



Green human resource management: A fundamental comprehension and assessment

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Abstract

This paper searches for a fundamental comprehension and assessment on Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) which is one of the most emerging fields in Human Resource Management today. The main focus of the article is about, what is Green, reasons behind Greening, what is Green HRM, importance of Green HRM, Green HRM practices, Impact of Green HRM practices on environmental sustainability and organizational success. It is expected to opening avenues for other researchers to fill the gap of assessing the impact of Green HRM on environmental sustainability and organizational success.

Keywords: green, greening, green human resource management, environmental sustainability, organizational success

Introduction

“Green HRM” can be identified as an emerging branch in Human Resource Management in the world today. The book titled *Greening People: Human Resources and Environmental Management* by Walter Wehrmeyer in 1996 might have given the birth to the concept Green HRM (Opatha, 2013). During last decades, this concept was a novel to all academic and professionals in HRM (Opatha, 2013). In the recent past Green HRM has become an essential part of reinforcing environmental sustainable practices and enhance employee commitment on the problem of environmental sustainability (Masri, 2016).

The main purpose of this paper is to offer a fundamental introduction and assessment on Green HRM by several related questions such as, What is Green?, Why is Green?, What is Green HRM?, Why is Green HRM important?, What are Green HRM practices?, and What is the impact of Green HRM practices on environmental sustainability and organizational success.

What is Green?

The term “Green” has different meanings. However, mostly it means something relevant to nature or natural environment (Opatha, 2013).

According to Opatha (2013), Green or Greening could be observed in terms of Preservation of the natural environment, Conservation of the natural environment, Avoidance or minimization of environmental pollution, Generation of gardens and looking-like natural places in the context of managing people at work. Any person belonging to managerial or non-managerial category is supposed to perform four roles for becoming a green employee such as, Preservationist, Conservationist, non-polluter and maker (Opatha, 2013).

Why is Green?

Globalization gets people away from natural environmental inspiration day by day and the result is being increased up to adverse effects of global warming today. This situation causes having many unbalances in physical and human environment (Hansen *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, it is essential to manage the gap between natural resource consumptions

and the human needs with a sustainable approach (Yılmaz & Bakış, 2015).

What is Green HRM?

Green HRM is referred to, all the activities engaged in development, execution and on-going maintenance of a system which targets at creating employees of an organization Green (Opatha, 2013). Green HRM is the side of HRM which concern of converting typical employees towards green employees with the intention of achieving environmental goals of the organization and ultimately give a crucial contribution on environmental sustainability (Opatha, 2013). It brings up to the policies, practices and systems that create employees green for gaining benefits for individual, society, natural surrounding and the business. Also Opatha (2013) highlighted, that it is impossible to make a Green organization without making its people Green.

Why is Green HRM important?

For the purpose of providing environmentally friendly products and procedures, to manage successful corporate environmental programs, and to overcome execution challenges of corporate environmental programs the Green HRM has become necessitated (Milliman and Clair, 2017).

Green HRM is termed as the assimilation of corporate environmental management in to human resource management. It has also stated that human resource aspects of environmental management are Green HRM. Renwick *et al* (2008) broadly indicated that distinguished policies in recruitment, performance management and appraisal, training and development, employment relations, wages and rewards can be considered as strong tools to line up employees with environmental strategy of an organization. Hussain (2018) mentioned according to Jabbour *et al* (2010) Green HRM is the greening of functional dimensions of human resource management.

Green HRM is significant not only at the organizational level but also at the employee level. Environmentally conscious behaviors in both work life and private life domain is facilitated (Opatha, 2013). Being a Green employee will be beneficial as it enables individual

involvement towards successful corporate management and also to be a good shareholder of environmental sustainability (Opatha, 2013).

What are Green HRM practices?

Green HRM practices changed the unsustainable practices that all levels of employees may have engaged over a long time period. Green HRM practices and their probable consequences in organizations can be identified all around the globe.

Considering the Green job designing, job description can be used in order to highlight some environmental protection duties and responsibilities (Renwick *et al.*, 2008). Many organizations have engaged in different types of environmental and social tasks with an eye to safe guard environment. In some organizations, each job description includes at least single task related to environmental protection and also consists of suitable applications of environmental responsibilities (Hussain, 2018). In addition, teamwork and cross-functional team were used in some companies as job design techniques in order to manage environmental issues effectively (Hussain, 2018).

