

## **Implementing Green HRM: Sectoral Insights into Awareness and Practice**

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**ABSTRACT:** Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) involves the integration of sustainability principles into core HR functions, including recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and workplace practices. As businesses increasingly shift their focus towards responsible behavior by embracing various corporate responsibilities, it becomes essential to foster inclusivity—ensuring that all stakeholders align their efforts to make business operations more sustainable. The growing emphasis on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has compelled companies to consider not only profit, but also the planet and people in their decision-making processes. In this context, it is crucial that employees within organizations are made aware of their individual and collective roles in advancing sustainability through their everyday actions. Green HRM addresses this need by combining HR policies and practices with environmental objectives, enabling organizations to embed sustainability into their core business processes. This study explores the levels of awareness, the extent of implementation, and the challenges associated with Green HRM across diverse industries. A survey-based methodology was employed, gathering responses from professionals across various sectors to evaluate their understanding of and involvement in Green HRM practices. The study utilized a qualitative approach, with purposive sampling and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify prevailing trends and issues. Organizations that have adopted Green HRM practices report positive outcomes, including enhanced corporate image, increased employee motivation, and cost efficiency. Nevertheless, factors such as high implementation costs, limited awareness, and resistance to change remain significant barriers. Despite limitations such as reliance on self-reported data and potential response bias, the study offers meaningful insights into the current state of Green HRM and highlights strategies for promoting its broader adoption.

**KEYWORDS:** Green HRM, Sustainability, Employee engagement, CSR, HR policies and practices, Eco-friendly workplace, Environmental goals

### **INTRODUCTION**

As the businesses are shifting their focus to responsible behaviours by assuming various corporate responsibilities, the major area of concern is to make it inclusive where all stakeholders should be aligning their focus to make business processes sustainable. As the concept of

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) compelled companies to think of planet and people also while generating profits, it is all the more important that people working inside should be made aware about their role in bringing sustainability to the organisation through their actions. Hence, the Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) combines HR policies and procedures with environmental goals so that organisations can be sustainable in their business processes. It includes recruiting, training, and motivating employees to adopt eco-friendly behaviours to ensure sustainability in business operations (Cherian and Jacob, 2012). Sustainability is a major concern in view of climate change impacts on business and increased costs to mitigate the risk of natural calamities. Green HRM promotes sustainability by developing, implementing, and maintaining initiatives that cultivate employee support and commitment to environmental goals (Future Learn, 2017).

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Pham, Hoang & Phan (2024) conducted a systematic literature review of 74 articles related to GHRM, categorizing them into ten themes and proposed 16 detailed recommendations, culminating in a research framework for future studies.

Khaira (2023), in her research study, "Green Human Resource Management: A Review", provided an overview of GHRM practices, including green job analysis, recruitment, performance management, training, and reward systems. The study emphasized the growing importance of environmental considerations in HRM and suggested areas for future research, particularly concerning the green behavior of millennials.

Yusliza, et al(2020) identified, in their study titled, "Green HRM: A systematic literature review and future research agenda", key themes in Green HRM research such as green recruitment, training, employee involvement, and the role of leadership. It highlights gaps in empirical research and proposes future directions.

Renwick, Redman & Maguire (2013) in their study, "Green Human Resource Management: A Review and Research Agenda", proposed the integration of HRM and environmental management, discussing various GHRM practices and their potential to promote sustainability. It sets the stage for future research by outlining key areas where GHRM can contribute to environmental concerns.

Mandip (2012) in his study titled, "The role of Green HRM in creating sustainable business organizations", emphasized the strategic role of HR in driving sustainability. It discussed how Green HRM enhances environmental consciousness and contributes to building green organizational culture.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the current study is to know about the awareness level of Green HRM among various stakeholders like employers, owners, employees, educators, self-employed and students belonging to organizations in different sectors. The current study also focused on the revealing various problems faced during implementation of Green HRM and related challenges.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Data Collection and Analysis: The study used primary as well as secondary data. For achieving the stated objectives, a survey was conducted for understanding various aspects related to the study. For this purpose, a structured questionnaire was administered through digital platform among 85 respondents and 56 responses were analysed after screening out incomplete responses (questionnaires). A purposive sampling technique was used for collecting responses from various stakeholders like employers, owners, employees, educators, self-employed and students belonging to organizations in different sectors of India like public, private, non-government, and semi-government. The qualitative data so received was analysed using descriptive statistical tools like percentage and average. The study also considered informal discussions among peers and experts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study found available Green HRM literature consisting of following strategies or functions on which opinion of respondents was sought in relation to their respective organizations.

