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Green Human Resource Management Practices: Promoting Environmental Sustainability at the Workplace

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Abstract

This study examines how Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices impact the creation of eco-friendly workplaces, focusing on Information Technology (IT) companies in Chennai. With sustainability gaining importance, there's a gap in research regarding GHRM's influence on eco-friendly work environments. This study seeks to fill that void by conducting qualitative focus group interviews with ninety-five IT employees. The findings highlight a positive employee attitude, with a strong willingness to support green initiatives. However, a conspicuous knowledge gap exists concerning specific GHRM initiatives, emphasizing the need for enhanced communication strategies. Green Training and Development (GTD) and Green Compensation and Reward (GCR) are influential factors in fostering a Green Work Environment (GWE). Investment in GTD equips employees with the necessary eco-friendly skills, while GCR serves as a motivating force for green behaviours. In contrast, Green Recruitment and Selection (GRS) and Green Performance Management (GPM) demonstrate limited impact, suggesting a need for strategic reassessment of these HR practices.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management, GHRM, Eco-friendly work environments, Green training and development, Organizational sustainability, Sustainability initiatives.

1. Introduction

The creation of a sustainable workplace is a crucial issue worldwide, particularly in Western nations where people prioritize the work environment. Sustainable workplaces have become an increasingly important priority for developing countries. In fact, some governments have adopted comprehensive long-term development strategies that include the integration of sustainable development goals (SDGs) into their plans (Omisore, Babarinde, Bakare, & Asekun-Olarinmoye, 2017; Osborn, Cutter, & Ullah, 2015; United Nations [UN], 2019)

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has emerged as a pivotal aspect of contemporary organizational practices, underlining the importance of environmental consciousness and corporate responsibility. In the bustling city of Chennai, India, renowned for its IT sector, the intersection of GHRM principles and the pursuit of green workplace environments within IT companies has become a compelling area of study. This research article embarks on an investigation of the awareness and the transformative impact of GHRM practices in shaping sustainable workspaces in Chennai's IT firms.

Chennai's IT industry has been a driving force behind the city's economic growth, with a notable presence on the national stage. As of the most recent available data, the IT and IT-enabled services sector accounted for approximately 7.7% of India's GDP in the fiscal year 2020-21 (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, 2021). Within this context, Chennai's IT sector stands out as a dynamic contributor to this economic dynamism, housing a spectrum of companies, from local startups to global IT giants.

This paper explores the intricate relationship between Green Human Resource Management practices and their profound impact on promoting environmental sustainability within the workplace. It delves into the multifaceted dimensions of GHRM, examining how it encompasses aspects such as recruitment, training and development, employee engagement, and performance management, all of which can be harnessed to align with ecological objectives.

2. Review of Literature

GHRM has been defined in various ways by different scholars. Renwick et al; (2008) The term GHRM refers to the integration of environmental and corporate management into HRM. According to Sharma & Gupta (2015), Organizations can promote sustainability and environmental responsibility through Green HRM policies and practices. Muster and Schrader (2011) stated that GHRM focuses on promoting environmentally responsible behaviour among employees both at work and in their personal lives. Jabbour (2011) defined Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) as the integration of environmental management practices into HRM processes, which can enhance the sustainability of the organization. In addition, GHRM involves the integration of various functions and policies to create, implement and maintain a system that promotes environmentally friendly behaviour among employees. The ultimate goal is to achieve the organization's environmental objectives and ensure long-term sustainability (Opatha, 2013; Opatha & Anton Arulrajah, 2014). Previous studies have not provided a precise definition of a sustainable workplace. However, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration Act of 2016, a sustainable workplace

endeavours to maintain a balance among the planet, people, and profit, with the goal of achieving long-term success. This means that organizations cannot have sustainable workplaces without ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of their employees. When it comes to sustainability, it's not only about the actions taken but also the way in which they are carried out. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration Act of 2016 emphasizes the importance of incorporating health and safety practices into sustainable workplaces. Doing so allows for better protection of workers and ultimately contributes to achieving a truly sustainable organization. A sustainable workplace includes ethical, social, and environmental responsibilities, as well as improved health and safety (Danish Trade Union Movement's Centre for Competence Development, 2004 as cited in Nollman, 2013). According to Summertown (2018), sustainable workplaces aim to protect the environment by conserving natural resources and minimizing internal and external damage to businesses. Xenofontos (2019) defined sustainable workplaces as those that incorporate environmentally friendly design, construction, and operational practices to minimize negative impacts on the environment and occupants. From these definitions, The importance of GHRM for a sustainable workplace is evident as it fosters sustainable attitudes in employees (Dumont et al; 2017)

