps employee perform his best in the time he feels comfortable. Therefore promoting good employee experience and employee engagement in the organisation.

Now let us understand in depth the Concept of Sustainability

Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present in such a way that we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It simply means using our resources in a cautious manner, follow the principle of 3 R's-Reuse, Reduce and Recycle for waste management. Thus, ensuring that people can live

nicely in the present and leave sufficient natural and economic resources for the future generations to live peacefully. As people grow and industrial activities increase, natural resources such as water, forests, energy, and minerals are being used rapidly. Sustainability encourages responsible consumption and management of these resources to avoid depletion and environmental damage. The concept of sustainability is based on the idea of maintaining a balance between growth and preservation. It is based on four pillars-

- **Environmental:** involves reducing pollution and carbon emissions, conserving natural resources protecting the long term environment balance.
- **Social:** to develop and maintain a fair society by bringing social equity, upholding fair labor practices.
- **Human:** individual welfare, and talent development and helping members of society to reach their full potential
- **Economic:** financial systems should be strong noncorrupt and extend fairly to all members of the society.

### **Role of Green Human Resource Management in Promoting Corporate Sustainability**

Green HRM plays a very important role in supporting sustainability in an organisation. An organisation is nothing but a culmination of the thoughts, future perceptions, ideas and decisions and behaviours of its employees. Green Human Resource Management ensures the necessary framework for creating such employees behaviours. Sustainability can only be achieved when each employee of the organisation actively understands and perceives the consequence of his decisions with regard to environment. Green HRM attempts to train and impart awareness to employees in this direction. It acts as a bridge between organisational sustainability goals and employees perceptions and decision making so as to influence and embed environmental consciousness into the organisational work culture. The role of Green Human Resource Management in bringing about sustainability is the following-

#### **Promoting Environmental Awareness in Employees**

Green Human Resource Management plays a crucial role in training and building environmental awareness in employees. It involves organising training programs, seminars and meetings to educate the employees about environmental degradation and need for energy conservation. Green HRM embed and promotes the concept and knowledge of environmental sustainability in employees day to day decision making this prompts the employees to follow more eco-friendly practices at the workplace.

### **Reduces Organisational Carbon Footprints**

Green HRM through their practices such as hybrid working, online training, web discussions and digital Communications reduce the carbon footprints of an organisation. A carbon footprint refers to the total amount of Greenhouse gas emissions, particularly carbon dioxide, produced through organizational activities. Manufacturing operations, transportation, energy consumption, excessive paper usage, and wasteful workplace practices considerably contribute to environmental pollution and climate change. Green human resource management contributes to reducing carbon emissions by integrating sustainability into organisational operations. Employees are encouraged to adopt ways to minimise waste and support environment conservation. Work from home policies reduce employee commuting thus reducing fuel consumption and Greenhouse gas emissions, less employees leads to reduction in traffic congestion lowering air pollution and decrease the dependence on fossil fuels. Virtual meeting, video conferencing all contribute towards reduction in carbon footprints.

### **Reduction in Resource Wastage- Eco-Friendly Resource Management**

Green Human Resource Management contributes significantly in eco-friendly Resource Management in an organisation. An organisation consumes a lot of operational resources such as electricity, water, fuel paper etc. Green HRM promotes policies and practices that reduce the wastage of resources in an organisation. It develops suitable strategies that encourage the employees to reduce the consumption of these operational resources, it provides sufficient training and creates awareness to educate the employees about sensible use of resources such as only essential paper printing, switching of the lights when not needed etc. all of these small measures go a long way in bringing about sustainability in an organisation

### **Promotes Employee Participation and Engagement in Environmental Sustainability**

Green Human Resource Management promotes employee involvement and engagement by various initiative such as suggestions environmental committees Green voluntary programs employees are encouraged to share new ideas regarding sustainable place practices including the employees and consulting them regarding sustainable practices helps develop a greater sense of ownership and responsibility in the employees this improves employees motivation and commitment towards sustainability efforts Green voluntary programs such as tree plantation drives cleanliness campaign energy conservation initiative strengthen employee engagement Sustainability goals cannot be achieved only by management decisions and active involvement and participation of motivated employees leads to real contribution towards sustainability

### **Builds Organisational Reputation in Sustainability**

In today's dynamic world the stakeholders, consumers, investors –all value those organisations who have a reputation of being socially responsible, adopt environmental conscious policies and practices. Green Human Resource Management place a crucial role in improving organisational reputation by building a sustainable competitive advantage. It embeds sustainability values in the work culture, employee behaviour and organisational policies. When the organisation implement Green recruitment eco-friendly work practices, trainings for sustainability awareness, this show a greater commitment towards environmental preservation and conservation to the society which in turn positively influences its goodwill in the market. Organisation with better sustainability commitments are considered more responsible and long lasting therefore generating investors confidence and attracting socially responsible Investments.