**Green Recruitment and Selection:** Prioritize candidates with environmental awareness and a commitment to sustainability. This ensures new hires align with the organization's green values and contribute to eco-friendly initiatives.

**Green Training and Development:** Offer programs that enhance employees' environmental knowledge and skills, enabling them to implement sustainable practices in their roles.

**Green Performance Management:** Incorporate environmental objectives into performance appraisals, evaluating employees based on their contributions to sustainability goals.

**Green Compensation and Rewards:** Implement incentive systems that recognize and reward eco-friendly behaviours and achievements, motivating employees to engage in sustainability efforts.

**Green Employee Involvement:** Encourage staff participation in environmental initiatives, such as recycling programs or energy-saving projects, fostering a collective commitment to sustainability.

**Green Workplace Practices:** Adopt policies that promote resource conservation, waste reduction, and the use of sustainable materials within the workplace.

**DATA ANALYSIS:** A structured questionnaire was administered for collecting responses from various stakeholders like employers, owners, employees, educators, self-employed and students belonging to organizations in different sectors of India like public, private, non-government, and semi-government. Respondents majorly belong to organizational location in central India.

A detailed analysis of the questionnaire responses is presented in the following section.

- *Demographic profile of the respondents:* The demographic profile of the respondents consists of around 39 % males and 61 % females, out of which majority of the respondents (43%) belong to 18-35 years age-group, 33 % are of 36-50 and 24% belong to 51-65 years age-group. Majority of the respondents were employed around 77%, 4% were self employed, 5% owned businesses (employers) and 12% were students. Around 50% belongs to education sector, 10 % to IT, 2% to manufacturing, 3% to retail, 5% to healthcare, 7% to finance and banking, and remaining other services. The respondents were working majorly in private

sector (86%), 11 % in government or public sector and remaining in semi-government and non-govt. (NGO) sector.

- *Awareness about Green HRM*; Around 84% of the respondents were aware of the concept of Green HRM. Around 68 % respondents opinionated that their organization is actively implementing Green HRM practices, where as 7 % informed that their organization is not involved in such practices whereas 25% were not sure about this which implies that if at all their organization is involved in Green HRM practices, the stakeholders were not involved or made aware of.
- *Green Practices followed in respondents' respective organisations*:
  - Green Workplace Initiatives (Reducing Paper Use, Energy-efficient Tools)–Around 61 % respondents expressed that their organizations focus mostly on sustainability initiatives like reducing paper use and implementing energy-efficient tools.
  - Green Performance Management (Evaluating Eco-friendly Contributions) – Around 41% respondents were of the view that their organizations measure employees' eco-friendly contributions.
  - Green Training (Providing Sustainability-related Training) – Around 39% respondents feel that their organizations focus on green practices like educating employees about sustainability.
  - Green Recruitment (Hiring Employees with Environmental Awareness) – Around 30% respondents believe that their organizations prefer hiring environmentally aware employees.
  - Green Commuting Incentives (Cycling, Public Transport) – Around 25% respondents expressed that their organizations follow the practice of providing green commuting incentives to their employees.
  - Employee Engagement in Sustainability Projects – Around 27% respondents reported that their organizations indulge in engaging employees in sustainability projects.
  - Rewarding Green Initiatives (Financial/Non-financial Incentives) – About 21 % respondents reported that their organizations reward employees' efforts towards sustainability through financial and non-financial incentives.
- *Sustainable HR practices followed by respondents in daily activities*:
  - Video conferencing instead of travel: Around 52 % respondents use video conferencing for meetings.
  - Telecommuting/Remote work: 36 % respondents prefer remote or work from home.
  - Flexible work hours: 36 % respondents enjoy flexi hours of working.
  - The college/ office building well designed with proper ventilated rooms/ class rooms with natural light and green environment:38% respondents
  - Using solar or energy-efficient equipment: 36 % respondents
  - Using rainwater harvesting systems: 25% respondents
  - Using company-provided transport:12.5% respondents



