

# GREEN HR PRACTICES AND ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY: A STUDY OF INDIAN COMPANIES

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**Abstract:** Our environment is in danger. If the current state of the environment remains, life on this planet cannot remain unaffected and immune. Degradation of the environment is a matter of global concern and is in dire need of a global remedy. The rapid increase in industrialization pose a serious threat to the environment and therefore, air and water pollution are the main problems in the environment. Amidst all this, a relatively new concept has gained momentum known as G-HRM. Green HRM has become a new catchword in the business organizations these days because of its increasing importance and benefits. Green HRM is the use of HR policies in such a way that it results in the more sustainable use of the resources in the business organizations thereby promoting environment sustainability. It is fairly a new concept but has gained popularity and is now a crucial part of the HR approach in business organizations. Green HRM is an extended form of traditional HR practices, in a way that with the typical HR practices it also focuses on earth-friendly practices within an organization. Green HR practices can be present in various forms and types in day to day HR practices ranging from recruitment, selection, training and development, incentives and rewards to performance appraisal. This paper tries to study the acceptance of Green HR practices by Indian Companies and their benefits. We also tried to study the future of G-HRM in India.

**Keywords-** Green HRM, Human Resources, Environment, Sustainability, Carbon Footprint, Go-Green.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management is the process of hiring employees and developing them so that they become more valuable resources for the organization. HRM is a lot more than just hiring and firing. It is a strategic approach of acquirement, development, management of one of the key organizational resource i.e. human. It includes motivating employees and maintaining a workforce within the business. HR departments are required to ensure that there is an appropriate building of teams and proper empowerment of employees. Human resource manager plays a vital role in HRM. She/he performs important functions of overseeing all the department functions and managing the employees, therefore, the HR manager needs to be well-versed in all the human resources disciplines like employee compensation, benefits, training, development, relations, recruitment, and selection.

Human Resource Management includes:

- Conducting Job Analysis
- Planning
- Recruiting the right people for the right jobs
- Orientation and Training
- Management of wages and salaries of the employees
- Provision of benefits and incentives to employees
- Evaluation of performance
- Resolving disputes
- Employee welfare
- Effective communication
- Labor relations

### Green Human Resource Management

HRM is a crucial function of business management. It deals with the most useful and valuable assets i.e. Human Resources. Going Green with this function of management contributes to Green HRM. HR practices are carried out in such a way that helps in the sustainability of the environment by internally managing Human Resources. Sustainable development is conserving the available resources and meeting the diverse needs of our present generations without compromising with the needs of future

generations thereby leaving enough resources for them. Sustainable development is much more than just the environment. It aims at having a strong, fair and healthy society. A small number of actions by each one of us can lead to a big change.

G-HRM makes all the activities in the business as environment-focussed. It encourages the use of resources in the organization in a sustainable way and thereby promoting environmentalism inside the organization. This, in turn, boosts employee morale and satisfaction. The objective is to gain absolute green corporate culture. Going Green is all about conserving the natural environment, wise and systematic use of resources, taking proper safeguard measures to protect Mother Earth and minimizing pollution levels and growing more trees & plants. Green practices involving developing, implementing and maintaining all the business activities in such a way that they support all goals of a sustainable environment and contribute towards environment, society & economic profitability of the business concerns. G-HRM is aimed at having a Green Workforce. Green Workforce is composed of those employees who understand, supports, initiates and practices green activities. They have green goals and objectives associated with each HRM activity. That is, practicing green initiatives while recruiting, selecting, training, compensating and separating employees. The HR manager and HR departments play a crucial role in implementing green corporate culture which contributes towards the financial, economic, environment and social sustainability within the business eco-system.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To know the importance of green HR practices in different companies.
- To study the acceptance of G-HRM by Indian companies and start-ups.
- To know the future of G-HRM in India.

## III. GREEN HR PRACTICES

### 1. Earth Conscious Recruitment & Selection

Green Recruitment or E-recruitment has gained popularity in today's digitalized world. It is not only the cheapest way to hire employees but also the method that saves a lot of paper and energy thereby helping in environmental sustainability. It reduces energy usage and pollution which is caused by the manufacture, transport, and recycling paper products. This concept is developed in those organizations which focus on protecting the environment while fulfilling their organizational goals. This helps in maintaining the right ecological balance. Green recruitment is paper less recruitment with minimal impact on the environment. It is about using technology and other web-based tools to hire employees which lead to the hiring of best candidates at the lowest cost. Some ways to practice green recruitment are conducting e-interviews, telephonic interviews, scanning the resumes, job portals, or use of other e-recruiting software. This reduces agency costs, promotes the company's brand, minimize paper usage and processing costs, good candidate experience, better ethical culture, and greener approach. Companies like Wipro and TCS follow methods of online recruitment to hire talented employees. Even start-ups understand the importance of commensuration of organizational goals with environment sustainability therefore, they also practice green recruitment.

