

Green HRM Practices in Private Health Care & Banking Sectors in India

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The concept of green HRM has emerged with the initiation of Green Movement, the rapid growth of which was witnessed during 2000-2010 in almost all industries across India. In the present study, 139 respondents from the private sector banking and 116 participants from the private sector health care organizations of 6 different organizations from each sector were surveyed through a structured questionnaire on the relevant green HRM issues and practices from two major cities of India, viz. Kolkata and Delhi. The study is intended to evaluate the effectiveness of different Green HR practices in terms of cost-benefit, employee engagement and reachability and employer branding perspectives, as practiced in these organizations.

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Background

The concept of green HRM emerged in the backdrop of green business practices. Though, no specific source is found on the introduction of the concept of green HRM, different scholars have related the evolution of the concept as the embedded practices of sustainable management, which became growingly popular since 1990s. Scholars like Thomson and Leviski (2011), Ratnesh (2011), Liberd (2012), Robert and Timber (2013) have identified the inevitability of the emergence and growing popularity of green HRM, in the situation of large scale automation and de-humanization of a major portion of former HR functions in many parts of the world. According to them, HR decisions and tools have become growingly dependent on different automated technologies, softwares and virtual technologies, where traditional ways of HR interventions have been largely reduced over the period of last decade of 1990 and first decade of 2000. Ratnesh (2011) in his study on Indian organizations, showed that during 1995-2000 period, the spread of such practices was only around 12% and that also in large scale organizations; which witnessed a

phenomenal growth from 2001 to 2005 and such spread reached the level of 43%. The study further concluded that, these organizations have adopted green HRM practices in most of the major HR functions like training, salary and compensation, career management, recruitment, employee performance management etc., which were earlier being practiced traditionally. Thomson and Leviski (2011) in their study on the economically advanced countries of Europe found that, the spread of green HR as a popular practice was speeded up during 2005-2010, mainly in countries like Germany, Austria, France and Spain. They have, however, linked this development to the growing adoption of sustainable management practices in these countries. Robert and Timber (2013), in their study on service organizations, based in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, have held effective decision making, better precision in operational implementations and reduction of manpower cost responsible for the growing popularity of green management in general, and green HR practices in particular over a period of time. Therefore, it can be assumed that green HR has evolved due to different reasons, some of which are purely commercial and operational and some others parts of overall development in the strategic business environment.

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Green HRM: The concept

The concept of green HRM has been defined by different scholars in different ways. Kennedy and Toffler (2014) have referred 'Green HRM' as all those activities, involved in development, implementation and on-going maintenance of a system that aims at making the employees of an organization green. According to them, it is the side of HRM that is concerned with transforming normal employees into green employees so as to achieve environmental goals of the organization and finally to make a significant contribution to environmental sustainability. Almost same observation can be found in the definition given by Watson and Kavid (2014), where green HRM has been explained as the set of policies, practices and strategies pertaining to HR discipline, which can ensure the achievement of overall sustainable business model in an organization. Peter and Lanos (2015), on the other hand have defined green HR as the initiatives to reduce wastes. Their observation has remained focused on resource wastage in an organization, which traditional HR has been accused of. Scholars like Opatha and Arulrajah (2014) have defined green HRM somewhat differently. According to them, the effort to establish the green HRM practices attempts to create, enhance and retain greening within the employee of the organization so that he or she gives maximum individual contribution on each of the four roles of any sustainable business model such as preservation, conservation, non-polluting and making. However, functional dimensions of green HRM have been linked to the

aspects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices too by some scholars. Studies by Rothenberg (2003), Jabbour and Santos (2008), Cetro and Cetro (2008 & 2012), Renwick et al. (2011), Jackson et al. (2011) have emphasized the key involvement of human resource of the organization for effective implementation of green HR functions. According to them, green HR should focus on a few things such as building green competencies (building knowledge and skill about greening), developing green attitude (divided into cognitive aspect-believing in greening, affective aspect-positive feeling about greening; behavioral aspect-intention to behave positively and green behavior-green organizational citizenship behavior, green interpersonal citizenship behavior and green official behavior; green results-innovations and green outcomes). Therefore, different dimensions of research are available in the field of green HR practices.