- **Working on water conservation, environmental conservation, sustainable development of rural India:**7% respondents
- *Providing rewards/incentives for adopting Green HRM practices by respondents' organisations:* Around 38 % of the respondents' organizations offer non-monetary rewards such as recognition or public acknowledgment for encouraging green HRM practices. Around 28 % of the respondents expressed that their organizations do not provide incentives and are not planning to, suggesting a notable portion of organizations currently show little or no interest in incentivizing eco-friendly initiatives. 25% reported their organizations do not yet provide rewards but intend to do so in the future, indicating a growing recognition of the importance of sustainability incentives. Around 9% stated that their organizations provide direct monetary incentives, such as bonuses or cash rewards, for green HRM initiatives.
- *Biggest Challenge in implementation of Green HRM in respondents' respective organizations:* The major challenge in implementing Green HRM policies and practices or activities is lack of awareness (54%) followed by high cost of implementing such practices (21%), 10 % respondents felt that adoption of green technology was the most difficult challenge in implementing Green HRM, and a few of them (7% each) were of the view that resistance from employees and lack of Management's commitment were the main challenge during Green HR policy implementation.
- *Respondents' view about their organization's commitment to sustainability and Green HRM:* Most of the respondents found that their organization's commitment towards sustainable practices was good (41%), 34% found it average, 23% told it was excellent and around 2% viewed that it was poor. Most organizations rate themselves as either "Good" or "Average" in terms of their commitment to sustainability and Green HRM, with 18 responses in the "Good" category and 19 in the "Average" category. This indicates that while many organizations are involved in sustainability, they may not yet have fully embedded or realized their sustainability goals.
- *The most impactful practice or activity that makes an organization environmentally friendly:* Around 36% of the respondents found employee engagement as the most impactful, 29% found use of Green technology in workplace, 18% viewed government regulation and legal compliance, 14 % strong sustainability policies and only 4 % viewed Green hiring and training programs as impactful practice for making organization more environmental friendly. This suggests that though technological advancements like green technology are critical for reducing environmental impact but most of the respondents believe that employee involvement and awareness play a key role in driving sustainability.
- *Respondents' view about green HRM practices contributing towards improving their organization's brand or image:* 48% generally agree that Green HRM practices have helped improve the brand or image, but they may not see it as a major factor or might think it has contributed in a more moderate way, 38% respondents strongly agree and believe that Green HRM practices have significantly contributed to enhancing the brand or image of their organization, 2% disagree that Green HRM practices have had any positive

effect on the brand or image of their organization, and 13% remained neutral and were undecided or feel that they have not observed any significant impact from Green HRM practices on the brand or image of their organization.

- *Respondents' biggest motivation to participate in Green HRM initiatives:* 55% showed environmental concern is the biggest motivation to participate in Green HRM initiatives, 27% personal interest in sustainability, 7 % due to company policies, and 5 % each get motivated by organizational rewards and incentives system and influence from colleagues respectively. Environmental concern is the most significant motivator, with the highest frequency. This suggests that most participants are intrinsically motivated by ecological responsibility.
- *Additional Green HRM practices preferred by the Respondents:* The respondents showed strong preference for reducing paper usage, with multiple mentions of digitalization, paperless offices, and discouraging paper-based work. Interest in training & awareness programs to educate employees and students on sustainability. Energy efficiency and resource conservation are key concerns, particularly in solar energy and reducing plastic waste. Management support & policy integration are seen as necessary drivers of Green HRM initiatives.
- *Respondents' additional suggestions or feedback regarding Green HRM initiatives:* Most of the respondents suggested paperless work & digitalization which includes mandatory paperless work practices in universities/ offices, completely refrain from paper usage, encouraging virtual meetings & online training, paperless operations & green performance appraisals, digitalization in recruitment, selection, and training. The other suggestions were tree plantation & environmental conservation, employee awareness & training, energy & resource efficiency, company policies & management commitment and green commuting & work processes.

## CHALLENGES

- **Lack of Awareness & Education:** As the current study unfolds that lack of awareness among people is the biggest challenge in the implementation of Green HRM initiatives. Since many employees may not understand the importance of sustainability initiatives, like eco-friendly recruitment, sustainability-driven appraisals, and green commuting.
- **High cost of implementation of Green HRM initiatives:** Adopting green technology and incentivising employees for adopting sustainable practices raises costs. Due to high initial investment in solar panels, energy-efficient equipment, and paperless technology, organizations are unwilling to allocate budgets for Green HRM initiatives.
- **Resistance from employees:** New sustainable practices may want employees to change their methods or attitude and many employees feel reluctant to change because of inconvenience. Resistance is also because employees may not understand the importance of sustainability initiatives.

