
Green Work- Life Balance: A New Concept in Green HRM

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ABSTRACT:

This paper focuses on the concept of Green Human Resource Management with emphasis on Green-Work –Life Balance. This paper adopts a theoretical approach and presents a review based on the data gathered from sources like books, journals, internet, and work of previous researchers.

Green Human Resource Management is concerned with those Human Resource Management procedures and practices which ensure protection and preservation of the environment and sustainable utilization of the resources. Growing concern for environment protection has led to development and adoption of measures to preserve and maintain the environment and its valuable resources. The Corporate sector (Business sector) has also initiated environment protection and preservation and is making tremendous efforts to achieve the green goals.

Green Work-Life-Balance emphasizes on the integration of private life and work life of the employee with reference to environmental attitudes, practices and behaviour. Green Work Life Balance has emerged as a key component of Green Human Resource Management. According to this concept, green practices and green attitudes must be enforced in both the private life and the work life domain of the employees in order to ensure that the green goals of the organization are achieved completely.

Key words- *Environment, Green HRM, Work-Life Balance, Green Work-Life-Balance, Green values*

GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (GREEN HRM)

Green HRM is the concept of using Human Resource Management practices and policies to implement the optimal and sustainable use of resources within the organization. It refers to the practices and policies undertaken by the HR department to preserve the environment. The HR department can be an influential force in inspiring and empowering the employees to adopt green initiatives. There is a need for effective integration of Environment Management into Human Resource Management. (Ehnert et al 2013) and (Mishra et al 2012)

The HR department can initiate the development of environment friendly attitudes and behaviour in the employees in a systematic and well organized manner because this department is primarily concerned with managing the employees. It acts as the point of contact of all employees. The HR department can use every employee touch point or interface to promote sustainability and eco-friendly practices. It plays a key role in facilitating a systematic and comprehensive approach towards creating and maintaining a culture of sustainability in the organization.

The HR department should design its structure and system with eco- friendly activities and methods. This emphasizes on the inclusion of environment - friendly procedures into its

functions such as recruitment, selection, induction, training and development, performance management and reward management. It should continuously encourage the employees to adopt and practice green values and green procedures. (Ehnert et al 2013) and (Mishra et al 2012)

Eco- friendly practices include- effective waste management (reducing wastes), effective power and energy saving (reducing wastage of energy and power by minimizing their consumption), reduction in the emission of poisonous and toxic gases and products, reduction of paper consumption and so on. The essential elements of Green HRM include implementation of environment-friendly policies and procedures, preservation of knowledge capital and encouragement of employees to adopt and practice green policies and procedures. (Olson 2009)

GREEN WORK LIFE BALANCE

It is an emerging concept in Green Human Resource Management which emphasizes on the development of environment friendly values and attitudes in the two major domains of an employee's life- Work life and Private Life. It aims at creating an environment friendly personality of the employees which ensures that the employees imbibe green values in their professional as well as personal lives.

According to Muster (2011), this concept considers the employees as both producers and consumers. Green Work-Life-Balance is a potential strategic HRM tool that needs to be incorporated into the corporate objectives and culture of the organizations for sustainable value creation. Green work life balance policies lead to a balanced approach towards green practices by encouraging positive interactions from work –to life and life-to work. Sometimes, employees tend to adopt eco-friendly practices at their work place but still continue to ignore it in their personal lives. This creates an imbalance and the green goals of the organization are not achieved completely. Hence organizations need to encourage the adoption of green values in both the domains to ensure that the goals of Green HRM are achieved completely. If Green HRM focuses only on the professional role of the employees and ignores the non- working roles, then the full potential of Green HRM cannot be realized. Employees are human beings and they play numerous roles in their day to day lives and the organization must induce green behaviour in every role the employee plays. (Kossek & Lambert 2005)

The organization (Work Place) is one of the two major domains of an employee's life. Organization is a highly structured system equipped with all the necessary facilities and resources required for implementing the necessary practices and policies. Hence the starting point of the process of striking a favourable Green work-life balance is mostly the work place of the employees. The major share of the green personality and green attitudes of an employee is shaped by the organization in which he or she works. The managers in an organization (particularly HR managers) are trained to impart eco- friendly values into the employees in a well organized and systematic manner. The private life also plays a pivotal role in shaping the green attitude of a person but the process is generally implemented in a systematic manner by an organization since an organization is a well defined system. The HR department is primarily concerned with management of the workforce of the organization. Thus the HR people have the primary responsibility of enforcing the environmental values among the employees. Adoption of Green Work-Life Balance policies encourages the

employees to exchange their environmental ideas and suggestions between domains which in turn help in achieving the Green Goals.