### 2. Green Employee-Employer Relations

Strong employer-employee relation is really important to build a green corporate culture. Employers must respect employees position in the organization no matter on which level of hierarchy they are on and must ensure a positive work environment. It is really important to invest in employee networking and being loyal to them. Employee engagement and participation must be encouraged. The green ideas and suggestions must be welcomed by the employers and great ideas should be appreciated by way of awards or rewards. Going green with employee-employer relations will not only build long term loyalty of the employees but also will be really beneficial for the environment.

### 3. Going Green with Job-designing

With the increasing degradation of the environment, businesses have become a little conscious and want to contribute something for the betterment of the environment. Green HRM is the best way by which businesses can achieve their goals while focussing on eco-system. An important part of Human Resource Management is effective job designing and analysis. Green job design and analysis can be efficiently tied with the environment focussed goals. This can be done by including few environment associated tasks within the job and keep the environment as a dimension in the job specification. Completely new jobs should be designed that is totally based on environment management. Job specification must include green competencies as a special component.

### 4. Eco-friendly Training & Development

Training is a program that seeks to develop and enhance special skills and knowledge among the employees for a particular job. Training helps to do the job in the most effective and efficient way. Development is a much broader term. It aims at an employee's future growth, performance, and career path. Development is a long term process and focuses on employee's future prospects rather than just a particular job. Proper training and development increase the rate of employee retention and profits for the business concern. It helps employees to be dynamic and adapt to the changing environment at a faster pace. This gives a

competitive edge to the company over other companies. Going green with this activity of HRM will increase employee engagement, employee motivation, and productivity. Green initiatives must be included like paperless office, conservation of energy, treatment of waste, recycling and reusing of products, green building, save water and electricity while doing the job, etc. ONGC, ITC, GOOGLE, and many other companies are going green with this important activity of HRM and are contributing to a more sustainable environment.

### 5. Environment focussed Rewards and Incentives

In order to recognize the performance of employees and appreciate them, organizations have certain reward systems based on employee's performance in a particular job. Such rewards motivate employees to perform even better and increase employee retention rate. Rewards can be of two types i.e., Intrinsic and Extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards give internal motivation and satisfaction to the employees. They are not in physical form and are intangible in nature, for instance, pat on the back or some words of appreciation from the mouth of the boss, receiving more challenging job roles, sense of personal achievement and growth, more autonomy, etc. Extrinsic rewards are tangible in nature. They have a physical form and are either monetary or some other form of benefit. Example, monetary incentives, company car, discount on health insurance, better office facilities, etc. As many businesses are going green, companies have started aligning the rewards system with green initiatives in order to embrace sustainable culture in the organization. These rewards and incentives reflect the green mindset of the organization. Companies' designs different ways to make employees go green and then they reward them in return. Green rewards will help in reducing employee's environmental footprints and will help them to work in a more environmentally focussed way. Example, Reducing wastage while doing the job, recycle and reuse products, saving energy, saving electricity, saving water, printing less, reducing CO2 emissions, etc. These green incentives will change the way how employees are at their workplaces and homes. This will help in achieving the organization's green and economic goals.

### 6. Going Green with Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal means measuring of performance of employees as against some standards and giving them valuable feedbacks in order to help them in doing their job more efficiently and effectively. Green companies tie green initiatives and environmental tasks with a particular job. It is very important for HR to measure employee's performance from time to time and design proper rating scales. Performance appraisal rating scales must be modified and include green competencies and environmental stewardship as the special components. These competencies will allow managers to measure their performance in the best way. HR should conduct performance appraisal from time to time throughout the year and should guide them better. This will improve employee's knowledge and skills and will transform them into a more sustainable human being.

### 7. Green Work-Life Balance

Employees' stressful and hectic work schedules leave them with no personal time. This not only deteriorates their health but also deprive them of their peace of mind. There is an important need to maintain an equitable balance between work life and personal life. Green work-life balance means green initiatives by the managers that are focussed on having a good occupational and organizational health. Two important elements of Green work-life balance are a) being sustainable and b) operationally efficient. This can create a win-win situation for both worker and boss. Being green has become a way of life and is no longer a myth. These Green HR practices help workers to gain personal satisfaction and help them to focus on their work a little better. Employees sense the feeling of belongingness and become happy hence, more productive. Some initiatives of maintaining Green Work-Life Balance are:

- i. Work from home revolution- helps in reducing carbon footprints, reduces transportation and operational costs, reduces hassle for employees to commute for such long hours, etc.
- ii. Women-friendly policies- child care policies, crèches, allowances, etc.
- iii. Team building exercises
- iv. Outings and trips
- v. Celebrating achievements
- vi. Cultural and sports events
- vii. Wellness programs- yoga, gym, etc.