With regards to the Green human resource planning, some leading companies manage their environmental issues by forecasting number of employees and types of employees, required to implement corporate environmental management initiatives like ISO 14001 (Arulrajah *et al.*, 2015). In addition, appointing experts to environmental audits or outsourcing can be identified when deciding strategies to meet the forecasted demand for environment related works.

Today, some companies search environmentally oriented workers and there are two options of recruiting those. First to focusing on Green recruitment and second is to give awareness, education, training and development to the current work force regarding environmental protection. The first option seems to be more proactive and cost effective than the second one. Integration of corporate environmental policy and strategies within the recruitment policy has become one prominent factor in the recruitment context of some companies. According to a survey done by "British Carbon Trust", more than 75% of employees have realized the significance of the active environmental policy which helps to reduce the carbon emissions (Clarke, 2006). According to another survey, it has revealed that graduates in United Kingdom judge the environmental performance and company reputation as a decision-making criterion when applying for a job (Wehrmeyer, 1996). The Chartered Institute of Personal and Development (CIPD) rely on becoming a Green employer may enhance employer branding and company image (CIPD, 2007). Most of the advertisements regarding job vacancies therefore express certain environmental values these days.

Green Selection connects with selection criteria like environmental concern and interest of the candidate in many organizations. When evaluating candidates for selection, environmental related questions are tested by those companies (Crosbie and Knight, 1995).

Talking about Green Induction, companies can adopt two ways in respect of Green induction such as, general Green induction and job related Green induction. Also companies should ensure that the newly recruited employees have sound knowledge regarding environmental responsibilities, appreciate the corporate environmental culture, and adopt the environmental policy and practices (Arulrajah *et al.*,

2015).

Green performance evaluation can be identified as key functions in Green HRM. This should be done as a separately or as a part of performance evaluation of the company. Creating measurement criteria of employee Green performance should be aligned with the organization's criteria related to environmental performance (Arulrajah *et al.*, 2015). Many organizations have started environmental management information systems (EMIS) (Wells *et al.*, 1993) and environmental audits (Carpenter, 1994). The aim of an EMIS is to successfully monitor large amount pollution, resource consumption, energy and regulatory needs (Schwalm, 1994). Also it is very important to install corporate-wide environmental performance standards (CWEPS) in the context of Green performance evaluation. The firm Amoco in the United States use waste management, environmental audits, reduction of waste as CWEPS in order to measure environmental performance standards and improving Green information systems and audits (Milliman and Clair, 2017). Also a green performance evaluation should consists of evaluation of job performance according to Green related criteria, measure the progress on Greening, setting Green targets and goals, regular feed backs on environmental goals (Arulrajah *et al.*, 2015).

Considering Green training and development (Green T&D), it is very crucial to provide environmental training to non-managerial employees and managers. This is very useful function of Green HRM in order to develop required skills and knowledge of organizational members. Training on recycling and waste management, flexi schedules and telecommuting, reduce so far business travels can be identified as very useful to minimize environmental harms of the organization (Jackson *et al.*, 2011). Fuji Xerox in Singapore, all organizational members are given eco-awareness training and also sales forces are received education on the green aspects of product and supplies. Some organizations celebrate "Environmental day" annually at company level with many competitive activities for staff members and family members. This can be recognized as a good practice to inculcate particular key eco-values among work force and their family members (Arulrajah *et al.*, 2015). Training staff members to produce Green analysis of workstation, application of job rotation to train future Green managers, providing training on environmental management matters of safety, better utilization of energy, waste management, waste recycling, Green personal skills development can be highlighted as Green T&D practices (Renwick *et al.*, 2008).

Green reward management is another key function of Green HRM and it can be identified as the basement of the sustainability of environmental performance. Green reward management gives a significant contribution to motivate organizational members on corporate environmental management initiatives. Some organizations use financial rewards like incentives, bonus and cash for good environmental performance while some other organizations use non-financial rewards like awards, prizes, and special recognitions for their good environmental performance (Arulrajah *et al.*, 2015). For example, managers at Coors Company give awards to employees who have involved in successful environmental programs (Woods, 1993). Renwick *et al.*, (2008) suggest Green pay system, tailor packages to reward green skill acquisition, monetary based

and non-monetary based environmental management rewards, personal reward plan with Green stewardship, linking suggestion scheme with reward system, linking involvement in Green initiatives with upgrades and Green tax breaks as Green reward management practices.