The corporate reputation of the organization gets enhanced when it adopts green behaviour and practices and encourages the exchange of those ideas between the domains of the employees. This contributes significantly to corporate goodwill and employer branding which enables the companies to attract the best talent in the market. (Lea & Webley 1997) and (Fombrun et al 2000)

The concept of green work life balance is based on the linkages between private life and work life interactions. (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000)

The work life and private life interactions maybe illustrated through some relevant models.

SOME RELEVANT MODELS ON PRIVATE LIFE- WORK LIFE INTERACTIONS

a) **The Conflict Model**- It emphasizes on the difficulties associated with bringing about reconciliation between the needs of both the domains. (Guest 2002). Private role and Work role imbalances usually occur because the essential resources of life such as energy, time, attention are not distributed evenly. These conflicts are the results of factors which are generally related to stress, time, behaviour and so on. Since the resources are limited, they cannot be consumed equally in both the domains. This leads to frequent role conflicts and imbalances, creating a negative impact on the private life or the work life.

b) **The Enrichment Model**- According to this model, sometimes the experiences, value additions or achievements acquired in one domain leads to a positive impact on the other, thereby enriching both the domains. Optimistic employees and go getters can strike a perfect balance between the two domains. According to Rothbard (2001), in this model, employees accumulate various resources through the numerous roles they play.

c) **The Spillover Model**- It may be considered as a component of the enrichment as well as the conflict model. (Lambert 1990). According to this model, there are usually some transfers of specific experiences, traits or resources between the work and life domains. (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). The spill-over could be positive or negative depending on the experience of the individual in either of the domains. For example – success, achievements, accolades and recognitions at work place often get translated to positive behaviour, happiness and self confidence in personal life. On the other hand, negative experiences in private life may lead to low self esteem and low performance level at the work place.

d) **The Compensation Model** - This model suggests that the experiences garnered in one domain tend to lead to a contradictory behaviour in the other. (Lambert 1990). Individuals are often found to make extra efforts to compensate the negative and dissatisfying experiences of one domain by the other. This generally leads to low morale, low self esteem, less involvement, less time devotion and less attention in the dissatisfying domain and greater involvement in the satisfying one. This eventually results in an imbalance between the two domains. Dissatisfaction in one domain makes a person strive for additional recognitions, accolades and rewards in the other to compensate this negativity.

According to these models, an individual is a passive entity who generally does not have an influence on the interactions and potential behavioural shifts between domains. The Border Theory considers a situation where people are the active managers of their own life domains and they manage the transition between the two domains (Clark 2000). Hence these individuals are perceived as “border crossers”. Employees themselves decide the extent of segmentation, integration or relative importance they want in both the life domains. However certain factors like the company policies, infrastructure, work environment and personal resources like time, money, personality influence their freedom of judgment and actions. Thus, based on people’s personal competencies, experiences and specific objective conditions of their life domains, they can prosper or suffer from the work- life interactions. Employees encounter various negative and positive situations in their work life and this makes them behave accordingly. The personality, psychology and the attitude of the employees also have an impact on their behaviour. Adoption of green practices in one domain can motivate similar behaviour in the other. Likewise, adoption of non-environment friendly behaviour in one domain may lead to similar activities in the other.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES FACED BY GREEN HRM AND GREEN WORK LIFE BALANCE

Establishment of effective Green values and practices in the organization faces certain challenges. The first major challenge is creating the necessary awareness about the environment among the organizations. There is a growing need to inculcate green attitudes across all levels of human life. The concept of Environment Management is gaining impetus and momentum in the world. Every organization needs to implement a comprehensive and holistic environment preservation system. The environment management system should not be implemented on an ad-hoc basis or “as and when required” basis. Another key challenge faced by the organizations in this process is creating green awareness among the workforce and encouraging the employees to adopt a green work-life balance. The organization needs to enlighten the employees about the issue and encourage integration of green behaviour in both the domains of life. The Green work-life balance policies might create ambiguous ideas in the minds of employees and they may feel that the company is trying to interfere in their private lives and threatening their personal freedom. So the organization must communicate to the workforce that the interventions are voluntary. At the same time the employer must design and implement the green work-life balance policies in such a manner that the employees get attracted towards them.. Sometimes it might become a challenge for the organizations to bring about synchronization of green policies between the two major domains of an employee’s life. Since it is a new concept, the employees might not be ready to embrace it and accept the change which may pose another challenge. So the onus is on the HR department to eliminate this preconceived notion and fear and encourage them to welcome and imbibe this change with a view to its favourable consequences. Adoption and implementation of green practices and green work life balance policies involve significant expenditure, huge organizational effort and adequate time. Sometimes organizations are apprehensive about such investments and their subsequent results since this process yields no immediate gain. Every organization has employees with various cross-cultural backgrounds which makes it even more difficult for the management to instil this idea.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

