Green human resource management: A theoretical assessment and future directions

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Abstract---Purpose: Green or environmental Human Resource Management (GHRM) has become popular in recent years and there is a spate of conferences and researches going on in the area of green HRM, with these developments taking place GHRM also gaining the attention of academia and practitioners from all around the globe. Therefore there is a need to provide a comprehensive literature review so that further analysis can be carried out on the recommendations thus suggested, therefore this paper provide a comprehensive literature review in the area of Green Human Resource Management and try to identify scope, approaches and contexts to identify focus areas and also proposed areas for future researches.

Design/Methodology/Approach: On the basis of comprehensive literature review approach researches were borrowed from many reputed journals and the researches from these journals became the inherent part of this paper. Multidimensional matrix was formed after the identification of six focus areas and six contextual variables.

Findings: It is proposed that more than 40 articles would be reviewed in a process of performing comprehensive literature review as the research is growing significantly in the area of Green Human Resource Management from the last decade. Based on these researches some focus areas were identified and the main emphasis will be paid on the performance outcome of green Human Resource Management.

Research Limitations/Implications: As it is a theoretical paper and the research is limited to comprehensive literature review, only academic articles from online databases in the area of Green Human Resource Management/environmental HRM were obtained, making it difficult to study other allied areas and related empirical researches.
Keywords---Literature review, Green human resource management, Green training, Green HRM.

Introduction

As the world is now witnessing an era for green practices and many countries either they are developed/underdeveloped or developing nations are emphasizing on green practices due to the huge demand for environmentally friendly agenda and facilitation of sustainability oriented strategies. Changing context is also influencing businesses which already operates in a highly competitive environment where they have to be efficient on one hand and also have to leave deliver value according to the needs and wants of the customer but at the same time they have an additional responsibility towards the environment in which they operate (Jabbour et al., 2012). This environment friendly techniques and concerns about global health pressurize the organizations to become green and environment friendly. As it is believed that human resource management played an important role in the development of any company therefore researches and sponsors around the world emphasize on embedding green practices in Human Resource Management functions to enhance the sustainability of the domain (de Souza Freitas et al., 2012; Jackson et al., 2011; Renwick et al., 2016).

The concept of green Human Resource Management is not a very old concept. It has started to gain currency in the last decade when Human Resource Management with its green management practices strategy to reduce its environmental footprint. Since 2015 there is a noticeable surge in the researches related to Green human resource management practices as it plays an integral role in facilitating environment friendly practices ((Mishra et al., 2014, Dumont et al., 2016; Guerci, Longoni and Luzzini, 2016; Guerci, Montanari, Scapolan and Epifanio, 2016; Jabbour and Renwick, 2018; Yonget al., 2019; Yusliza et al., 2017). It involves individuals as a part of environment friendly initiatives and the change is in existing practices (Ahmad, 2015). The change in Human Resource Management is believed to be a planned and continuous change for the organization (Sawang and Kivits, 2014).

To estimate the contribution made by green human resource management we have to judge the potential of Human Resource Management with respect to sustainability (Jabbour and Santos, 2008). However when it comes to changing different strategies and efficiently implementing them, Human Resource Management plays an important role as suggested by many researchers (del Brio et al., 2007). According to Cohen et al (2012) the most important role was played by human resource managers in creating sustainable business practices throughout the organization. The role of human resource manager is pervasive as it starts from the formulation of strategies and it also serves as a partner in implementing these strategies.

From the above research is it can be easily ascertained that Green Human Resource Management is gaining attention and there is a need to develop a holistic and comprehensive research framework on different focus areas covering different contextual aspects. It is important to overview the existing body of
Human Resource Management Research and also to predict the path on which green Human Resource Management Research is developing. Presently the domain of green human resource management practices lacks a comprehensive model based on latest literature. Once a review of latest literature was made investigation and analysis can be carried out on developed constructs, therefore in this research a comprehensive and extant literature review on green Human Resource Management was carried out. After the thorough literature review the objective of this paper was finalized, objective of this research is to investigate green Human Resource Management Research on many focus areas in different contexts. In particular the research will focus on the latest literature in the area of green Human Resource Management Research and future directions of green human resource management practices.

**Methodology**

This paper follows a customized literature review technique which can be called as a systematic literature review method for the purpose of analyzing, summarizing and drawing results from the literature available in the area of green Human Resource Management (Tranfield et al., 2003). The literature review was aimed in accordance with the objective framed in this research. The methodological approaches adopted in this study are based on the popular studies of Hohenstein et al.(2014) and Rashman et al.(2009). But not limited to these approaches, this study goes further and identifies six focus areas and different contextual variables of research for the literature review.

**Database selection**

As a first step, to procure researches in the area of green Human Resource Management many online databases for identified. All the databases provide articles and researches in English language and are available online. The databases which were included in the book science and Scopus are being selected to prepare articles and researches (Unnikrishnan and Hegde 2007). Secondly, the articles of the researches was searched in these databases by putting keywords such as green Human Resource Management, green human resource, green human resource management practices, environmental HRM, green training so on and so forth.