According to Jabbour & Santos (2008), Practices related to GHRM aim to guarantee a safe work environment for all employees. Saeed et al. (2019) It has been stated that the implementation of GHRM practices can aid organizations in establishing an environmentally friendly workplace. However, previous studies have identified a range of GHRM practices as significant (Dumont et al., 2017). To encourage green workplace behaviour among employees, GHRM should focus on recruiting individuals who share the organization's environmental values and beliefs. Additionally, they should implement development, performance, and reward practices that consider individual environmental performance. Effective training programs that cultivate environmental awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge should also be put in place (Cherian & Jacob, 2012; Daily & Huang, 2001; Clair et al., 1996; Renwick et al., 2013)

Yusoff and Nejati (2017) Green recruitment and selection is considered a crucial aspect of GHRM practices. Pradhan et al. (2017) identified that employees who prioritize environmental values actively contribute to improving their organizations' environmental performance. To this end, it is recommended that organizations seek out job applicants who demonstrate a commitment to environmentalism and assess their knowledge and attitudes on the matter. This will enable organizations to recruit individuals who possess positive attitudes and knowledge about environmental issues. Green training and development is a system that inspires employees to learn environmental protection skills and be more aware of environmental issues (Jabbour, 2011). According to Sammalisto & Brorson (2008), Organizations can provide training to develop environmental knowledge, awareness, and skills across all departments, making green training essential for every employee.

The performance management and appraisal system includes an evaluation of employees' activities in environmental management (Jabbour & Santos, 2008). Green performance management measures employees' environmental responsibilities, incidents, carbon emissions reduction efforts, and communication of environmental policies during appraisals using specific indicators and criteria (Saeed et al., 2019). Performance management systems use these

indicators to measure employee and manager practices, rewarding those who maintain GHRM practices in the workplace (Hermeann et al., 2007). According to Jabbour et al. (2013), green rewards and compensation are a comprehensive set of incentives which incorporate both financial and non-financial aspects. These incentives aim to encourage, retain, and motivate employees to fulfill environmental objectives. According to most researchers, green rewards, such as recognition and praise, are more effective than nonfinancial rewards in motivating employees (Jabbour et al., 2008; Jackson et al., 2011). Using rewards and incentives can be a powerful way to increase employee performance and align organizational goals. In comparison to other HRM processes, using both monetary and non-monetary rewards as motivators has proven to be the most effective in motivating employees within an organization (Jabbour et al., 2008; Renwick et al., 2013). Additionally, green recognition involves acknowledging employees within an organization and publicly, with certificates, gifts, and paid vacations (Kim & Choi, 2013; Saeed et al., 2019).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design:

- **Study Type:** This research is designed as a pilot study to investigate the awareness of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices among IT employees in Chennai.
- **Sampling Method:** Convenience sampling was employed to select participants for this study.
- **Objectives of the study:** This study aims to assess the relationship between awareness of GHRM practices and the creation of a green work environment within IT companies in Chennai. The primary objective is to determine whether GHRM practices lead to the development of environmentally friendly workplaces.

3.2. Sample Selection:

- **Sample Size:** The study includes ninety-five IT employees in Chennai.
- **Sample Criteria:** Participants were selected from the top 10 IT companies in Chennai, as identified in the NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Service Companies) report for the fiscal year (2020-2021).

3.3. Data Collection:

- **Data Sources:** Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to the selected IT employees. Secondary data is collected through sources such as government publications, academic journals, industry reports, books, websites, and databases.
- **Questionnaire Development:** The survey was carefully designed to measure the level of knowledge and understanding about Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices, as well as their perceived effectiveness in promoting a sustainable work environment in IT companies. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a set of statements on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly

Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". The survey will be reviewed for content validity to ensure its accuracy and usefulness.

- **Data Collection Procedure:** The questionnaire was distributed electronically to interested IT employees using Google Forms. Participants were able to access and complete the questionnaire at their convenience, either on their work computers or personal devices. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of anonymity.

3.4. Analysis:

The data collected from the survey was analysed utilizing analytical software such as SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to provide a comprehensive descriptive statistical analysis. Initially, a mean rank analysis will be conducted to assess the level of awareness of GHRM practices among IT employees. Subsequently, correlation and regression analyses will be executed to explore the connections between GHRM practices, employee attitudes, and the establishment of environmentally friendly workspaces.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Reliability

When it comes to measuring instruments, reliability is key. It shows how unbiased the instrument is and that it can produce consistent and stable results. The stability of the instrument is crucial in ensuring that it produces the same results at different points in time during the study. The level of reliability needed depends on how the measure is used. If it's for early-stage research, instruments with modest reliability (such as .70) can be used to save time and energy, according to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994, pp. 264-265).