Literature: Overview

The first significant research in the field of green HR was found in the work by Wehmeyer (1996). Based on the study of more than hundred small and medium scale organizations in Europe, the research concluded that recruitment remains the most crucial function of green

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HR initiatives. According to the study recruitment could support effective environment management by ensuring that new recruits understand an organization's environmental culture. Stringer (2009) has also emphasized on recruitment as the most important tool for effective green HR practice implementation. However, their observations have mainly been concentrated on the relationship between employer branding initiatives and green HR initiatives. Training, mainly environmental training and establishing a culture of accountability building for environmentally sustainable system has been identified by Ramus (2002). His predictive research model was developed on the basis of the study of more than twenty large organizations in USA. Incentives management has been identified as a major facilitator in the studies conducted by Milliman and Clair (1996) and Roberto (2000). Based on the studies conducted on the middle level employees in Australia and Europe respectively, the scholars have come to the conclusion that motivating employees towards green HR practice implementation could be given a big push through putting an effective incentive plan in place in the organizations for such involvements. More recent studies have however covered newer perspectives, though most of them have been done on traditional issues like training, development; recruitment and rewards, employee empowerment etc. Sarkaris et al. (2010) and Jabbar et al. (2010) have concluded in their respective researches, conducted on organizations in Asia, Europe and Middle East that better trained employees played crucial role in effective understanding of

the green HR philosophies and their implementation at workplace. Another study by Jabbar et al. (2012) on seven major organizations of the Indian subcontinent has identified the need for employee empowerment to take decisions towards implementation of green HR practices in those organizations.

Green HRM in India

Green HRM practice, though is a relatively new concept in India, large number of reputed organizations, both from public and private sectors have already adopted as the essential extension to sustainable management initiatives. From the public sector, organizations have initiated to strategize the process through 'less paper and less energy' applications. For example, organizations like ONGC, SAIL, GAIL etc. have significantly invested in green recruitment, training and compensation practices. Other organizations like Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum, Hindustan Petroleum, State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda etc. have also attempted to integrate digital marketing and digital people management practices to a large extent. A study by Ramneek and Batabyal (2014) showed that investment in technology and capacity development towards green HR implementation in five major public sector organizations have increased at the rate of 12% since 2000. The same study has also indicated that most of the interventions have been made in the areas of e-staffing, e-training and e-performance monitoring initiatives. National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) in a recent report, published in 2015 indicated that more than 80 percent of its member

organizations have converted more than 50 percent of their HR processes into paperless, manual free actions (NASSCOM, 2015). Here comes the role of private sector organizations in implementing green HR as a regular practice in their respective organizations. Reputed organizations such as Hindustan Unilever, Procter and Gamble, Nestle India, Amul, ITC, Maruti Udyug (Suzuki India), Jindal Steel, United Breweries etc. have significantly progressed towards implementing green HR in line with their overall sustainable management practice since the late 1990s (Sindhu, 2014). Though moderate number of studies are available on green HR practices in manufacturing and FMCG industries in India, significant research on Indian service industries are almost found to be absent in the knowledge domain. It is found that private sector involvement in banking and healthcare industry grew at the level of 9.11% per annum and 14.07% per annum respectively since 1997, which was accompanied by the latest management practices like large scale automation, greening of management practices, intelligent infrastructure development etc. (Sharma & Patel, 2011). Therefore, the scope of a preliminary but detailed study on these two sectors, which comprise a major share of service industry in India can be planned.

Objectives

The study has been done with the following key objectives:

- To evaluate the overall employee understanding of green HR initiatives in the respective sectors.

- To study the employee perception regarding the overall effectiveness of green HR initiatives in their respective organizations.
- To analyze the scope of further improvement/s of green HR initiatives in terms of employee empowerment, system modification, efficient HR service delivery etc.
- To compare the opinions of the respondents from both the sectors in terms of present status and future possibilities of green HR practices.

Research Plan

The present research intends to evaluate the effectiveness of different green HR practices in terms of cost-benefit analysis, employee engagement and

reachability and employer branding initiatives etc. For the purpose of the study, 139 respondents from private sector banking and 116 respondents from private healthcare sector, all middle management professionals with more than five years experience in the sectors from 6 different organizations each, based in two major cities in India, i.e. Delhi and Kolkata, were surveyed through a structured questionnaire. These samples were chosen based on simple random sampling without replacement technique. While approaching the respondents, it was taken care that all of them have the exposure to automated, paperless management practices, mainly in terms of HR functions in their organizations. Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample from banking sector, covered in the study.