### **Aligning Organisational Goals with Sustainability Objectives**

One of the important role of Green Human Resource Management is integrating organisational goals with sustainability objective. Few years back sustainability practices were considered optional and viewed as a separate activity in an organisation. However environment degradation, climate change, pressure from international institutions has made sustainability practices essential in a organisation. Green Human Resource Management helps in aligning the organisational policies, systems, method and practices towards achievement of organisational goals with principles of sustainability By following the Green HRM techniques such as Green recruitment and selection, Green training and development, performance benchmarks based on sustainability, aligning employee compensation and rewards with achievement of environmental goals etc have helped in aligning organisational goals with sustainability objectives. This strategic alignment strengthens employee commitment supports long term environmental goals and contribute towards sustainable organisational growth.

### **Case Studies**

Real life case studies of companies who have been able to bring sustainability by implementing Green Human Resource management practices:

#### **Accenture**

Accenture is a leading global professional services company in India with headquarters in Ireland.it is an IT and management consulting company. Their mantra is a sustainable workforce. Accenture promotes sustainability internally by implanting environmental responsibility into workforce management.

Some of their known Green HRM initiatives are:

- Flexible and remote work system leading to decreased commuting and thus less carbon emissions.
- Paperless HR Processes: Online recruitment, web interviews, digital training, and paperless HR documentation all lead to reduced paper waste, thus save resources
- Net-Zero & Carbon: As per SBTi standards, Accenture is targeting for a 90% complete reduction of carbon emissions across Scopes 1, 2, and 3 by 2040.
- Green Learning Programs: Employees are trained on sustainability, ESG, and environmental responsibility.
- Employee Green Participation: employees participate in many tree plantation schemes, they are encouraged to contribute ideas for sustainability projects.
- Supply Chain: Requires key suppliers to disclose environmental targets and reduction actions, aiming for 90% disclosure rates.

Accenture was named a winner of the 2025 SAP Pinnacle Awards in the Sustainability category for leading implementations of SAP Green Ledger and other sustainability software.

## Unilever

Unilever is a Consumer Goods (FMCG) conglomerate headquartered in London. In India, Unilever operates through its subsidiary, Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), which is a major fast-moving consumer goods company in the country. Unilever generates approximate over €50 billion in annual turnover, Unilever has incorporated sustainability into all of its businesses through many of its sustainability programs and environmentally responsible workplace practices.

### Green HRM Practices of Unilever

Green hiring and selecting: Unilever integrates sustainability principle right at the time of hiring and selecting candidates. it hires employees who align with sustainability values and environmental responsibility.

- **Green Employee Training:** special programs for employee sustainability training on climate awareness, sustainable production, and responsible resource use are organised through the year.
- **Sustainable Work Policies:** The shift to paperless processes and optimized digital workflows reduces the company's internal carbon footprint and operational costs.
- **Green Performance Management:** The company has committed to achieving net-zero emissions across its value chain and reducing its virgin plastic footprint by 40% by 2028

- **Employee Engagement:** Workers participate in environmental campaigns, waste reduction programs, and carbon reduction initiatives.

