
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Green Human Resource Management Practices and Environment Sustainability: From Empirical Evidence

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| ABSTRACT

Green human resource management, if well designed and implemented, is undeniably one of the avenues that is envisaged to contribute towards the actualization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This paper set out to interrogate the extant literature on Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) Practices and their nexus to environmental sustainability. One of the emerging issues within business communities is the campaign of going green (GG). GHRM is a drive which helps to create a green workforce that can understand and appreciate green culture in businesses and institutions. It is paramount to note that human resource and their systems are the basic foundation of any business. It is a fact that the human resource function in an organization is responsible for planning and executing those eco-friendly policies to create a green environment. The study was mainly a desktop, where a review and synthesis of the existing empirical literature was undertaken. The main sources of the data and information for purposes of this paper were largely relevant reports, journals and books. Past writings indicate that there is a growing need for the integration of environmental management into Human Resource Management (HRM) research practice. This article pursues an integrated view of the literature on Green HRM. It examines and interrogates the current empirical literature in the area of green human resource management with a view to pointing out and synthesizing the gray areas and suggesting a way forward towards enriching knowledge and practice in the area of green human resource management. Finally, the paper suggests some key HR initiatives towards creating and nurturing GHRM practices and behaviour for environmental sustainability. This article draws together the extant literature in this area in suggesting managerial implications and research direction in GHRM. Hence, the papers demystifies the debate and discussion on GHRM and suggests new fronts that requires research focus.

| KEYWORDS

Going Green, Environment, Sustainability, Eco-friendly, GHRM.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Human resource management practices have changed dramatically during the last two decades owing to globalization, privatization or deregulation, competition and technological advancements. The highly turbulent environment has forced organizations to adopt new workplace practices that lead to sustained levels of high performance (Ray & Ray, 2011). As firms enter into a more dynamic world of international business and as the globalization of world markets continues at a fast pace, human resource management issues appear to be gaining momentum (Namusonge, Gathungu, & Iravo, 2015).

When employees are managed effectively through consistent practices, they are able to act flexibly in pursuit of the organization's excellence. Wachira (2013) observes that worldwide, human resources have to be managed effectively if they are to generate value from other resources. In Nigeria, Oaya, Ogbu and Remilekun (2017) observe that recruitment and selection strategies in manufacturing companies have an influence on organizational efficiency hence performance. Kianto, Sáenz & Aramburu (2017)

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argue that in the contemporary business world, human resource represents the most important resource and each organization strives to achieve a competitive advantage and improve organizational performance.

According to Tiwari and Saxena (2012), human resource management practices refer to organizational activities directed at managing the pool of human resources and ensuring that the resources are employed towards the fulfillment of organizational goals. Effective HRM practices have the potential to create organizations that are more intelligent and flexible than their competitors through the use of policies and practices that focus on hiring, developing talented staff and synergizing their contribution within the resource bundle of the organization (Saeed, Afsar, Hafeez, Khan, Tahir & Afridi, 2019).

Human resource management practices are central to the improvement of the quality of services offered by organizations. Human resource management practices are important pillars in building and maintaining trust in employees, for they shape the employment relationship between the employee and the employer (Tang, Chen, Jiang, Paille & Jia, 2018). They are aimed at improving the overall performance of employees within the organization, ultimately resulting in increased organizational performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Green Human Resource Management

In Green HRM, different human resources practices such as recruitment and selection, training, compensation and rewards, and performance appraisals are adapted to ensure their employees understand and promote green behavior. Green HRM aims to design, implement, improve, and maintain a green vision within every employee of the organization. It is the use of HRM policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within organizations and, more generally, promotes the causes of environment sustainability". GHRM is directly responsible for creating a green workforce that understands, appreciates, and practices green initiatives and maintains its green objectives all throughout the HRM process of recruiting, hiring, training, compensating, developing, and advancing the firms human capital. It refers to the policies, practices, and systems that make employees of the organization green for the benefit of the individual, society, natural environment, and business. Chemjor (2020) explains that green human resource management refers to using human resources management practices to reinforce environmentally sustainable practices and increase employee's commitment to the issues of environmental sustainability, and it embraces considering concerns and values of environmental management in applying human resources initiatives generating greater efficiencies and better environmental performance. Similarly, Mampra (2013) defines green human resource management as the use of human resource management policies to encourage the sustainable use of resources within business enterprises and promote the cause of environmentalism, which further boosts employee morale and satisfaction). This then affects the employee attitude towards the implementation of a sustainable environment.