Table1 Sample Distribution: Banking

Description	Delhi	Kolkata	Total
Organizations	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	6 (100%)
Sample breakup	72 (51.79%)	67 (48.20%)	139 (100%)
Functional distribution of respondents	Personal banking: 39 (54.16%) Credit management: 12 (16.66%) Relationship management: 21 (29.16%)	Personal banking: 26 (38.80%) Credit management: 18 (26.86%) Relationship management: 23 (34.32%)	Personal banking: 65 (46.76%) Credit management: 30 (21.58%) Relationship management: 44 (31.65%)

The above distribution describes that majority of the respondents were from personal banking operations (46.76%), followed by relationship management (31.65%) and credit management (21.58%). As the survey was conducted more at the branch than at the non-branch levels, majority of the responses came from personal banking professionals.

Table 2 indicates the distribution of the sample from healthcare sector, covered in the study.

As the survey was conducted at the hospitals located in these cities, maximum number of respondents (41.37%) was found to be nursing staffs, followed by paramedical staff (28.44%), medical

Table 2 Sample Distribution: Healthcare

Description	Delhi	Kolkata	Total
Organizations	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	6 (100%)
Sample break up	49 (42.24%)	67 (57.75%)	116 (100%)
Functional distribution	Nursing: 19 (38.77%) Paramedical: 12 (24.48%) Medical: 06 (12.24%) Administration: 12 (24.48%)	Nursing: 29 (43.28%) Paramedical: 21 (31.34%) Medical: 12 (17.91%) Administration: 05 (07.46%)	Nursing: 48 (41.37%) Paramedical: 33 (28.44%) Medical: 18 (15.51%) Administration: 17 (14.65%)

staff (15.51%) and administrative staff (14.65%).

The structured questionnaire was designed for the study comprising 17 questions. Before using the questionnaire for detailed study, a pilot survey was conducted on 45 respondents in total, with 29 respondents from banking industry and 16 from healthcare industry. Responses were further analysed through Cronbach Alpha using SPSS 19, which shows adequate internal consistency and appropriate scale reliability (0.076) of the questionnaire. The responses were captured through 5 point Likert scale. Once, the questionnaire was found to be reliable, it was used at a larger scale. The captured responses were then analysed through mean and standard deviation to understand the trends and to measure how far responses tend to be from mean responses. Table 3 shows the response patterns based on the questionnaire administered in the study.

Findings & Observations

Based on the response patterns, following observations can be found:

- Employee understanding of the green HR practices in general seems to be moderately good in both the sectors. As per the response patterns, in banking industry, the mean score of response pattern has been found to be 2.93, whereas in healthcare industry, it is 2.67 with standard deviation of .87 and .19 respectively. In that sense, unanimity of opinion seems to be higher among the employees from healthcare sector. However, there seems to be more advocacy required in making the concept and practice acceptable to a higher number of employees as visible from their opinions. Both banking and healthcare sector responses have given lower than moderate responses (mean 2.37 and 2.43 respectively).

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- Regarding the overall effectiveness of green HR initiatives in their respective organizations, employees' opinion from both the sectors has been found to be positive. For ex-

Table 3 Response Patterns (Mean & Standard Deviation)

Serial No.	Questions	Banking sector		Healthcare sector	
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	As an employee of your organization, you understand the concept of sustainable management practice in general, green HR in specific	2.93	.87	2.67	.19
2.	Your organization implements green HR practice seriously	3.66	.07	2.97	.13
3.	Green HR is practiced as a policy under overall sustainable management practice	3.01	.16	2.87	.09
4.	Your experience with green HR practice is not restricted to few areas, but to most of the HR services	2.87	.08	2.46	.19
5.	As per your opinion, Green HR initiatives have increased the efficiency of HR functions in the organization	2.79	.29	2.53	.07
6.	Investment in technology and systems towards implementation of Green HR is cost effective	2.92	.19	2.87	.16
7.	Green HR practices have positively affected the performance of other departments in your organization	2.69	.08	2.57	.12
8.	Green HR concept is clearly explained and communicated to you	2.37	.71	2.43	.09
9.	Green HR to you provides better service than traditional HR practices	2.93	.39	2.17	.21
10.	Green HR practice is still at the nascent stage in your organization	3.18	.19	4.09	.27
11.	Further training should be provided on continuous basis for higher engagement of employees in sustainable HR practice in your organization	2.09	.76	1.87	.04
12.	You believe that green HR initiatives have helped you to understand your responsibilities towards adopting a sustainable work practice in your organization	2.19	.05	2.06	.19
13.	As per your opinion, your organization should work towards better review and monitoring system for effective implementation of sustainable management in general, green HR in specific	2.97	.16	3.16	.03
14.	As per your opinion, better incentive mechanism can be put in place by HR to develop a more favourable attitude towards sustainability	3.78	.12	3.98	.07
15.	Green HR practices adopted in your organization has helped you to perform your role better with higher motivation	2.87	.19	2.59	.04
16.	Frequently you get the opportunity to participate in sustainability initiatives at your organization	1.87	.27	1.16	.07
17.	HR at all levels in your organization has significant opinion in shaping sustainable initiatives in your organization	2.93	.18	2.07	.02

