

Green Human Resource Management: Strategies for Modern Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability has become a crucial concern for researchers and corporations in the last few decades. With a continuous depletion of resources, there is a growing debate over the future of the environment and the need for a sustainability-oriented organizational outlook. Human Resource Management (HRM), acting as a key driver for all other organizational functions, is considered a foundation for the sustainability orientation of corporations. The present paper discusses the significance of green, sustainable human resource management, focusing upon all the HRM functions. A sustainable solution has to focus on the protection of ecology and ensure economic viability. The present study focuses on all the green HRM dimensions in detail and provides recommendations for strengthening sustainable human resource management in organizations in the long term.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Sustainability, Environment

Introduction

Modern organizations are facing a green movement (Peatti & Ratnayaka, 1992). Human resource management (HRM) is always the prime focus of organizations. Effective HRM is indispensable for the success of all organizations. However, in the last few years, there are growing concerns over sustainable HRM. Green HRM is a relatively newer concept in this field. Concepts such as green marketing and green accounting have been popular for decades. Green marketing is a popular idea promoted by consumers concerned about environmental sustainability (Peattie & Charter, 1992). In the same way, green accounting has also been a center of attention in organizations (Owen et al., 1997). The broader term green management can be understood as the process through which companies minimize environmental harms by developing environmental management strategies (Lee, 2009). According to Rani & Mishra "...Green HRM refers to using every employee to support sustainable apply and increase employee responsiveness and commitments on the problems of sustainability..." (Rani, S., & Mishra, K., 2014).

To understand green HRM, one needs to understand HRM functions first. Human Resource management is related to all the activities of managing human capital/ human resources or manpower in the organizations. Right from when a person joins an organization, till the time he leaves; he is treated as a human resource for the organization. All the activities in between this tenure can be termed as functions of human resource management. Human resource management functions include human resource planning- that is mapping the demand of employees in the future and forecasting the supply of the workforce and balancing this demand and supply of workforce in the organization. Job analysis- that is preparing a personnel specification and description of the job containing details of knowledge, skills, and abilities of the person to fulfill the requirements of the job. Strategic Job analysis is a significant HRM function (Schneider & Konz, 1989). Similarly, Recruitment- that is attracting a pool of eligible candidates to fill in the positions, and selection refers to screening out the best available candidate from amongst the interested eligible candidates; are also the foundation for organizational success and growth (Newell, 2005).

Once the selection is done, human resource managers are responsible for induction and familiarisation of the new inductees with the policies, rules, regulations, and culture of the organization. Training and development are also indispensable functions of human resource managers (Aguinis, & Kraiger, 2009). Training can be understood as measuring the gap between expected/ standard performance and the actual performance of an employee and eradicating that gap by imparting the required knowledge skills and abilities.

Human resource managers are also responsible for the development of employees that is preparing employees for future prospective positions in the organization, preparing the career graph for the employees to hold those positions, and imparting the required knowledge skills and attitude so that they can discharge their responsibility in the future positions effectively and efficiently. Not only this, human resource

managers have a very significant task of maintaining high motivation level of employees by designing a fair, transparent, and effective performance management system. They measure the actual performance of the employee, measure the gap between actual and expected performance, and train them to minimize that gap. They keep employees motivated to hold future positions in the organization. Along with this, HR managers motivate the employees to boost their morale, sketch a career graph for employees and also look after their health and safety requirements. By managing the grievances of employees, human resource managers also act as a link between employees and the management for negotiation and bargaining over issues that have a conflict of interest between two parties. When a person is retired from an organization, human resource managers are the people who look after their pensions and their well-being. Green human resource management is managing all these functions in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way by minimizing the damage to the environment.

Green human resource management is the implementation of environment-friendly sustainable practices and functions of HRM. Green HRM can also be summarised as a combination of green recruitment, selection, green training and development, green management of organizational culture, green performance management, etc.

Green Recruitment

Green recruitment can be understood as a recruitment process with minimum environmental damage, conducted in a paperless way. Green recruitment has been found to enhance an organization's overall performance (Obaid, 2015). Green recruitment is generally an IT-enabled recruitment process where the applications are invited on electronic mediums like email, online application pool, or the already existing talent pool. The interviews are also conducted on telephone, video conferencing; to ensure that transportation cost is also minimized and negative environmental impact is also curtailed. Information technology has facilitated the green recruitment and selection procedures, where the efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process are not compromised; but the cost and environmental impact can still be curtailed.

Green Training and Development

Green training processes are the ones that focus on optimum utilization of resources cost-effectively and also lead to the minimization of environmental harm. Green training is information and communication technology (ICT)-enabled training methods where the effectiveness and efficiency of training are not affected, but the cost, time, and involvement of paper and electricity are minimized through interactive online training programs.

Green training also means that organizations equip employees with the skills and knowledge that develop the approaches of optimum utilization of resources, reduction of waste, conservation of energy, and instill a sense of environmental protection. Green training focuses on sensitization of employees towards the environment and motivating them to adopt the practices and work procedures with the motive of minimizing environmental impact true innovative ideas.