Thomson and Leviski (2011), in their study on the economically advanced countries of Europe, noted that the spread of green human resource practice gained momentum during 2005-2010, mainly in countries like Germany, Austria, France and Spain and linked this development to the growing adoption of sustainable management practices in these countries. Robert and Timber (2013), studying service organizations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, noted that firms achieved effective decision making, better precision in operational implementations and reduction of manpower cost responsible as a result of the growing popularity of green human resource management practices.

Green practices in human resources can take a wide range of forms, from communications methods, employee selection, employee training and reward, among others. For example, green recruiting and hiring practices can be seen through hiring and recruiting more of a workforce that is aware of and personally more committed to green matters than the typical job candidate; green training and development practice through instilling awareness and values along the green theme by way of targeted training and development on everyday practices, a specialized area of employee activity, efficiency in the use of company equipment, proper waste disposal, and recycling methods; and, green reward practice where employees are rewarded for their alignment with green company practices, and often times, the rewards themselves are additionally of some eco-friendly nature. Today players are looking for and embarking on more ways to sustain and be conscious of environmental issues affecting people, the community and the society at large. Green human resource management is one of these ways. Today, the discussion on green human resource management not only includes awareness of environmental affairs, but also stands for the social as well as economic well-being of both the organization and the employees within a broader prospect. Green human resource management, if well designed and implemented is undeniably one of the avenues that is envisaged to contribute towards the actualization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3. Statement of the Problem

Human resource management is an important field of study today. It is a recognize practice of high value for any business. Human resource management is explained as the efficient and effective utilization of employees in order to achieve an organization's goals. It is about managing the people side of the business, putting in place and actualizing policies, procedures, rules, and systems

that influence the behavior and productivity of employees of the organization (Opatha, 2009). In human resource management, there is growing research attention and literature on green human resource management. However, Renwick, Redman & Maguire (2013) and Jackson, Renwick, Jabbour & Camen (2011) note that the literature on green human resource management is not only diverse and piecemeal but also does not have a strong analytical and theoretical framework to underpin the valuable knowledge obtained by the scholars through a systematic research works in this field. Greening organizational operations and activities has become the talk of the day, so much so that every organization could like to put it into practice to ensure sustainability. Past writings indicate that there is a growing need for the integration of environmental management into Human Resource Management (HRM) research practice. This article pursues an integrated view of the literature on Green HRM. This article draws from the extant literature in this area in proposing a new process model and research agenda in Green HRM. Hence, this paper presents and interrogates the current GHRM literature and proposes a way forward towards enriching knowledge and practice in the area of green human resource management for environmental sustainability.

4. Methodology

This paper employed a H-Classics methodology. This is regarded as an objective approach to categorizing classic papers that takes into account the magnitude and history of citations in a given field of knowledge, providing useful information for developing lines of research (Katarzyna Piwowar-Sulej, 2021). Therefore, the H-Classic approach, as utilized, offers an objective method to identify core knowledge in green human resource management and environmental sustainability. This paper pursued a desktop research approach. Relevant theoretical and empirical literature is reviewed and synthesized. Textbooks and journal articles were the main sources of the data and information for the purposes of this paper.

5. Results and Findings

Samant & Sangle (2016, p. 106) view sustainability as a competitive strategy which represents the philosophy as well as the strategy of an organization. As a company's performance, including the achievement of its sustainability-oriented goals, depends first of all on its employees, more and more attention is being directed toward new human resource management concepts such as sustainable HRM, green HRM, socially responsible HRM, triple bottom line HRM, and common good HRM. Ren, Tang, & Jackson (2018) Saeed et al. (2019) argues that the concept of green HRM can also be described as sustainable human resources management, which is defined as "the adoption of HRM strategies and practices that enable the achievement of financial, social, and ecological goals, with an impact inside and outside of the organization and over a long-term time horizon while controlling for unintended side effects and negative feedback" (Ehnert, Parsa, Roper, Wagner, & Muller-Camen, 2016, p. 90).