Table 1 Reliability Analysis

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha
Green Recruitment and Selection (GRS)	.94
Green Training and Development (GTD)	.96
Green Performance Management System (GPM)	.95
Green Compensation and Reward (GCR)	.96
Green Work Climate (GWC)	.97
GHRM Awareness (GHA)	.97

The table displays Cronbach's Alpha values for various dimensions related to Green Human Resource Management (GHRM). All dimensions, including Green Recruitment and Selection (GRS), Green Training and Development (GTD), Green Performance Management System (GPM), Green Compensation and Reward (GCR), Green Work Climate (GWC), and GHRM Awareness (GHA), exhibit exceptionally high internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.94 to 0.97. These values suggest that the items within each dimension

are reliably measuring their respective constructs, indicating strong internal reliability for the GHRM assessment. The overall scale reliability was α = .99 with a 95% confidence interval.

4.2 Participants Demographics

The following table provides a detailed overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants in the pilot study conducted in Chennai. The study focused on 95 IT employees selected from companies in the top 10 ranks of NASSCOM. This demographic breakdown is essential for understanding the composition of the respondent pool, which encompasses a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences within the IT sector.

Table 2 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Category	Subdivision	n	Percentage
Gender	Male	54	56.8
	Female	41	43.2
Age	20-29yrs	37	38.9
	30-39yrs	42	44.2
	40-49yrs	13	13.7
	Above 49yrs	3	3.2
Educational Qualification	Diploma	5	5.3
	UG	51	53.7
	PG	39	41.0
Work Experience	0 to 3yrs	21	22.1
	4 to 6yrs	12	12.6
	7 to 9yrs	10	10.5
	Above 9yrs	52	54.8
Monthly Income	Below ₹50,000	28	29.5
	₹50,001 to 2,00,000	31	32.6
	₹2,00,001 to 3,00,000	14	14.7
	Above ₹3,00,000	22	23.2

Source: Primary data

The table presents the demographic characteristics of respondents. The majority are male (56.8%), with 43.2% female. The largest age group is 30-39 years (44.2%), while those above 49 years are the smallest (3.2%). Respondents primarily have undergraduate degrees (53.7%) and a monthly income of ₹50,001 - ₹2,00,000 (32.6%). Most respondents have above 9 years of experience (54.8%).

Table 3 GHRM Awareness among the Employees

GHRM Awareness among the Employees	Mean	Rank
I am willing to make personal changes in my work habits to support GHRM practices	3.81	1
I support any green initiatives taken by the GHRM	3.77	2

I understand the environmental benefits associated with implementing GHRM practices in the workplace	3.72	3
I am conscious of the environmental impact of my individual work activities	3.64	4
I am aware of the role that employees play in contributing to the environmental sustainability goals of our organisation	3.61	5
I am well-informed about the sustainable practices that can be adopted in my day-to-day work routine	3.54	6
I am familiar with the concept of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM)	3.47	7
I am knowledgeable about the specific GHRM initiatives implemented by our company	3.44	8

Source: Primary data

The table displays employees' awareness of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices based on their mean scores and ranks. Employees are most willing to make personal changes to support GHRM practices (mean score: 3.81), followed closely by their support for green initiatives (mean score: 3.77). They also understand the environmental benefits (mean score: 3.72) and are conscious of their individual environmental impact (mean score: 3.64). However, their knowledge about specific GHRM initiatives is relatively lower (mean score: 3.44). Overall, employees exhibit a positive attitude towards GHRM practices but may benefit from more information about specific initiatives.

Table 4 Correlation between the Dimensions

Table 4 shows the correlation between the dimensions of Green Recruitment and Selection (GRS), Green Training and Development (GTD), Green Performance Management (GPM), Green Compensation and Reward (GCR), and Green Work Environment (GWE).

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
1. GRS					
2. GTD	.66*				
3. GPM	.78*	.78*			
4. GCR	.73*	.66*	.88*		
5. GWE	.63*	.72*	.78*	.77*	-

*p < .01.

This correlation matrix provides valuable insights into the relationships among these dimensions. While some dimensions, like GRS, appear unrelated to the others in this context, there are strong positive correlations between GTD and GPM, GPM and GCR, GCR and GRS, GTD, and GWC, and GPM and GWE.

4.3 Impact of Various Factors on Green Work Environment

The impact of various factors Green Recruitment and Selection (GRS), Green Training and Development (GTD), Green Performance Management (GPM), Green Compensation and Reward (GCR), on Green Work Environment (GWE) in the IT Companies in Chennai was studied using the regression model. The results of the regression model are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

$H_0$1: There is no impact of green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance management system, green compensation and reward on green work climate.

Table 5 Regression Model Summary of Impact of GRS, GTD, GPM, and GCR on GWE

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	p
.82[a]	.68	.66	.55	46.96	<.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), GRS, GTD, GPM, GCR

The table represents a regression model's performance assessing the impact of four predictors (GRS, GTD, GPM, GCR) on the dependent variable GWE (Green Work Environment). The model is strong, with an R-value of 0.82, indicating a strong positive correlation between predictors and GWE. 68% of GWE's variance can be explained by these predictors (R Square). The adjusted R Square accounts for model complexity. The low standard error (0.55) indicates accurate predictions, and the F-statistic (46.96) with a p-value < 0.001 confirms the model's overall statistical significance, suggesting that these predictors collectively have a significant impact on GWE.

