


Chapter 11

Navigating the Intersection of Sustainability and Human Resources to Foster Responsible and Eco- Friendly Management: Green Employability and Green Jobs

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ABSTRACT

The role of Green HR practices and innovative HR practices in SMEs extends beyond mere environmental consciousness. Within SMEs, where resource optimization is paramount, Green HR practices and innovative HR practices emerge as a proactive means to enhance both ecological stewardship and organizational performance. These practices encompass initiatives such as eco-friendly recruitment processes, energy-efficient workplace design, and employee engagement programs focused on environmental responsibility. By integrating Green HR practices, SMEs not only reduce their carbon footprint but also cultivate a culture of sustainability, boosting employee morale, attracting eco-conscious customers, and contributing to the broader global goal of ecological well-being. The chapter explains the difference between “green jobs” and “green employability.” It takes the reader to a journey where the initial research to the utilization of industry 4.0 is studied to understand the innovative HR practices under the lens of different HR theories and models.

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INTRODUCTION

In ancient times, the pre-industrial era stood witness to significant climatic shifts, notably the Roman Climatic Optimum, the Little Ice Age, and the Medieval Warm Period, as documented by McCormick et al. (2012) and Neukom et al. (2019). These climatic epochs played pivotal roles in the ascendance and decline of kingdoms and entire civilizations, as elucidated by environmental history. Conversely, the environmental recklessness inherent in the industrial paradigm underpinning the modern world has left an indelible mark on our natural surroundings and is currently reshaping the Earth's climate. Though earlier ignored, Climate change has now become a global concern, and various international bodies have voiced their perspectives and recommendations on this critical issue. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has provided comprehensive assessments of climate science, impacts, and mitigation strategies (IPCC, 2021). Additionally, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has emphasized the importance of international cooperation to combat climate change, notably through agreements such as the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015). The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has continually monitored climate trends and has offered insights into the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events (WMO, 2021). Furthermore, organizations like the World Bank have underscored the urgency of climate action in achieving sustainable development (World Bank, 2021). Collectively, these international bodies have highlighted the multifaceted nature of climate change and the imperative for coordinated global efforts to address its far-reaching impacts.

Human actions have led to an estimated 2-degree Fahrenheit (1 degree Celsius) rise in the global average surface temperature since the pre-industrial era (1880-1900). While this increase may appear modest, it represents a significant accumulation of heat (Harmsen et al., 2023). Human influence primarily stems from two sources: organizations and households. Research suggests that organizational activities generally exert a more substantial impact on the environment. Take, for instance, daily waste production; the industrial sector generates an overwhelmingly larger volume of waste compared to households (Weiß & Bentlage, 2006). Recognizing their environmental footprint, an increasing number of organizations are adopting eco-friendly practices across various functions, including finance, marketing, supply chain logistics, and accountancy. The trend towards greening organizational operations is evident and growing.

Walter Wehrmeyer's (1996) collection titled "Greening People: Human Resources and Environmental Management" marked the inception of research into integrating environmental concerns into human resource management. Over recent years, interest in this field, known as Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), has surged. What was once a niche area of study has evolved into an independent research domain, distinct from its parent field, human resource management. The increasing interest in GHRM is evident from the numerous recent literature reviews and bibliometric analysis that include the work of many seasoned researchers e.g. (Bahuguna et al., 2023; Paulet et al., 2021; Yong et al., 2020; Benevene & Buonomo, 2020). Despite significant progress since Wehrmeyer's volume, a closer look at this emerging field reveals that while some areas have matured conceptually, others still hold untapped potential. This chapter aims to contribute substantially to the extensive existing literature, addressing both mature and evolving aspects of GHRM.

Paulet et al. (2021) assert that the battle against global climate change commences within organizations, which are often seen as the primary culprits for environmental harm. Organizations have a wide array of strategies at their disposal to contribute to a more sustainable future, both socially and environmentally. One approach is aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a path facilitated by Green Human Resource Management (GHRM). GHRM's objective is to empower

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