- **Lack of commitment from Management:** Lack of organizational policies and clear accountability structures for sustainability targets leads to weak management commitment and support for Green HRM implementation.
- **Employee engagement issues:** Employees do not prioritize sustainability due to workload or job demands and lack of appropriate motivational strategies prevent employees from actively participate in Green HRM activities.

## SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of the study, following are the suggestions for overcoming the challenges in implementation of Green HRM:

- **Enhance Awareness & Training:**  
Conduction of frequent workshops, training sessions, and awareness programs on sustainability and integrating Green HRM concepts into employee induction programs.
- **Improve Policy & Management Commitment:**  
A strong commitment from the top management of the organizations can be a crucial step towards creating awareness, appropriate motivational strategies-both financial and non-financial, and a clear vision towards achieving sustainability in organizational processes and operations.
- **Provide Financial & Non-Financial Incentives:**  
Offering recognition programs, awards, and benefits for employees engaged in green initiatives and investing in sustainable infrastructure with long-term cost-saving benefits.
- **Leverage Government Support & CSR Activities:**  
Advocating stronger government policies and incentives for Green HRM adoption as well as engaging in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities focused on environmental sustainability.
- **Use Technology to Drive Change:**  
Gradual transition to paperless systems using digital tools and investment in IT infrastructure that supports remote work and virtual meetings.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

- Majority of the respondents were employed (77%) and maximum belongs to education sector (50%) followed by IT (10 %), finance and banking (7%), healthcare (5%) and others. Respondents were working majorly in private sector (86%).
- 84% of the respondents were aware of the concept of Green HRM.
- Most common of the Green practices was Green workplace initiatives like reducing paper use and using energy-efficient tools (61%) and least common was rewarding green initiatives (21%).
- Regarding sustainable HR practices in daily activities, majority of the respondents adopt video conferencing (52%) and the least common daily activity is using company transport (12.5%) for commuting to and fro workplace.

- Non-financial incentives appear to be the most common way to encourage sustainable practices (38%). A significant proportion of organizations (29%) remain uninterested in offering rewards for green initiatives. 25% intend to offer in the future.
- Lack of awareness (54%) is the top barrier in the implementation of Green HRM practices and a considerable constraint is high implementation costs.
- As far as organizational commitment to sustainability is concerned, most of them were rated as Good (41%) by the respondents and only 23% felt it was excellent, indicating room for improvement.
- Most impactful green practice appeared to be employee engagement (36%) followed by green technology (29%) whereas Green hiring and training seen as less impactful (4%).
- 38% strongly agree and 48% agree that Green HRM improved organizational image.
- Of all the motivational factors, environmental concern (55%) is the strongest motivator.
- Reducing paper usage through increased digitization was the preferred additional Green HRM practice among the respondents.
- Mandatory digitalization, virtual meetings, and green HR processes were mostly suggested by the respondents to achieve sustainability in organizational operations.

As organizations face mounting pressure to reduce their environmental footprint, Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) emerges as a strategic approach to fostering a sustainability-oriented workforce. Compliance with evolving environmental regulations and the growing environmental consciousness among newer generations of employees, particularly millennials and Gen Z, underscore the need for eco-friendly workplace practices. Green HRM not only enhances organizational reputation but also serves as a competitive advantage in attracting customers, investors, and skilled professionals. Initiatives such as minimizing paper use, improving energy efficiency, and enabling remote work not only contribute to environmental goals but also deliver measurable cost savings and strengthen organizational resilience. This study reveals a growing awareness and gradual implementation of Green HRM practices, with fundamental sustainability actions being more prevalent. However, more complex practices—such as green recruitment, sustainability-focused training, and performance-based rewards for eco-friendly behavior—remain underutilized. Challenges such as limited awareness and financial constraints continue to hinder wider adoption. Despite these barriers, the intrinsic motivation of employees driven by environmental values presents a promising avenue for deeper engagement. Ultimately, the successful institutionalization of Green HRM depends on consistent leadership support and active employee involvement, transforming it from a set of isolated practices into a sustained cultural shift within organizations.

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