Table 6 Regression Coefficients of Impact of GRS, GTD, GPM, and GCR on GWE

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	.60	.23		2.62	.010
GRS	-.03	.09	-.03	-0.33	.745
GTD	.32	.10	.32	3.32	.001
GPM	.17	.16	.18	1.11	.269
GCR	.40	.12	.42	3.23	.002

Dependent Variable: GWE

The table displays regression coefficients assessing the influence of four factors (Green Recruitment and Selection - GRS, Green Training and Development - GTD, Green Performance Management - GPM, and Green Compensation and Reward - GCR) on the Green Work Environment (GWE). Among these, Green Training and Development (GTD) and Green Compensation and Reward (GCR) have substantial and positive impacts on GWE, suggesting that focusing on training and development opportunities and implementing rewarding mechanisms can enhance the green work environment. However, Green Recruitment and

Selection (GRS) and Green Performance Management (GPM) do not appear to significantly affect GWE, indicating the need for alternative strategies to improve environmental sustainability within the workplace.

5. Discussion

The IT industry in Chennai, India, has been at the forefront of economic growth and technological innovation. As global concerns about environmental sustainability continue to intensify, it is imperative for Chennai's IT companies to align their operations with eco-friendly practices. The discussion focuses on the results of the study, which examines how much employees know about Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices and how certain HR factors affect the Green Work Environment (GWE) in the IT industry in Chennai. The study uncovers a positive attitude among employees toward GHRM practices within Chennai's IT companies. Employees are willing to make personal changes to support green initiatives, indicating a strong foundation of support for environmental sustainability within the workforce. This positive disposition resonates with a global trend where employees increasingly value organizations that prioritize environmental responsibility.

However, the findings also highlight a noticeable knowledge gap concerning specific GHRM initiatives. Despite their overall positive attitude, employees seem to lack detailed information about the concrete steps taken by their organizations to promote environmental sustainability. Addressing this knowledge gap becomes essential as informed and engaged employees are pivotal for the success of any GHRM strategy.

It is important to understand how HR factors influence the Green Work Environment in Chennai's IT Companies. It's crucial to create a sustainable work environment that is safe, healthy and comfortable for employees. By implementing HR policies that focus on sustainability, we can reduce our carbon footprint and promote eco-friendly practices in the workplace. Saeed et al. (2019) have suggested that implementing GHRM practices can help organizations create an eco-friendly workplace**.** Green Training and Development (GTD) emerges as a crucial factor with a substantial and positive impact on the Green Work Environment. Pavitra Mishra (2017) argues that implementing GHRM practices such as training and development, compensation and reward can promote sustainable growth and a green work environment. This underscores the importance of investing in training and development programs that equip IT professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute effectively to an eco-friendly workplace. The results suggest that Chennai's IT companies should consider designing specialized training programs focusing on environmental sustainability to maximize the benefits of GTD.

Similarly, the influence of Green Compensation and Reward (GCR) on GWE underscores the role of incentives and recognition in motivating employees to actively engage in eco-friendly behaviours. The company could incentivize employees who participate in environmental activities to reflect their commitment to sustainability, benefitting both the individual and the organization (Hari and Subramanian 2020). Incentives tied to green practices not only boost motivation but also contribute to a culture where sustainability is not only valued but also financially acknowledged.

In contrast, the findings suggest that Green Recruitment and Selection (GRS) and Green Performance Management (GPM) do not significantly impact GWE within Chennai's IT sector.

This implies the need for a strategic re-evaluation of these HR practices. IT companies may need to explore alternative approaches or integrate green criteria into recruitment and performance evaluation processes to enhance their environmental sustainability efforts.

6. Conclusion

The IT industry in Chennai has a chance to lead in promoting and implementing environmental sustainability practices. In order to achieve this goal, companies must focus on bridging knowledge gaps, prioritizing employee training and development, and reassessing their human resource policies. By cultivating an eco-conscious workplace culture, companies have the ability to not only support but also actively contribute to a greener future. The exploration of this area has the potential to significantly enhance the environmental sustainability of Chennai's IT industry. By undertaking a thorough examination of the environmental impact of operations within the industry, it may be possible to identify areas where improvements can be made to reduce waste, conserve natural resources, and minimize the carbon footprint of the sector. Such measures could not only benefit the environment but also contribute to the long-term economic viability of the industry. Therefore, stakeholders in the IT industry must collaborate to promote sustainable practices and explore innovative solutions that can lead to a more environmentally friendly future.

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