These initiatives help employees to maintain work-life balance a little better and increase the employee retention ratio. They become more sustainable and environmentally focussed at the workplace and at home.

### 8. Going Green to Retain Employees

Green companies and their environmental initiatives have a great impact on employee retention ratio. Companies with strong green initiatives and CSR activities have a competitive edge over other companies. Employees trust these companies better. These initiatives increase employee engagement and employee participation, this leads to reduced absenteeism and stress at work and increased productivity. Employees in green companies have a positive outlook towards their future endeavors, more confidence in the company and the ability to fulfill not only organizational goals but also personal and environmental goals.

## 9. Green Information Sharing Techniques and Empowerment

Green information sharing techniques or technology is all about minimizing the adverse effects of Information technology to help solve various environment issues. Green information technology aims at sustainability, environment friendliness and energy saving. It tries to reduce carbon footprints. Companies try to find out more environmentally friendly options like:

- i. Producing environmental products
- ii. Purchasing environmental friendly raw materials
- iii. Management of power
- iv. Finding alternative forms of energy
- v. Recycling and reusing habits
- vi. Reducing life cycle costs
- vii. Cutting down computer waste
- viii. Proper resource allocation
- ix. Use of LEDs computer screens instead of LCDs
- x. Green data centers
- xi. Alternative cooling methods
- xii. Virtualization- use of virtual servers in place of high-density servers

Green IT helps in reducing carbon emissions and costs. It leads to improved financial performance and of course increased positive publicity.

## IV. IMPORTANCE OF GREEN HR PRACTICES

Conducting environment-focussed activities within the organization ecosystem can lead to the following benefits:

1. Good corporate image and brand in the market due to the proper implementation of ISO 26000, Environment audit, Waste management system and pollution control initiatives.
2. Great business opportunities and improved the reputation of the company.
3. Improved efficiency and productivity due to the more effective & sustainable use of resources.
4. Cost savings due to the usage of energy efficient and less wasteful technologies.
5. Avoiding misuse of resources and reduction in all those activities which leads to the deterioration of the environment.
6. Many benefits from the government in the form of subsidies, tax incentives, and rebates.
7. Recruitment of talented and innovative employees by providing them with environment-friendly practices.
8. G-HRM helps businesses to lower their costs without losing their talented employees.
9. Re-cycling and Re-using of products save the environment and can create great impact leading to good environmental management.
10. Reduce employee carbon footprints due to e-filing of returns, carpooling, sharing of jobs, online training, recycling, electronic interviews or e-recruitment, teleconferencing, etc.
11. Improvement in the overall performance of the organization due to the active involvement of employees in environment management programmes.

**Table:1 COMPANIES ENGAGED IN GREEN HR PRACTICES**

S.NO	COMPANY	GREEN INITIATIVES
1.	<b>Maruti Suzuki</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started initiatives like Save Water and Save Energy.</li> <li>• Acceptance and adoption of “Just in time” philosophy by the employees.</li> <li>• 3Rs- Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.</li> </ul>
2.	<b>Asian Paints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of more renewable sources of energy leading to reduced power consumption.</li> </ul>
3.	<b>Tata Sponge Iron</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mass afforestation program.</li> <li>• Took help of the company’s employees to plant trees in the surroundings.</li> </ul>
4.	<b>HUL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in share of renewable energy by converting agricultural waste into consumable fuel.</li> <li>• Use of solar energy to meet 80% of its power requirements.</li> </ul>
5.	<b>Jombay</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This company has an environmental sustainable committee. Members of this committee meet at least once a month to plan programs on environment sustainability.</li> </ul>
6.	<b>PepperFry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees host workshops on “Sustainability at Home”.</li> </ul>
7.	<b>Bank Bazaar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clubs are set up by employees in order to carry out green initiatives like trash collection at the zoo, beach cleaning, tree plantation, etc.</li> </ul>
8.	<b>Paytm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tree plantation drives.</li> <li>• Employees’ engagement in various environment awareness programs and sessions.</li> <li>• Lessons and counseling of employees in a more sustainable environment.</li> </ul>
9.	<b>ShopClues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiency in energy consumption- after 6 pm all the employees of the company are asked</li> </ul>