Thirdly, as many paper suggested that the research in green human resource management practices has evolved in the past decade therefore the articles from 2011 to 2021 was selected and included in the study. Fourthly, all articles were collected and after the initial review were classified into six focus areas and different contexts. Initially more than hundred articles were collected but for the final literature review 40 articles were selected. There are many articles which seems important for the literature review the PDF of these articles were obtained through their official journal websites.

**Bibliographic Analysis and Theme Identification**

After the initial screening of articles, the articles were divided into six focus areas based on the central theme they followed:
Central Theme 1: Reviews of Green Human Resource Management
There are more than 10 articles which were based on this theme (Tang et al., 2017; Jackson et al., 2011; Mukherjee and Chandra, 2018; Sriram and Suba, 2017; Chen and Wang, 2013; Siyambalapitiya et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2020). These articles are busy enduring literature review systematically in the area of green human resource management. Some of the articles developed some conceptual frameworks, some researches highlights the need for refined conceptualization and measurement of Green Human Resource Management, some focusing on cultural team work and empowerment from Green supply chain management, only some articles talks about green productivity and green Human Resource Management personnel training and communication costs.

Central Theme 2: Adoption of Green Human Resource Management
Under this theme six articles were identified (Yonget al., 2019; Obeidat et al., 2018; Yuslizaet al., 2017; Yong and Mohd-Yusoff, 2016; Guerci, Longoni and Luzzini 2016). The focus areas of these articles was emphasizing on contextual variables and situations. In one of the article 16 attributes of green Human Resource Management practices were finalized, some article talks about a tendency to which this generation cares about health of the planet and implications for green human resource management practices, some of the articles talks about different human resource management practices and transforming them into environment friendly practices, more than three papers in this area talks about green human resource management practices.

Central Theme 3: Antecedents of Green Human Resource Management Adoption
In this area five studies were found, these studies are latest in the area and some of them talks about employee empowerment and its influence on green human resource management practices, some talks about e-hrm, in one of the study human resource management roles were studied in the context of Green human resource management practices, after the review of these articles some antecedents were identified such as organizational culture and teamwork, top management support, human resource management changing role, integrated attitudes (Guerci, Longoni and Luzzini, 2016; Longoni et al., 2016; Masri and Jaaron, 2017; Obeidat et al., 2018; Yusoff et al., 2018; Zaid, Bon and Jaaron, 2018).

Central Theme 4: Green Human Resource Management Outcomes
Number of articles qualified for this central theme were six, this section is structured on the basis of importance of green human resource management adoption and almost every article in this area advocated the methods to enhance green human resource management performance and tries to link it with the human resource management effectiveness and finally with the organisational effectiveness and performance. In this study all the human resource management practices were discussed such as green recruitment and selection, green training and development and green rewards and most of these studies that focus on assessing environmental performance (Dumont et al., 2016;
Kim et al., 2019; Saeed et al., 2018; Luu, 2018; Ragas et al., 2017; Shen et al., 2016).


In this area four articles were identified and research talks about how companies implement green human resource management practices in Indian contexts (Gupta, 2016; Dutta, D. and Bose, I. 2015; Chaudhary, R. 2018; Dubey et al., 2016). In these researches the contextual situation was discussed at length and all the green human resource management practices and strategies were trimmed according to the contextual situation of the organization. Therefore an insight was gained in the area of implementation of green human resource management practices.

Central Theme 6: Future Directions in the Area of Human Resource Management:

There is a paucity of research in the area and therefore we get the lowest number of articles which discussed about future researches in the area. The main purpose of this research is work developing sustainable development strategies, green human resource management knowledge, the role of green human resource management practices. After the classification on the basis of focus areas/Central themes the articles were then classified on the basis of contextual situations in which the researches were made. For this six contextual variables were identified from the literature and the articles were organized and Classified on the basis of these contextual situations.

Year of Publication
Firstly the articles were classified on the basis of years in which they were published. An upcoming trend was observed on the basis of article published till 2021.

Sector
Secondly, the articles were divided into different sectors in which the research was carried out. This is done to show the pervasiveness of research in the area of green human resource management practices and generalization of the findings in this domain.

Economic Context
Thirdly the economical context was taken into consideration to show the universality of the concept and the articles were classified on the basis of economies which becomes a focus of the research. The economies were classified as underdeveloped, developing and developed economies.

Methodological contextual situations
To take the research for the some Methodological aspects were taken into consideration and the articles were divided on the basis of number of citations, methodologies used and new concepts reviewed in the area of Green Human Resource Management practices. The findings related each of the
contextual situations was given in the next section. On the basis of these themes and contextual situations, a matrix is developed and some surprising insights were observed. The matrix was given as under (refer Table; 01). The insights ensure that research in the area of green HRM is ongoing. The research is not limited to any specific sector, type of economy and some new concepts are also introduced in the literature. All the focus areas were thoroughly reviewed by the academicians and researchers. The literature in the area is also gaining good citations, which is regarded as a good indicator of research development. It is also observed that the research is moving from qualitative to quantitative adding more empirical evidence in the area.