5.1 Green recruitment and environmental sustainability

Wehrmeyer (1996) notes that general job descriptions can be used to specify a number of environmental aspects. For example, based on evidence from the UK, environmental reporting roles and health and safety tasks, in which staff are exposed to harmful substances/potential emissions, and matching personal attributes to needed environmental competencies, buying-in specialist competencies via new hires or investing in training and induction for new recruits is seen to be needed to ensure they understand and approach their corporate environmental culture in a serious way. Based on survey data in the UK, Wehrmeyer (1996, Oates (1996) further argues that environmental issues have an impact on recruitment. According to them, survey data show that high-achieving graduates judge the environmental performance and reputation of a company as a criterion for decision-making when applying for jobs. As reported by Clarke (2006), a survey by the British Carbon Trust shows over 75% of 1,018 employees considering working for a firm see it as important that they have an active policy to reduce carbon emissions. A study by The U.K. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development shows that 49% of their respondents take environmental credentials into account when deciding whether to take a job or not, with firms like Boots viewing the 'green job candidate' as influencing thinking in this area (Brockett, 2006). Jabbar H. M Abid M. (2015), in their study of green Human resource practices and their impact on environmental performance, noted that employees recruited on the basis of their environmental cognizance achieve higher grades of satisfaction when they are more involved in decisions and day to day operations.

5.2 Performance Appraisal and environmental sustainability

There has been debate as to how to measure green performance through performance appraisals. Firms like Amoco in the United States (U.S.) have installed corporate-wide environmental performance standards (which cover on-site use, waste management, environmental audits, and the reduction of waste) to measure environmental performance standards, and developing green information systems and audits (to gain useful data on managerial environmental performance), Union Carbide, who include a green audit programme that contains field audits which are seen as important, as they can give employees a mechanism by which they can raise any recurring problems, and gain information and feedback on past and future environmental performance of their firm (Milliman and Clair, 1996). Milliman and Clair argue that there is a need for managers to be held accountable so that they familiarize themselves with compliance issues. However, several of the existing PA systems in use in the U.S. seem limited to plant and division managers and executives only. TUSDAC (2005) proposes that one way in which PM systems can be successfully initiated in an organization is to develop performance indicators for each risk area in environmental awareness and education.

5.3 Green training and development and environmental sustainability

There is debate and discussion on the who and how in terms of embracing employee training and development for purposes of environmental sustainability. Organizations train teams of front-line employees to produce a waste analysis of their work areas. Such employees are seen as ideal staff to spot and reduce waste as they are closest to it, but they must be knowledgeable on how to collect the relevant data. Examples of best company practice in training and development in EM in the U.S. comes from Allied Signal Inc., who include a Total Waste Minimization (TWM) component into their training, whilst Nordstrom use education initiatives in general waste minimization (May and Flannery, 1995: 30, 34-35). Training seems to be one area where the role of HRM in environmental management has been recognised for some time (as job rotation provides a useful way to train Green executives or future Board members in EM and is seen as a crucial part of successful environmental programmes (Wehrmeyer, 1996). North and Daig (1996) reports that in Adam Opel AG in Germany, environmental issues are integrated within the training programmes given with all new projects and processes. In the U.K. at General Electric Company (GEC), all of their companies are required to work out their own environmental targets individually. At GEC, such training incorporates the aspects of environmental legislation, the environmental management system (EMS) (for environmental managers) and issues like waste management, transport and air emissions, a discussion of treating waste and ground water, communications, awareness-raising and risk management.