		<p>to move to the first floor. Lights and other electronic devices on the other floors are switched off in order to reduce power consumption.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Also creates a plastic-free environment within the organization.</li> </ul>
10.	Wipro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green recruiting or e-recruiting.</li> <li>• Green building. Certified by the international green standard.</li> <li>• Installed solar panels around their campus.</li> <li>• Wipro launched desktops known as Wipro green wares.</li> <li>• Waste management programs.</li> <li>• Save water and save energy campaigns.</li> </ul>
11.	Infosys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement of renewable energy.</li> <li>• Use of solar energy.</li> <li>• Production of less harmful products.</li> </ul>
12.	ITC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carbon positive.</li> <li>• Water positive.</li> <li>• Solid waste recycling close to 100%.</li> </ul>
13.	HCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Sustainability program is known as HCL's Ecosafe. This program aims at incorporating environmental management initiatives in normal business activities.</li> </ul>
14.	L'Oreal India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water consumption reduced by 62%.</li> <li>• Green electricity.</li> <li>• L'Oreal products reduce environmental footprints.</li> <li>• Use of renewable raw materials.</li> <li>• Zero waste to landfills through proper waste management programs.</li> <li>• Suppliers are selected based on their environmental performance.</li> </ul>
15.	Siemens India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Building.</li> <li>• Rainwater harvesting.</li> <li>• Green products.</li> <li>• Installation of sewage treatment plants.</li> <li>• Recycling and reuse.</li> <li>• Sustainability programs in order to create a green culture in the organization.</li> </ul>

## V. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sakhawalkar & Thadani (2013) tried to check the awareness among employees about the concept of G-HRM in Information Technological companies of Pune. Also, to check the implementation of such practices and testing their effectiveness. It was found that 82% of the respondents know about the concept of G-HRM. Rate of effectiveness was found to be 72.2%. Respondents suggested car pooling and green training for improving the environmental performance of the company.

Rani & Mishra (2014) focussed on G-HRM as a strategic initiative by different companies to promote more sustainable business activities. Two important elements of G-HRM of G-HRM studied by them are environmental friendly HR practices in the business and knowledge capital preservation. G-HRM has become the backbone of strong organizations. Environmental friendly HR practices result in Cost savings, increased efficiency, and better employee engagement which helps an organization to perform more effectively i.e. in a more sustainable manner.

Opatha, & Anton Arulrajah (2014) defined how G-HRM is transforming organization employees into green employees in order to be more sustainable and solve many environmental issues. Ongoing maintenance activities as a part of G-HRM motivate employees to go green.

Jabbar, & Abid (2015) studied Green HR practices and their impact on environmental performance. The study was conducted on 200 respondents from 5 firms. It was found that Green Recruitment leads to Job satisfaction as it increases employee involvement and participation in organizational programs. Researchers established that job satisfaction doesn't lead to improved environmental performance and concluded that in order to improve environmental performance there is a need for strict green policies in an organization. Green rewards and incentives can improve the environmental performance i.e. when employee's payroll is linked to environmental performance. They pointed out how G-HRM is very crucial to an organization and enhances its operations and performance.

Bangwal, & Tiwari (2015) focussed on G-HRM and its practices. They discussed how green practices help the organization in going green and also studied the social implication of Green HR practices on Green organization. Green Recruitment, Green Performance Management, Green Training &, Green Compensation, Green initiatives, and Employee participation in the Green HR help in improving environmental performance. HRM plays a very important role in an employee's entry and exit. G-HRM helps to improve the retention rate of employees and the company's public image. It helps in increasing productivity, proper allocation of resources, and leads to a more sustainable environment.

Aykan (2016) compared traditional HRM with the relatively new concept of G-HRM and evaluated G-HRM and its practices. Where Traditional HRM had a central vision and shared values, G-HRM has centrally shared the environmental vision and environmental culture in the organization. Every activity of traditional HRM is now linked to the environment in order to improve

the environmental performance of an organization. G-HRM helps in enhancing positive communication between the workers and the management. It also leads to improvement in productivity and efficiency.

Kar & Praharaj (2017) studied G-HRM and its importance and also illustrated employees' role in involving green HR initiative. Researchers found that employees play a pivotal role in implementing the concept of G-HRM in an organization. They can go for Carpooling, bicycle to work, or using public transportation to travel to work. They can find some alternative ways of reducing waste, saving energy, reducing carbon footprints. Purchasing and procuring environmental friendly products that match the company's environmental rules and policies. Employees should try to maintain Green work-life balance and should go green not only at their workplaces but also at their homes.