- There should be an organized and systematic implementation of Green HRM and Green Work Life Balance policies in the organization and these policies should mandatorily be a part of the long term objectives of the company.
- The organizations must motivate the employees to adopt the green values and green practices in all spheres of their lives.
- Organizations should introduce eco-friendly products (like bio-degradable cups,) and practices (like zero plastic consumption) in their regular operations. The environmental consequences and implications of a product or a service must be evaluated before it is launched or implemented. Environmental risk assessment should be undertaken.
- The HR department must adopt and implement eco-friendly procedures into its various functions such as recruitment, selection, induction, training, reward management and so on. The HR department has the primary responsibility of promoting and developing a green culture in the organization.
- Resumes must be submitted online and the vacancies should also be posted online into the company websites and other job portals. This will lead to a reduction in the usage of paper.
- During the selection process, the company may judge and assess the environment related knowledge and awareness of the prospective candidates. Awareness and consciousness about the environment should be one of the requirements necessary for getting selected in any position in any department in the company.
- Companies should promote themselves as environment conscious organizations to their prospective employees and this will help in creating and maintaining a Green Employer brand. This will eventually enable the organizations to attract the best talent in the market.
- Environment preservation goals and policies should be incorporated into all job descriptions at all levels and hierarchy of the organization.
- The Induction Programme must include environment related concerns and issues and the new employees should be motivated to embrace and accept the green awareness policies followed by the company.
- The learning and development programmes must include workshops, sessions and intensive training on green policies and practices. Training programmes and sessions on environment must be conducted on a regular basis.
- E- learning or online learning system must be established in all organizations. The employees should be able to access the training modules and contents online and this will lead to reduced paper consumption.
- Performance Management system should include well defined and rigorous assessment of the environment related activities of the employees. Green performance assessments should be a part of the KRA (Key Result Areas) in the performance appraisal. The environment related activities of the employees must be assessed against the pre defined green standards and targets and a well organized feedback should be given to the employees with emphasis on areas of improvement.
- Rewards, Recognitions and compensation packages should be designed in a manner which ensures that the employees who achieve the environment management standards are rewarded with cash/non-cash incentives, accolades and recognition. The

organizations can arrange for training programs and certifications from reputed environmental agencies for those employees who achieve remarkable results.

- Employees should be encouraged to share new ideas, suggestions and experiences regarding environment acquired from their private lives with their peers at the work place and thus inspire them about the same. Informal discussions about green ideas among the employees at the workplace (places like canteen, common room) and outside the work place should be encouraged. **Quality Circle Initiatives** can also be encouraged.
- Brochures with information about the environment should be distributed. Seminars and training sessions on green policies and practices should be organized on a regular and systematic basis. Organizations may arrange occasional shows of documentaries and short films on environment for the employees. Organizations can also arrange seminars of reputed environmental agencies in their premises. Training programs and certifications from acclaimed environmental agencies may also be organized.
- Social media and Social networking sites and blogs may be used by the employees to spread environmental awareness.

Green work life balance concept is an emerging area of Green HRM which goes beyond greening the employees and considers them as complete human beings with their private lives and consumer attitudes and behaviour. Adoption of Green work life balance ensures that the employees initiate and practice green values, attitudes and behaviour in both the major domains of their lives. Green Work Life Balance ensures a holistic approach to HRM. It has a major positive impact on the environment, organization, employees and the society. With effective implementation of Green HRM and Green Work- Life Balance Policies, a completely green world may be achieved. Work life balance concept has already been embraced in many organizations worldwide. However Green Work-life Balance is a new concept which is yet to be undertaken and implemented on a large scale. Adoption of this policy will be an important step forward towards the achievement of the environmental goals.

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