According to Wehrmeyer and Vickerstaff (1996), A number of steps may be used to establish an environmental training system, such as a) an audit of existing training system resources and activities, forming a corporate environmental committee (with HR representatives, environmental professionals and other executives on it), b) a job analysis producing a job description, and environmental awareness as part of induction training (as done at the Body Shop in the U.K.) and c) use a performance management system to monitor and review performance on productivity, quality, wastage and accidents.

Jabbar H. M Abid M. (2015), in their study of green Human resource practices and its impact on environmental performance, proposes that organizations who want to increase their employee performance should put emphasis on training as it motivates them to achieve higher performance levels. Simms (2007) advocates for initiatives to encourage and empower staff to act in more environmentally friendly ways at work and home. A study by Chemjor (2020) recommends that there is a need for training and development to build capacity for those institutions that have embraced green human resource management practices and provide support to various green network movements and other groups as the leading vehicles for green human resource management and sustainability in our entities.

5.4 Employee relations and environmental sustainability

Employee relations through employee involvement and participation has been seen as one of the ways of nurturing an eco-friendly workforce. Reed (2002) reports that since 1975, 3M has encouraged employees to propose changes to generate revenue and reduce pollution through their Pollution Prevention Pays (3P) programme. So far, 3M claim their 3P initiative has produced more than 2,500 pollution solutions, halving their waste release and saving them nearly \$300million. Indeed, later estimates for 3M are that their 3P programme has seen employees propose more than 4,750 projects worldwide, preventing 1.7 billion pounds of pollution and saving them \$850 million in pollution control and raw material costs. According to May and Flannery (1995), American Airlines claim their flight attendants recycle over 616,000 pounds of aluminium cans, earning at least \$40,000 to them in one year. Newman and Johnson (2000) report that other employee involvement team projects in the U.S. have also been seen to produce environmental improvements for Chrysler at the Jeep plant in Toledo, AT&T in Ohio, and the Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel plant.

Fernandez, Junquera and Ordiz (2003) argue that Eco-initiatives occur from creative ideas from all employees and that mechanisms need to be made to involve employees in it, giving employees independence to generate creative solutions to solve problems. Ramus and Steger (2000) examined the relationships of environmental policy and direct supervisory support behaviours in promoting employee-led environmental initiatives in a survey of 353 mid and low-level workers in 10 European (and one U.S. and one Canadian) leading-edge firms committed to environmental protection. Their results reveal that factors associated with organizational and supervisory encouragement are important in employee environmental creativity. A HSBC initiative in the U.K. found benefits in carbon saving being seen to come from employee initiatives (Simms, 2007). Phillips (2007) notes that Argos (UK) are aiming to engage its staff through increased environmental awareness, including initiatives in recycling and waste segregation.

5.5 Green grievance & discipline and environmental sustainability

Wehrmeyer (1996) argues that disciplinary procedures should be attached to environmental rules and duties where non-compliance occurs. Brockett (2006) supports this position by noting that environmentally unfriendly behaviour may constitute a breach of contract and, therefore, possible grounds for disciplinary measures to be undertaken. This is expected to act as a deterrent to behaviors and conduct which are eco-unfriendly.

5.6 Green compensation and reward practices and environmental sustainability

It is argued that organizations could benefit from establishing a reward system for waste reduction practices that teams develop. May and Flannery (1995) cites various examples in this line, such as DuPont in the US, which has an Environmental Respect Awards program that recognizes employee environmental achievements, and both Nordstrom and 3M, which offer rewards for suggestions that individual staff make to help the environment and increase firm profitability. However, Fernandez, Junquera and Ordiz (2003) note that assessing results that employees produce in environmental activities is a difficult task and argue that it is important to consider linking contingent remuneration for senior managers and the higher performance produced in environmental management and the successful use of public recognition systems that include financial compensation for employees.

Milliman and Clair (1996) root for recognition-based rewards. This suggestion is supported by Govindarajulu and Daily (2004), who further suggests these could take the forms of paid vacations, time off, favoured parking, and gift certificates, all aimed at encouraging employees on environmental performance.

5.7 Green employee exit practices and environmental sustainability

According to Wehrmeyer (1996), general debriefing should include an environmental dimension, and if staff resign, then HR managers need to discover why.

