

"Green Human Resource Management Practices for Sustainability: A Comprehensive Review"

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Abstract

This review article explores Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), an innovative approach that integrates environmental sustainability into human resource practices within organizations. This article provides an overview of GHRM's theoretical foundation and practical implementation, including key practices such as green recruitment, eco-friendly training, and sustainability-based performance evaluations. The benefits of adopting GHRM practices, such as reduced environmental impact and enhanced corporate reputation, are discussed, along with its potential to attract and retain environmentally conscious talent. This article also addresses challenges, such as resistance to change and difficulties in measuring the impact of green initiatives. Despite these obstacles, the review concludes that GHRM presents a compelling opportunity for organizations to embrace sustainable practices, fostering a greener workplace and contributing to a more environmentally responsible future.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management, GHRM, environmental sustainability, human resource management, sustainable development, sustainable business practices.

INTRODUCTION

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is an emerging approach that integrates environmental sustainability and human resource management practices to promote sustainable development (Renwick et al., 2013). There has been a growing interest in GHRM among scholars and practitioners in recent years, as it offers a promising strategy for organizations to balance their economic, environmental, and social goals. The objective of this review article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current state of research on GHRM, with a particular focus on its theoretical foundations, practices, and outcomes.

The concept of GHRM emerged in response to the growing concern about the impact of human activities on the environment, and the need for organizations to adopt sustainable business practices (Ramus & Steger, 2000). GHRM aims to create a culture of environmental awareness and sustainability within organizations and motivate employees to adopt environmentally responsible behaviour (Jabbour & de Sousa Jabbour, 2016). GHRM has been recognized as an important tool for achieving sustainable development and has been widely adopted by organizations across different industries (Lam, Chan, & Lan, 2018). However, despite the increasing attention that GHRM has received, there is still a lack of consensus on its definition, scope, and implementation (de Sousa Jabbour et al., 2017).

By providing a comprehensive review of the existing research on GHRM, this article seeks to contribute to the development of a better understanding of the potential benefits and challenges of this emerging approach and to provide insights for scholars and practitioners interested in adopting GHRM practices in their organizations

Definition: Green Human Resource Management

Green Human Resource Management is a "systematic approach to the implementation of environmentally sustainable human resource management practices" (Renwick et al., 2013). GHRM is the application of HRM principles that foster resource sustainability within business organizations and, in general, support the cause of environmentalism (Dutta, 2012) GHRM practices are effective tools for promoting environmentally sustainable operations within organizations. (Arulrajah et al, 2015). "The integration of environmental management practices into human resource management processes, to achieve environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility goals, while also improving employee well-being and engagement" (Arora & Sharma, 2016). "The adoption of HRM practices that promote the sustainable use of natural resources, reduce carbon emissions and enhance the organization's environmental performance, while also promoting employee engagement and well-being" (Sharma & Gupta, 2015).

Importance of Green Human Resource Management

GHRM is important for several reasons. The HR function has a critical role to play in creating and implementing sustainable business strategies throughout an organization. The HR function can assist in formulating and achieving environmental and social goals and also balancing these goals against traditional financial performance metrics. The HR function can also serve as a partner in formulating corporate values and sustainability strategies (Cohen et al.,2012). It allows organizations to demonstrate their commitment to environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility, which can enhance their reputation and competitive advantage (Jabbour et al., 2008). GHRM can help organizations to reduce their environmental impact and achieve cost savings through the implementation of eco-friendly practices and technologies (Russo & Fouts, 1997). GHRM can improve employee engagement and motivation, as employees are more likely to be committed to an organization that shares their values and beliefs (Mujtaba & Cavico, 2013).

GHRM practices can contribute to a positive corporate image, which can enhance the organization's reputation and attract more customers and it leads to cost savings through the reduction of energy consumption and waste generation (Park et al., 2014). GHRM can improve employee well-being by promoting a healthy and sustainable work environment and can contribute to achieving environmental sustainability goals (Renwick et al.,2013).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Theoretical Background of GHRM is an interdisciplinary approach that draws on multiple theories and concepts from environmental management, sustainability, HRM, and strategic management. It aims to integrate environmental sustainability into HRM practices and strategies to promote sustainable development. According to institutional theory, organizations are impacted by societal norms and values, such as environmental concerns. To

maintain their position in the industry, they must comply with these expectations to gain legitimacy. Institutional pressures can shape an organization's GHRM practices, such as adopting environmentally-friendly HR policies and practices (Scott, 2014). Resource-based View (RBV) theory focuses on the internal resources and capabilities of an organization that can be used to gain a competitive advantage. An organization's green HR practices can be considered a valuable and rare resource that can create a competitive advantage by attracting and retaining environmentally-conscious employees and customers (Barney, 1991). Stakeholder theory suggests that organizations have a responsibility to balance the interests of their various stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and the environment. GHRM practices can be viewed as a way to meet the expectations of environmental stakeholders and demonstrate a commitment to sustainability (Freeman 1984). Human Capital theory proposes that investing in employees' skills and knowledge can lead to increased productivity and organizational performance. training employees on environmental issues and sustainability can enhance their skills and knowledge and contribute to the organization's environmental goals. (Becker, 1964)

GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

GHRM practices aim to integrate environmental sustainability into HRM practices and strategies to promote sustainable development. The practices of GHRM go beyond just implementing environmental management initiatives. The HR function plays an important role in promoting a culture of sustainability within organizations by aligning their practices and policies with eco-friendly goals (Mandip, 2012; Cherian & Jacob, 2012). Here are some of the key GHRM practices:

i. Green Recruitment and Selection

Green recruitment and selection is an eco-friendly approach to hiring that eliminates the need for paper and reduces environmental impact. Recruitment and selection for sustainability is an important GHRM practice that involves identifying and selecting candidates who have the knowledge, skills, and values to contribute to the organization's sustainability goals. To promote effective environmental management, recruitment practices should focus on selecting candidates who are already familiar with an organization's environmental culture and can uphold its environmental values. This will help ensure that new hires are able to contribute to the organization's environmental goals from the very beginning (Wehrmeyer,1996). According to a survey conducted by the British Carbon Trust, more than 75% of 1,018 potential employees believe that companies must have a policy in place to decrease carbon emissions (Clark,2006). There are two aspects to green recruitment and selection. Firstly, utilizing environmentally friendly methods such as online tools and minimizing paper usage during the hiring process. Secondly, evaluating the environmental attitudes of potential candidates during selection. This involves considering individuals who prioritize green practices and engage in basic eco-friendly activities such as recycling, reducing printing, and conserving energy (Pavitra Mishra, 2017).

ii. Green Training and Development

Training and development for sustainability is another important GHRM practice that involves providing employees with the knowledge and skills to support the organization's sustainability goals. Companies that offer environmental training to their employees are more

likely to reach their sustainability objectives (Delmas and Toffel 2008). Green training and development aim to enhance employees' understanding and awareness of environmental issues, foster a positive attitude, encourage a proactive approach to environmental concerns, and build skills to conserve energy and minimize waste (Zoogah,2011). In Germany, Siemens provides environmental training for all its employees, specifically those dealing with hazardous waste and interested specialists. This training is part of the company's in-house program and takes at least one day during working hours. As a result of this training, plant employees have submitted 5,000 suggestions per year for environmental protection (North & Daig,2017).

iii. Green Performance Management System

Performance management for sustainability is a GHRM practice that involves setting performance goals and targets that align with the organization's sustainability objectives. Promoting environmental behaviour and sustainable development is crucial in human resource practices, and performance management plays a fundamental role in achieving this. That's why green performance management is advocated (Gholami et al.,2016). The researcher suggests that employees' job performance should be assessed based on green-related standards and that a separate aspect of progress towards environmental sustainability should be included in performance feedback interviews (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014). Including sustainability metrics in performance management systems can enhance organizational performance and boost employee engagement. (Formentini & Taticchi 2016). Establishing green performance indicators involves setting green criteria for all members during performance appraisals. These criteria cover topics such as environmental incidents, environmental responsibilities, carbon emission reduction, and communication of environmental concerns and policies (Tang et al., 2018)

iv. Green Compensation and Rewards

Compensation and rewards for sustainability is another GHRM practice that involves aligning rewards and incentives with the organization's sustainability goals. Organizations that provide financial rewards and incentives for sustainability-related performance are more likely to successfully accomplish their sustainability objectives (Boiral & Paillé 2012). Providing financial incentives for sustainable behaviour can enhance employee motivation and engagement in sustainability initiatives (Ziegler & Rennings 2004). Green recognition is a method of motivating employees without financial incentives. It involves giving non-monetary rewards such as public recognition within the company, paid vacations, and gift certificates. These rewards create a sense of pride among colleagues and encourage environmentally friendly behaviours more effectively (Veleva & Ellenbecker, 2001).

GHRM practices are essential for promoting sustainable development and achieving organizational sustainability goals and integrating environmental sustainability.

BENEFITS OF GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

One of the key benefits of GHRM is its contribution to environmental sustainability. Many companies worldwide are now choosing to have green buildings as their workplaces and offices instead of traditional ones. Green buildings have features that promote green practices like energy efficiency, renewable energy, and stormwater management. By transitioning to a paperless office, the usage of paper is significantly decreased, leading to reduced expenses related to printing, copying, and storing documents. Moreover, it saves valuable time that

would have been wasted in searching for physical files. Idea Rebel, a digital agency founded by Jamie Garratt in 2008 and based in Vancouver, operates as a completely paperless office (Borzykowski, 2013). Moreover, GHRM can help improve an organization's environmental reputation and increase stakeholder support for sustainability initiatives (Shen et al., 2019). GHRM practices can also lead to economic benefits for organizations. Organizations that prioritize sustainability in their operations and products can gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Fang et al., 2022). Studies have also found that GHRM can positively impact financial performance and contribute to long-term business success (Cheng et al., 2014).