### ITC Limited

ITC Limited is a Indian conglomerate headquartered in Kolkata, with a varied business portfolio including Consumer Goods, hotels, paperboards, packaging, and agriculture. ITC's uses several programs and strategies to integrate and make its employees into active change agents for the Triple Bottom Line (People, Planet, Profit). Some of these are:

- **Green Recruitment & Employer Branding:** ITC integrates environmental mission right from the onboarding stage
- **Green Training & Eco-Awareness:** Many courses to educate employees on sustainable supply chains, resource optimization, and waste minimization are conducted throughout the year.
- **Green Performance Management:** Employee's performance incentives are tied to measures such as energy efficiency ratios, carbon reduction.
- **Employee Green Behaviour:** voluntary eco-friendly behaviours are encouraged in employees. Well-being Out of Waste (WOW)- is a famous waste reduction strategy of ITC
- **Carbon Positive & Climate Action:** ITC has achieved its 2030 goal of meeting 50% of its energy requirements from renewable sources.
- **Water & Waste Stewardship:** The Company has been water-positive for over two decades and has created a massive rainwater harvesting potential. ITC is also plastic-neutral, having collected over approx. 54,000 metric tons of plastic waste
- **Green Buildings:** ITC pioneered Green infrastructure in India, building 40 LEED Platinum-certified Green buildings, beginning with the ITC Green Centre in Gurugram, which emits 20% fewer Greenhouse Gases (GHG) than conventional buildings.

ITC has an 'AA' MSCI-ESG rating for several years and holds a "Leadership" status in CDP Climate and Water ratings.

### Google LLC

Google LLC is an American multinational technology corporation specializing in internet services, software, hardware, and artificial intelligence. Google's sustainability agenda aims at net-zero emissions across its operations and value chain by 2030, they intend to have a 24/7 carbon-free energy (CFE). Some Sustainability Initiatives are

- **Green Recruitment & Culture:** Google targets to attract environmentally conscious talent. New hires are introduced to a sustainability-first culture where all offices and data centres are built using environment friendly materials.
- **Employee-Driven Innovation (The 20% Rule):** Google employees are empowered to use 20% of their time to work on side projects that benefit the company and society. A lot of emphasis is given to produce innovative sustainable practices.
- **Sustainable Operations:** Google follow sustainable policies such as boosting Green commute, providing options like corporate shuttles, zero-waste cafeterias.
- **Flexible and Remote Work Policy:** Google offers extensive work-from-home/telecommuting options that directly reduce the company's carbon footprint.
- **Data Centre Efficiency:** many sustainability initiatives for saving energy are implemented. Energy emissions at data centres were reduced by approx. 12% year-over-year.
- **Water Stewardship:** Google replenished approximately 64% of its freshwater consumption, successfully returning \ (4.5\ billion gallons of water to communities and the environment

## Conclusion

Sustainability is not an option but a inevitability. As Prince Charles once said “sustainability is now a revolution and, hopefully, will be the third major social and economic turning point in human history.” The ever rising environmental degradation, climate change, depletion of natural resources and many other factors have made implementation of sustainability practices an inevitability for everyone. Corporates being the key consumer of resources need to add sustainability practices in all its functions. The major transformation comes when it is voluntarily accepted and practiced by each employee in an organisation and thus, Green Human resource management becomes of paramount important. The present study explores the role of Green Human Resource Management in promoting sustainability while examining real life case studies on four prominent global companies regarding their sustainability practices and achievements. The findings indicate that Green HRM significantly contributes toward environmental sustainability by encouraging Green employee behaviour, promoting efficient resource utilization, reducing waste, minimizing carbon emissions, and strengthening organizational commitment to environmental responsibility. ITC demonstrates that Green HRM becomes effective when employees are actively involved in sustainability initiatives through training, participation, and organizational culture. While Unilever demonstrates that

sustainability becomes more effective when environmental values are integrated into HR policies and employee behaviour. The study also identified several emerging trends, including digitalization, paperless HR systems, remote work models, artificial intelligence integration and sustainability-oriented employer branding. These trends indicate that Green HRM is continuously evolving to address modern sustainability challenges and technological advancements. However, the successful implementation of Green Human Resource Management is not without trials. Employee resistance, financial limitations, inadequate awareness, lack of managerial commitment, and difficulties in measuring sustainability performance often hinder effective implementation. Organizations must therefore invest in awareness programmes, leadership commitment, employee training, and supportive policies to overcome these barriers.

In conclusion, Green Human Resource Management serves as an essential instrument for promoting sustainability and create a bridge in people, planet and profit. It not only enhances an organisation reputation but also ensures long-term organizational survival. Thus, Organizations that strategically integrate environmental responsibility into human resource practices will be better positioned to achieve sustainable growth, competitive advantage, and positive social impact in the future.

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