5.8 Green Human Resource Management Practices and Environmental Sustainability

Kanapala P. M.K, Battu N (2018) carried out a study on the role of Green Human Resource Management Practices on Employee Performance in the Health Care Industry and noted that green HRM practices (recruitment, performance management and appraisal, training and development, employee relations and pay and rewards) had the moderate effect on employee performance.

In their study of Green HR practices and their impact on environmental performance, Jabbar and Abid (2015) concluded that GHRM enables organizations to reduce their costs and invest their resources for the betterment of the environment. Organizations that recruit employees with the objective of enhancing environmental outcomes have gained customer satisfaction and eventually increased their performance. Companies that are able to align practices and human resource dimensions with the objectives of environmental management can be successful in the organization journey towards environmental sustainability.

A study by Andjarwati., Audah, Khouri and Rebilas (2019) on the impact of green human resource management with a focus on training and development and Eco- Friendly policies enterprise sustainability. Using data collected from the employees who are associated with the mining sector of Indonesia, the findings revealed that green training and development are not important predictor of environmental sustainability.

A study by Owino & Kwasira (2016) investigated the influence of selected Green Human Resource Management Practices on environmental sustainability at Menengai Oil Refinery Limited Nakuru, Kenya. The practices focused on green employee sourcing, green occupational health, green employee training and green performance management. Findings from this study indicated that embracement of these practices influenced environmental sustainability. The study further found out that the firm was able to improve its environmental sustainability practices when it offered training and development programs on green aspects of the organization and environmental consciousness and implemented green occupational health and safety programs. A similar study carried out by Langat and Kwasira (2016) at Kenyatta University, Kenya, found that employees' application for employment at the University was not based on green issues hence their little understanding of the concept. It further showed that many employees were aware of Environmental sustainability and National Environmental Management Authority policies and regulations as opposed to Green Human Resource Management and sustainable organizational practices. Findings from the study at Kenyatta University further indicated that green/environmental performance indicators were not adequately included in performance management and appraisals systems and thus recommended the need for training and capacity building among the employees of the university and inculcating the culture of green and sustainable ecological practices as well as developing pro-environment managers and leaders to ensure sustainability in the workplace. Whiegar (2012) observes that almost all Supermarkets in Nairobi, Kenya, have adopted various green logistics such as the use of lead free fuels, recycling of materials, complying with the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) regulations, and use of environmentally friendly packaging materials in serving customers through the embracement of green human resource management practices.

A study by Chemjor (2020) recommends that there is a need for training and development to build capacity for those institutions that have embraced green human resource management practices and provide support to various green network movements and other groups as the leading vehicles for green human resource management and sustainability in our entities.

6. Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the literature on Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) and its implications on Environmental Sustainability (ES). From the evidence reviewed, indeed, green human resource management practice and initiatives are critical for the realization of environmental sustainability at the individual, corporate, community and society levels. However, it is evident that there is limited literature and, therefore evidence on the practice of GHRM and its implications on environmental sustainability across the diverse sectors in the developing economies.

Based on the review and discussion of the extant literature in GHRM, going green in HRM should be the slogan and anthem for individuals, corporations and the community as one of the avenues towards the achievement of environmental sustainability and contributing to the realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Employers and human resource practitioners are encouraged to incorporate aspects that impress upon eco-friendly and behaviour in hiring and recruitment, staff training and development, staff deployment, employee performance appraisal, employee relations through involvement, employee reward system and employee exit process. This is envisaged to contribute to improved organizational environmental performance. Top leadership of organizations are also encouraged to develop and support policies and strategies that create an enabling working environment for the people and organization exhibiting a “green” behaviour with a keen interest in waste management and recycling and safeguarding and enhancing worker health and well-being.

We suggest that more research efforts and support should be directed to documenting evidence on GHRM practices with a focus on the level of adoption and implications on not only environmental sustainability but also organizational or institutional performance within developing economies and across sectors and sub-sectors. stakeholders in HRM. Therefore, academicians and researchers are called upon to step into gaps and contribute to the growing literature and knowledge in the area of GHRM.

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