Green Performance Management Systems

Effective performance management systems are imperative for quality assurance in organizations (Waldman, 1994). Companies are now also keen to design a green performance management system. Green performance management includes the environmental concerns and policies of the company towards environmental responsibility. In the conventional framework of the performance management system, the criteria related to practices for safeguarding the environment, conservation of energy, and innovating environment-friendly practices and standards; are included. Employees promoting the innovative ideas for justifying environmental responsibilities effectively and working efficiently through green information systems, and marking a high performance during green audits are rewarded accordingly. Green performance appraisal includes rating people not only for their technical and behavioral competencies but also for their concern for environmental sustainability. One dimension of the green performance management system is the use of information technology for measuring performance and deduction of the use of renewable sources of energy.

Green Workplace Management practices

Green workplace management practices include a policy framework for imparting a green element in the workplace. Green workplace practices have a significant impact if implemented in an appropriate manner (Cherian, 2012). Green workplace management includes the development of a green workplace, green transportation and commutes, green organizational culture, and green HR practices.

Green Workplace

The green workplace is characterized by sensitivity towards the environment, efficient use of resources, and societal and community considerations. A green workplace can be achieved with a few policies and procedures to ensure minimum environmental damage. Minimum use of paper and with the use of electronic media, inter and intra office communication can be efficiently performed electronically. With the minimization of print and hardcopies, the harm to the environment can be reduced to a significant extent. Green workplaces are important for employee performance (Stringer, 2010).

The office procedures and policies should clearly state conservation of energy procedures such as switching off of lights, turning off of the machines which are not in the use, use of stairs in place of lift, sharing of resources like printers, placing of recycling containers, etc. Similarly promoting the use of mugs and glasses in place of disposables, having plants and green workspace, ensuring sufficient exposure to sunlight and natural light, using light wall colors to reduce the energy use; similarly reducing the use of difficult degradable products such as rubbers, plastics; use of recycled paper for files and ensuring the reduction in water wastage can ensure to have a greener and environment-friendly workplace.

Green Commutation and Transportation

A lot of resources are utilized for commuting and transportation of people and materials. So, the carbon footprint can be reduced significantly by adopting policies such as sharing of office vehicles, use of public transport, strategizing the routes for transportation of materials, use of maximum electronic channels of communication, arrangement of video conferencing, and telephonic meetings in place of in-person meetings. These procedures ensure the conservation of a lot of natural resources and reduce the carbon footprints to a significant extent.

Green Organisational Culture

Green organizational culture is an added dimension of green HRM. Green organizational culture means inclusion of environment-friendly and sustainable goals, environment-oriented vision, mission, and objectives. It includes practices such as inviting observations and suggestions by employees regularly for environmental sustainability, the inclusion of environmental goals in the agenda of all the meetings, and ensuring the participation of the organization and employees in the local initiatives for the green environment. Also including a section in the employee handbook to create a green culture and engaging employees in the green organizational culture is an efficient step. Green organization culture development of a collective belief for an ecological and environmentally friendly way of execution of procedures, which is shared by all the organizational members from top to bottom. The support from top management of the organization to promote green culture and participation of all the levels of employees to ensure environment-friendly sustainable practices is required for an efficient and effective green or organizational culture.

Benefits of Green Organizations

Introducing green human resource management offers several benefits to the organization. Some of the benefits are- deduction and cost and minimization of the waste, green workplace, enhancing the overall efficiency of resources. The use of electronic communication for intra and interoffice communication reduces the use of paper significantly and saves on a lot of expenses on stationary and human efforts on typing, photocopying, etc.

Another advantage of having a green workplace and green human resource management is that green organizations get a lot of eco-friendly incentives and rebates from the government. Under a lot of government schemes, subsidies and rebates are given to the organizations; that have minimized the damage to the environment and are working continuously in the direction of environmental sustainability.

Green human resource management is also beneficial for marketing. Modern customers are also environmentally concerned and consumers who are eco-conscious and environment-conscious; can easily be attracted to brands that are positioned as green and environment-friendly. Having an environment-friendly image in the market attracts aware and educated customers more efficiently.

Green organizations are also able to ensure the health and safety of their employees. Employees are assets and taking care of their health and safety in the long-term will minimize the cost of the organization for the medical bills and insurance of the employees.

Green organizations are also able to increase productivity and the use of efficient technology also reduces the number of human efforts and costs to a larger extent. IT-enabled meetings and workplaces have witnessed a significant reduction in the cost and their budgets. This is an added advantage that green organizations get along with minimizing their carbon footprint.

Conclusion

Green HRM has become inevitable now for modern organizations. There are several green HRM practices that future organizations can utilize (Jackson,2011). Green HRM not only provides benefits to the organization but also ensures the contribution of the organization for larger interest. (Sudin, 2011). Green HRM can be facilitated by using ICT-enabled methods in the various functions of HRM. In the future, researchers and scientists are required to evolve technologies that not only minimize the environmental impact but also enhance the organization's effectiveness and efficiency. Green Human resource management if implemented along with other functions of organizations, can bring several advantages to the environment and ecology.

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