Jain (2016) studied the impact of G-HRM on organizations. Researchers discussed Green-HR activities practiced by Top 10 Indian Companies, for example, Wipro, Suzlon Energy, ITC, HCL technologies, Tata, etc. They suggested that by understanding and increasing the scope of Green HR practices, organizations can improve their environmental performance and can do their best to make the environment a little more sustainable for future generations. It is very important to prioritize each function of HRM in a greenway.

Kulshrestha & Srivastava (2018) studied the importance of Green HRM and reasons for moving towards green culture. They explain how HRM can help in creating a green infrastructure which in turn helps in maintaining a green environment and ecological balance. Researchers tried to explain the model of Green Human Resource Management and goal attainment through this model. They suggested many ways by which company can practice Green HRM in the organization, for example, not using disposable coffee cups, using public transportation, walking to work, launching of Carbon Credit Card, Video-conferencing, Internet to put employee manuals, policies and other related information online in order to avoid printing activities, etc.

Arumugam, & Vijai (2018) studied Green HRM practices in an organization and focussed on the relationship between CSR and the G-HRM. Researchers explained how Green HRM is an important part of CSR activity. In order to implement any environmental related program within an organization, it is very important for all the departments like Finance, production, procurement, etc. to join together and the most important of all is HRM department. They discussed how practicing Green HR practices can really help in fighting the environment pollution. Activities like, carpooling, printing less, telecommuting, teleconferencing, e-recruiting can be practiced. G-HRM is a new dimension of traditional HRM.

## VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature and tries to identify various factors driving G-HRM in India. We tried to study the growth of G-HRM in India in the past decade and tried to assess the performance & acceptance of this new form of HRM in the corporate sector. The research tool used for analyzing the data which amassed from different sources for the current study will be content analysis and the research method will be descriptive research. We will be taking into consideration the qualitative aspects of the research study.

### Data Collection:

This study is completely based upon the secondary data. A systematic review was done in detail for the collected literature.

#### • Secondary Data

Secondary sources of data used are:

- a) Journals,
- b) Newspaper articles,
- c) Textbooks,
- d) E-books,
- e) Reports of companies,
- f) Search engines,
- g) Company websites
- h) Scholarly articles, Research papers, and other academic publications.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Today, companies try to balance profit maximization and environmental performance at the same time. There is rising awareness of society and environment therefore, companies which accept and adopt green practices have higher society acceptance rate. G-HRM creates a positive impact on a company's growth rate and this ensures higher social acceptance as well as higher profits. G-HRM builds a company's brand name, improve productivity, increases efficiency, results in cost savings and improves environmental performance. As so many advantages are attached to it, Indian companies are accepting the concept of G-HRM and are making it part and parcel of their day to day operations. Top management support and commitment to green initiatives is a must. They must try to empower teams and employees which in turns improve the productivity of employees. Management should implement clear environmental policies in organizations. Mobile apps can be developed for instant discussion and feedback on the group. This will not only ensure a paperless environment but will also result in cost savings, time savings & increased efficiency.

A holistic approach should be followed to adopt G-HRM in the company's soul. For that, they should begin with environmental friendly talent management and green training & development. They should properly implement green performance appraisal and

green compensation systems. Then managers must focus on developing green employee involvement programs and evaluating their performance from time to time.

In order to speed up the adoption of the Green Agenda, organizations should incorporate sustainable development policies. Following steps can be followed for quicker adoption:

1. Recruiting of green employees i.e. those who can easily align with the green goals of the organization.
2. Job descriptions of employees should have some environmental roles.
3. Companies should go green with orientation, induction, and training & development programs in order to have green as well as a more sustainable culture.
4. Should add green competencies as a special component while evaluating their performance.
5. Rewards and incentives should also be given in a green manner.
6. Companies must always try and prioritize to support green actions and employees on green issues.
7. Green exit interviews should be conducted in order to find out reasons for leaving the job and if they are related to the environment then companies should try to sort them first.

The green movement and Green Human Resource Management are still in their early stages. But the future of G-HRM in India is quite promising. It is very important to incorporate the concept of G-HRM in the company quite carefully and regularly monitor the progress of it. It needs constant follow up and modifications in order to reduce environmental footprints. HR manager plays a crucial role in implementing various green initiatives successfully. It is the responsibility of HR managers to make present generations aware about going green, Green-HRM and various Green HR practices so that they practice them religiously not only at their workplaces but also at their homes. This will allow the company to have a green corporate culture and have a competitive edge over their competitors. Managers must make present generations understand the needs of future generations and retain sufficient resources for them. G-HRM if applied strategically will surely help corporate in the reduction of carbon and environmental footprints and will help them in becoming a Green Organization.

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