GHRM practices can also have positive social impacts. For example, by prioritizing employee health and safety, organizations can improve the well-being of their employees and contribute to a healthier workforce (Jabbour et al., 2016). In addition, implementing GHRM practices that promote social responsibility and support local communities can enhance the reputation of an organization and foster trust with stakeholders. (Shen et al., 2019). GHRM can also bring several benefits to the organization as a whole. GHRM practices can improve employee productivity and performance, leading to better organizational outcomes (Kramar, 2014). By building a culture of sustainability, organizations can increase employee engagement and commitment, which can lead to reduced turnover and increased loyalty (Shen et al., 2019). Introducing green HRM principles in EMS can lead to an improvement in the retention rate of employees, improvement in public image, improvement in attracting better employees, improvement in productivity and sustainability, reduction in the environmental impact of the company, improved competitiveness, and increased overall performance (Cherian & Jacob, 2012)

GHRM practices can also have positive impacts on employees. By prioritizing employee health and safety, organizations can create a safer and healthier work environment (Jabbour et al., 2016). By offering training and development programs that focus on sustainability, organizations can help employees develop new skills and advance their careers (Kramar, 2014). Studies have also found that GHRM policies and practices can lead to several benefits for organizations, including enhancing their external image and reputation as good corporate citizens, improving employees' identification with the organization, enhancing employees' skills and providing them with opportunities to engage in green activities, and making employees find their work more meaningful and valuable, which can enhance their organizational citizenship behaviour for the environment. (Liu et al., 2021). Green process and policies are now making their way through within the HR space complementing the existing green practices and initiatives. Green HR efforts have resulted in increased efficiencies, cost reduction, employee retention, and improved productivity, besides other tangible benefits (Ahmad 2015). Finally, GHRM practices can help build trust between governments and organizations, leading to increased cooperation and collaboration (Shen et al., 2019).

Overall, GHRM practices can bring a wide range of benefits to organizations, employees, society, and the environment. Organizations can achieve long-term success and contribute to a more sustainable future by promoting sustainability in their operations.

CHALLENGES TO GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

One of the main challenges to the adoption of GHRM is the lack of awareness and understanding of the concept among managers and employees (Renwick et al., 2013; Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014). This can lead to a lack of support for GHRM initiatives and a reluctance

to invest time and resources in implementing them. Resistance to change is another common barrier to the adoption of GHRM practices (Jabbour et al., 2014). Employees and managers may be resistant to new practices that require changes in behaviour or operations, which can hinder the implementation of GHRM initiatives. Many companies can employ successful Human Resource Management strategies to inspire their workers to reach environmental sustainability objectives. (Paille et al., 2014). Limited resources and funding can also pose a challenge to the adoption of GHRM practices (Jackson et al., 2011; Renwick et al., 2013). Organizations may be hesitant to invest in GHRM initiatives due to financial constraints, which can limit their ability to implement sustainable HR practices.

Cultural and institutional barriers can also pose a challenge to the adoption of GHRM practices (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014). Cultural factors, such as values and beliefs, can influence the adoption of sustainable HR practices, as can institutional factors such as organizational culture and structure. A lack of top management support is another common barrier to the adoption of GHRM practices (Renwick et al., 2013; Jabbour et al., 2014). Without the support of top management, GHRM initiatives may not receive the resources and attention needed to be successful.

Inadequate training and development can also hinder the adoption of GHRM practices (Jackson et al., 2011). Without proper training and development, employees may not have the knowledge or skills needed to implement sustainable HR practices. Difficulty in measuring and communicating the benefits of GHRM practices can also pose a challenge to their adoption (Jabbour et al., 2014; Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014). Organizations may struggle to demonstrate the tangible benefits of sustainable HR practices, which can make it difficult to secure support and resources for GHRM initiatives. A lack of stakeholder involvement is another common barrier to the adoption of GHRM practices (Renwick et al., 2013). It is essential to motivate all employees to enhance their technical and managerial skills to effectively execute a green management system in the company. (Unnikrishnan & Hedge, 2007)

CONCLUSION

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is a critical organizational practice that incorporates environmental sustainability principles into HRM functions. GHRM can benefit organizations, employees, society, and the environment in various ways. Organizational benefits include improved reputation, cost savings, and better performance, while employees benefit from improved job satisfaction and work environment. Society and the environment also benefit from a reduced carbon footprint and better resource utilization.

Despite the numerous benefits of GHRM, some challenges and barriers prevent its implementation in organizations. These challenges include a lack of awareness and understanding, resistance to change, limited resources, regulatory and legal barriers, and cultural and institutional barriers. Overcoming these challenges requires a concerted effort from organizational leadership and stakeholders, including government and industry leaders.

Future research on GHRM should focus on understanding the factors that influence the adoption and implementation of GHRM practices in organizations. Additionally, the research could explore the effectiveness of GHRM practices and their impact on employee and organizational outcomes. The practical implications of GHRM include the development of

guidelines and best practices for organizations to adopt, implement, and measure the impact of GHRM practices.

In light of the numerous benefits of GHRM, organizations should adopt and implement GHRM practices as part of their sustainability strategy. By adopting GHRM practices, organizations can improve their performance, reputation, and employee satisfaction, while contributing to environmental sustainability. GHRM is a critical organizational practice that can help organizations align their HRM functions with environmental sustainability goals.

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