ample, in both the banking and healthcare sectors opinions on the seriousness of implementing green HR seems to be positive (mean 3.66 and 2.97 respectively). Same trend has been found on the question of linking overall sustainable practices to green HR in banking and healthcare sectors (mean 3.01 and 2.87 respectively), on the question of extensive use of green HR in the organizations (mean score 2.87 and 2.46 respectively).

- When it was asked whether green HR has increased the efficiency of HR department functions in the organization, employees from both the banking and healthcare sectors have responded in moderately positive manner (mean 2.79 and 2.53 respectively). Employees have also favorably opined on the question of cost-effectiveness of investment in technology etc. for green HR implementation in both the sectors (mean 2.92 and 2.87 respectively). On other questions like improvement in HR service delivery by adopting green HR instead of traditional HR, contribution of green HR practice towards better role understanding and supporting other functions to perform their roles better etc., overall favorable opinions have been found in the response patterns of the employees from both the sectors.
- A few actionable areas or further scope for interventions have also been identified from the response patterns. Employees from both banking and healthcare sectors still believe that the

practice of green HR is still at the nascent stage in their organizations and a lot can be done in future (mean 3.18 and 4.09 respectively). It is also found that better review and monitoring system implementation, better incentive mechanism, higher involvement of employees in planning and updating the green HR practice etc. are needed as per the response patterns.

- Though on most of the questions, response patterns have been found to be moderately positive from both the banking and healthcare industries, on some areas wide differences in opinions are also visible. For example, on the question of whether HR at all levels play a crucial role in implementing green HR, respondents from healthcare sector have given much less favorable opinions (mean score only 2.07 in comparison to 2.93 of banking sector). Moreover, healthcare sector has shown better unanimity on the questions of employees understanding of the concept and practice of green HR, seriousness in implementation of green HR in the organization, implementing green HR as a part of overall sustainability initiative, increased efficiency of HR department through green HR practices etc. The responses received from the banking sector has shown greater unanimity on the question of wider usage of green HR in their organizations, positive effect of green HR on the performance of other functional departments green HR in understanding the role etc.

- Based on the findings of the response patterns on different pertinent questions as mentioned earlier, it can be concluded that scope for improvement in the process of implementation is very much there in both the sectors. In the process of making the system better, higher engagement of employees, regular advocacy and capacity building, regular review and up-gradation, engaging HR department across all levels more intensively etc. can be found to be the possible intervention areas.

Future Scope

The present research can be further improved and extended by following:

- Though, every possible attempt has been made to gather impartial opinion from the respondents, a minimum possibility of duplication of opinion might not be ruled out as the responses were collected through single source questionnaire.
- The study could have been made further qualitatively better by expanding the sample size as per scientific research principle.
- The study can be expanded in future by extending it to other industries as well, by making comparative studies in terms of more locations, by adding new dimensions to the investigation questions etc.
- The research can also be extended by linking the branding dimensions with the green HR strategies in both ser-

vice and manufacturing sectors. Comparative studies between public and private sector organizations can also be proved meaningful for future directions of designing and implementing green HR from broader perspectives.

Conclusion

With the growth and evolution of sustainable business philosophy, more scope for innovation, implementation and continuous up-gradation in the green HR strategies, priorities and practices can be witnessed. At the same time, such initiatives and thought processes will become more relevant for service industries as majority of the economies will be growing dependent on the sector. In India also, service industries have acquired prominent role in terms of revenue generation, contribution to GDP, employment creation, innovative practices etc. Green business as a whole, and green HR as a part therefore cannot be overlooked any more. Already, the trend is catching up and future will definitely witness greater potentialities to be unveiled.

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