Table 01: Showing developed Matrix on themes and Contextual Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/Contextual Situations</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Economical Context</th>
<th>Citations</th>
<th>Methodologies Adopted</th>
<th>Newer Concepts Reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GHRM antecedents</td>
<td>(2013, 2015, 2017, 2019)</td>
<td>Service (2), Manufacturing (2)</td>
<td>Developed (2), Developing (3)</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>Qualitative (3), Quantitative (3)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHRM Future directions</td>
<td>2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017</td>
<td>Service (2), Manufacturing (2)</td>
<td>Developed (2), Developing (3)</td>
<td>&lt;12</td>
<td>Qualitative (2), Quantitative (2)</td>
<td>Environmental Performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions and Contributions

The above studies constitutes sound evidence that green Human Resource Management is gaining importance and now organisations are ensuring environmental sustainability through HR involvement. Systematic literature review put forth some important findings. Firstly this literature review maintains high quality standard regarding papers and researches chosen for the review.

Secondly, this study draws inferences and adopt classifications but develop new ways to live up to the expected standards by developing a matrix through which both Central themes and contextual situations can be studied simultaneously. Thirdly, this research provides a comprehensive definition of green human
resource management practices. Fourthly, this study also identify newer concepts which are being developed in the latest literature and needs to be included in future researches and finally on the basis of literature review this research collects some distinct researches identify future research directions presented in the form of recommendations in the last section.

As stated above this study addresses two research questions, the conclusions regarding research question 01 was given as under: The literature review suggest that green Human Resource Management is gaining currency since 2010 and there is a spate of researches since 2015. The reasons of this can be attributed to the fact that in this span of time there are many startups came into existence which are looking at environmental sustainability and lately there are many governmental restrictions are put on ecological matters. Latest example of this is human resource participation in sustaining the environment was the main focus at UN sustainable development summit in Year 2015.

The conclusions regarding Research Question 02 being provided in multidimensional matrix develop in this study. The matrix shows that there are many articles and studies focusing on review in the area of Human Resource Management.

Furthermore, the researches in this area do not limit to theoretical contributions only but we find many researches which are empirical and based on robust methodologies. The Matrix also shows that there are researches in most sectors and does not primarily limited to service sector only. An important finding after the comprehensive and integrative literature review was observed that the research papers in the area of Green Human Resource Management practices are increasing at a good pace every year.

**Recommendations for future studies**

The conclusions can be divided into various recommendations. The first category of conclusion points out the Global human resource management practices to be investigated by the Scholars in other countries also. There is a scope for doing comparative analysis between underdeveloped, developing and developed Nations to gain insight in GHRM practices. Studies of this kind will not be a Nobel studies as the work is already in progress by Borgen et al., (2007) and concludes the important role of green human resource management practices in maintaining environmental awareness. This research also put forth some important research recommendations:

**Recommendation 1: There Is a Need that Future Studies Should Investigate Green Human Resource Management Practices In different Cultural Contexts.**

The literature review also concludes that the Scholars have paid more attention on the researches in Asia, Europe and America then rest of the world. This limitation can be termed as an opportunity to start research is these areas of concern. Pointed out by many researchers there is a paucity of research in Africa and other parts of the world. The environmental degradation is the key concerns
of the government and also at the community level in these countries. Therefore important insights can be obtained in these types of contextual settings.

**Recommendation 2: The Future Studies Should Apply Qualitative Methods or Triangulation.**

The conclusion regarding methodology was such that, there are many theoretical studies in this area and to some extent some conceptual models are also been framed and tested by empirical studies. However, there is a paucity of research when it comes to quality testing methods and specially there are very less studies which apply mixed methods, case study techniques and triangulation methods. Comprehensive literature review shows that there are many methods being used in green human resource management literature. Triangulation methods and mixed methodology is suggestive to gain insight about the complexity of the research problem in the area of green human Resource Management.

**Recommendation 3; Various Economic/Industrial Sectors Should Be Chosen For Future Research Studies;**

In the area of green human resource management practices most of the studies were found to be conducted in the area of manufacturing. Although there are many researches carried out in multi industrial settings. However, there is a paucity of research in the area of service sector; this finding is also found in Ren et al (2018).


Regarding this category, scarcity of researches was pointed out while investigating the role of green Human Resource Management towards different stakeholders. As for the employees the area which needs to be researched can be green employee performance, employee satisfaction/ turnover/ performance, green attitude/ activities. These are the areas which may be considered by the Scholars as it is also pointed out by the Jabbour, (2010) argues that green human resource management policies plays a vital role employee satisfaction, turnover and job performance. For the activities which affect external environment of the organization and based on theory of planned behavior (Aijzen 1981) the areas which are relevant and needs to be researched are green human resource management practices such as green training, green human capital and we see that there is no published papers in these areas comprehensively. We can easily conclude that there is a research opportunity which can be tapped if the research in this area would be undertaken in future.

**References**