Green health and safety management is noticeably different from traditional health and safety management in HRM. As a matter of fact, many organizations have re-designed the post of “health and safety manager” to “health, safety and environmental manager”. This post shows a wide range of job scope including biodiversity protection and community support initiatives and ensure a Green work place for all. Today, some companies extend their traditional health and safety function to Green health and safety functions with an eye to reduce employee stress and occupational diseases caused by hazardous work environment (Arulrajah *et al.*, 2015). Green factories or zones maintain conducive environment to prevent different health problems in many organizations. Some proactive companies like DuPont, Amoco, Monsanto, Allied, Signal, and 3M use environmental strategies as a part of their ethical trading (Arulrajah *et al.*, 2015). Also in Sri Lanka giant apparel manufacturing companies like MAS, Brandix, and Hirdaramani engage in different types of environmental plannings to make healthy and stress free working environment for all employees (Bombugala & Atputharajah, 2010).

What is the impact of Green HRM practices on environmental sustainability and organizational success?

It is now widely accepted that manufacturing industries are having a major influence on the deterioration of the global environment. Some experts suggest the industrial system can account for 30% or more of greenhouse gas generation in industrialized countries (Evans, 2009). Once manufacturing organizations come to realize the harmful effect towards environment by their organizations, they try to incorporate environmental friendly aspects with organizational goals especially through Green HRM practices. Environmental training and development can be recognized as important Green HRM practice in order to educate and develop knowledge and skills about environmental performance in organization. For examples, companies like Polaroid (U.S), Adam Opel AG (German), Imperial chemical industries (UK), and General electric (UK) are highly engaged in environmental training and development under Green HRM (Razab *et al.*, 2016). The best company practice in training and development in environmental management in U.S. records from Allied Signal Inc which include a total waste minimization. Polaroid in U.S has linked their training objectives to the vision regarding regulatory compliance (Renwick *et al.*, 2008). Compared to previous situation of manufacturing companies, it is crystal clear that they have highly engaged in different types of Green HRM initiatives to recycling waste, reducing waste and carbon emissions, and saving energy etc.

It is an emerging trend that the sports centers are engaging in various types of Green HRM practices in the world today by going away from traditional HRM practices. According to UNEP (2015), sports centers can also act as catalysts to save and improve the environment. Therefore these organizations must consider the long-term impact of their decisions rather than having holistic view of the duties and

responsibilities. Also the organizations should take responsibilities for their social and environmental influence in the economic growth. Gholami *et al* (2016) highlighted about player involvement and empowerment, urgent involvement of Green community in performance management, culture and supportive climate, pay and reward system, attracting and selecting, training and development, union role of environmental management. The results and findings proved the importance of Green HRM system towards employee well-being and organizational performance. For example, Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) football association, other sports centers in Malaysia, and other part of the world making the transition to the notion of a “sustainable center” which contribute to the economic, social, human and environmental development (Gholami *et al.*, 2016).

Traditional health and safety management is prominently differed from Green health and safety management. Also the post of health and safety manager has changed to the post of health, safety and environmental manager in many organizations today with wider job scope. The post is included biodiversity protection, community support, and creating Green work environment for all. Today, many organizations have engaged in Green health and safety arrangements especially to make healthy working environment for all employees (Arulrajah *et al.*, 2015). As cited by Abeyrathna (2019), Ajala (2012) has mentioned that environment is the main handler for the survival of men. As a matter of fact, workers are delighted with work place features such as natural light, relax environment, good ventilation etc. These features have significant impact on organizational productivity and workspace satisfaction. Shukor *et al.*, (2012) have pointed out that the Green outdoor environments and natural window views helps reducing employee stress. For example, Brandix apparel company, Seeduwa has reduced absenteeism with improvement health standard to 2% through Green environmental designing (Bombugala & Atputharajah, 2010).

Mexico has made one of the largest industrial economies during the past forty year period in the developing world. But Mexico was recorded as the highest air pollution city in recent past and other cities are also suffering from excessive pollution (Hettige *et al.*, 1996). National level institutional response towards the problem has accelerated during past years. The environmental performance of polluters is evaluated according to permission with numerous licenses and permits given to each plant, under command and control regulation (Dasgupta, 1998). Multi-institutional administration can be recognized as the second prominent characteristics in Mexican environmental managements. Various aspects of industrial pollution were recognized as the responsibilities of various agencies and one has expanded its activities from a few inspections annually to several thousand (Dasgupta, 1998). Once the organization realizes their bad environmental performances they have moved to the Green related performance management and evaluation system with many environment friendly approaches. The system was very helpful to make carbon neutral and healthy environment today inside the city.

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